

**ARPA Public Input Forums at
Camels Hump Middle School Library (+Zoom)
Minutes of September 28, 2022**

Members Present: Jay Furr, Jeff Forward, Josh Arneson, Rebecca Starks, Tom Lyle

Members Absent: Molly Dugan, Cara LaBounty

Staff Present: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Duncan Wardwell, Assistant to the Town Manager

Others Present: Meeting was recorded by MMCTV, Amy Powers, Betsy Hardy, Chelsye Brooks, Chris Granda, Chip Noonan, Christy Witters, Jane Van LANDINGHAM, JG, Karen and Don Yaggy, Kate Kreider, Marilyn Johnson, Martha Waterman, Pennie Rand, Velma

Call to Order: 7:00pm

Welcome by: Furr

Public Comment:

Furr: My name is Jay Furr and welcome to those at Camels Hump Middle School or on Zoom. I am a member of the Selectboard and the Chair of the ARPA Committee. I will provide some time for other members to introduce themselves.

Forward: My name is Jeff Forward and I am also a member of the Selectboard.

Lyle: My name is Tom Lyle and I am a member of ARPA as a resident.

Arneson: I am a member of ARPA as the Richmond Town Manager.

Starks: My name is Rebecca Starks, and I am also a member as a resident.

Furr: The ARPA Committee is not a decision-making body. We have been appointed by the Selectboard to gather recommendations. We will tabulate the input and pass them along to Selectboard with some scoring to help them make decisions. We were granted \$1.2 million to aid in COVID recovery and economic development. Since it is less than \$2 million, we could also declare it as revenue loss during COVID. In other words, we do not have to file it project by project. The money can be spent on almost anything. We ask people to remember that anything that might have an on-going cost like the maintenance on a swimming pool then we would have to consider an on-going expense as this is a one-time fund. We also want to remind people that suggestions are not votes. We want to turn it over to suggestions or questions from the public.

Rand: I live in the Village and thank you for this opportunity. I would like to put in a plug for more pedestrian safety. I am thinking of Cochran Rd and the length as a lot of people who walk, bike, jog,

and stroll. One easy fix is to reduce the speed limit after the cemetery. Another thought is to have speed bumps where people do not slow down like between the railroad tracks and the bridge. Is it possible to make a pedestrian lane on Cochran Rd? I am mostly interested in public safety for walkers, bikers, and others.

Furr: I recommend looking at our Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan as that list some of our current options. We will continue to look at those options at the Selectboard meetings as well.

Waterman: I am here to say the same. The Selectboard is aware of the value of the multi-use nature of Cochran Rd. Many residents feel un-safe using that road. I strongly encourage the ARPA Committee to increase access to that road in a safe way for pedestrians and cyclists. It will make our Town more accessible and friendly for tourists. I agree with Pennie that some sort of sidewalk or a path that is distinct from the roadway.

Granda: I live on Wes White Hill and Cochran Rd resonates with me as well. I want to avoid expenses that lead to on-going costs. There might be some opportunities for on-going savings. We could use the money to leverage for funding energy efficiency or a lower cost of electricity for Town residents. We might leverage larger savings over time. The Town Center might be a project to minimize on-going energy and maintenance costs. We could also find a location in Town for a community solar project. Town residents could subscribe to it for a lower fixed price of electricity. We could also look at low-cost housing, mobile housing and augment energy efficiency. \$1.2 million is not a lot of money but I think we can leverage it for more benefit to the Town.

Furr: We could also pair with other Towns.

Forward: With the new Inflation Reduction Act, there is a considerable amount of money for weatherization and energy efficient appliances.

Lyle: Would customers on the Vermont Electric Co-op benefit from solar panels when most of the Town is Green Mountain Power? In terms of housing, do folks own the mobile homes and rent land?

Granda: I think some own the homes and rent the plot and some simply rent the home and plot.

Lyle: The Champlain Housing Trust puts money as a silent second mortgage to reduce the price.

Van Landingham: I am the co-owner of 2 Grammas Farm on Wes White Hill. I value living in a small town. It is hard to get the money together to make up for the maintenance we haven't done on the Town Hall and Library. Richmond is a mixed income Town, and it would make sense for the bulk of this money to go for those buildings. I know people who went to school in these buildings. I am a retired social worker, and I cannot take advantage of certain opportunities for elderly living based on owning my home and farm. Burlington has some facilities where people with different incomes are benefited. I don't want to move away. I do not have access to Richmond Terrace.

Noonan: I am interested in leveraging the money as well. There are more than enough constituencies to use the money many times over. Is it a single overriding project or multiple smaller projects? There is public safety, elders, and recreation. I think we can unlock future dollars and is the best possible use for the entire community.

Danks: I live in the Village but used to live on Dugway and second keeping Cochran safe for many users. I also want to second leveraging funds. The Village is the most amazing place. There is a

group at the State looking to opportunities for adults with disabilities and living options. Currently there is only adult foster care. I would like to see something in downtown Richmond where adults with disabilities can live together and thrive. Our downtown is perfect for that. I think a little bit of local money could leverage other funds. We could look at universal design principles.

Forward: One option we might explore is giving this money to another non-profit who could fulfill our purpose like Cathedral Square. The Planning Commission is considering universal design, so I suggest participating in the Zoning process. There is a meeting in mid-October and your comments would be welcome.

Lyle: Do you have a sense for the current demand.

Danks: We have at least 17 people looking at Williston.

Johnson: I live in the Village where I think we could have better lighting. I know better sidewalks are in the plan, but it is hard to see coming back from the Round Church. I think the best recreation paths are not connected to roads.

Arneson: We are putting in more lighting by the Market but not the Round Church.

Forward: I think we are the first Town in the state to implement an outdoor lighting ordinance.

Danks: Lighting would be great for the Congregational Church, Library or future recreational paths.

Hardy: I want to support the weatherization of the Town Center and leveraging other funds. I know Rt. 2 is going to widen the shoulders but a pedestrian path between the Village and Park & Ride would be safer.

Kreider: I am a member of the Recreation Committee, and we are working on revitalizing Volunteers Green. If we could put in a new playground and update the Bandshell and bathroom facilities so that they last for decades to come as it is a wonderful town center.

Forward: The Recreation Committee could forward suggestions for Volunteers Green like landscaping and other priorities.

Arneson: Paving of Volunteers Green parking lot is happening in the Spring.

Witters: I live on Tilden Ave in the Village. I think about spending the money to bring the community together. I think of the Town Center and community gathering places. I think about the winter where the community can be together like a space in the back of the library. When we think about leveraging funds, we could consider matching funds for other grants for a lot of these ideas.

Brooks: It would be great if Volunteers Green had more amenities for equal access especially during the Farmers Market. The Farmers Market could have a better space for people with disabilities. The playground is too small during the Farmers Market. Tennis courts would be less maintenance than a pool.

Powers: I submitted my thoughts online.

Furr: This is not the only opportunity to share ideas. Everyone should have received a mailing. There is a form on the Town ARPA website. You can submit ideas via that link. There is an email address where you can also submit suggestions (ARPA@richmondvt.gov). I will also post reminders on Front Porch Forum. We held a variety of meetings to collect input. We will tabulate what we have and meet with other groups. We are reaching out to non-profits as well.

Forward: Thank you everyone for showing up. We appreciate the input. We do not have to obligate until 2024. Our approach is to take it slow.

Adjourn