

**RICHMOND SELECTBOARD  
REGULAR MEETING  
February 20, 2018 MINUTES**

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Members Present: Bard Hill; Stephen Ackerman; Steve May; David Sander

Absent: Jon Kart

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Others Present: Geoffrey Urbanik, Town Manager; Mary Houle; Ian Bender; Cara LaBounty; Bruce LaBounty; Steve Libby, Vermont River Conservancy; Lou Borie, Vermont Land Trust; Rick Brigham, Sullivan, Powers & Co.; Connie Bona, Finance Director; and Ruth Miller was present to videotape the meeting for MMCTV Channel 15.

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Bard Hill called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**1. Welcome and Public Comment**

Mr. Hill asked if there were any comments from the public.

Marie Thomas said she was a person who felt like she was aware of what’s going on in Richmond, but when she heard about “buying the gorge” she was not in agreement with the town buying it. She sent an email to the Selectboard stating her objections. Following that, she had met with Lou Borie from the Richmond Land Trust about the transaction. He informed her of the land trust’s plans to manage the property and warn of the risks associated with it, instead of encouraging people to use it for swimming more.

Ms. Thomas then spoke about the rules for using the Conservation Reserve Fund and said that voters should have more authority to approve purchases from the fund, instead now they only vote if the town is to own the property being purchased. She urged a change in the rules when the question comes back for renewal. She also suggested that a report on the use of the funds be included in the town report.

Mary Houle agreed on the need for a vote on purchases and feels the policy should be rewritten.

Cara LaBounty asked that in purchases there needs to be consideration of parking for the public. Too many other projects have been completed without access for the public.

**2. Items for Discussion with Those Present**

Current Events Discussion with Chief of Police Al Buck

Chief Buck began by explaining that Corporal Rick Greenough, along with VSP Trooper Chris Brown, were involved in a shooting on the interstate on February 12<sup>th</sup>. Both officers fired on the suspect, who later died from his wounds. First aid was administered, and Richmond Rescue responded. Both officers were also taken to the emergency room per procedure. Cpl. Greenough was on administrative leave while the incident is being investigated, however he is expected to return to work within the next week.

1 Chief Buck talked about the incident as he could and noted that Richmond cruiser and body cam  
2 footage was held by the State Police. This was the first officer involved shooting in the history of the  
3 Richmond Police Department. There was additional discussion about mutual aid, training, and more.  
4 The VSP would conclude their investigation at some point. The Selectboard thanked Chief Buck for  
5 his explanation of the incident.

#### 6 7 FY2017 Audit – Rick Brigham, Sullivan Powers & Co.

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9 Rick Brigham is the head of the audit team for Richmond, working for Sullivan, Powers & Co. Mr.  
10 Brigham reviewed the financial statements and noted some highlights. It was noted that the town's net  
11 position increased, as did its unrestricted fund balance. The firm had given an unqualified opinion of  
12 the town's finances. There was a discussion of how much cash the town should be holding as  
13 unrestricted fund balance. Mr. Brigham said that 25% of the annual budget was about as much as  
14 should be held, and we were in that range. He noted that some of our policies needed updating, and he  
15 was communicating with Finance Director Connie Bona on those. One of those was a repeat  
16 recommendation to utilize a cash register for the Clerk's office cash receipts.

17  
18 Cara LaBounty said that the \$142,000 of General Fund surplus should be used to reduce the tax rate.  
19 This led to a discussion between the board members of reserve funds, fund balance and budgeting.  
20 The Selectboard requested that during the budget presentation for Town Meeting that fund balances  
21 and reserve funds for the past five or six years be shown.

22  
23 At the March 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, a discussion and response to the findings will be presented. The  
24 Selectboard thanked Mr. Brigham.

#### 25 26 Clean Water Funding Discussion with Senator Chris Pearson

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28 Senator Chris Pearson, of Chittenden County – representing Richmond, explained that he served on  
29 the Natural Resources and Energy Committee and spoke about the proposed water quality bill. This  
30 bill had gained attention for the funding mechanism of a statewide per-parcel fee, payable to the State  
31 of Vermont, to be allocated towards projects that improve water quality. While this was largely in  
32 response to Lake Champlain concerns, water quality was a statewide concern.

33  
34 The discussion largely focused on the sources of phosphorus in the Lake Champlain basin, and  
35 agricultural practices and difficulties in identifying ways to change. Sen. Pearson discussed some  
36 details on the per parcel fee, noting that regulations were necessary to implement this, but implied that  
37 getting legislation passed this session was not likely.

38  
39 There was some additional discussion. Sen. Pearson offered to come back again in the future to  
40 explain progress on this issue. The Selectboard thanked Sen. Pearson for his time.

#### 41 42 Conservation Commission Recommendations

#### 43 44 Huntington Gorge – Vermont River Conservancy and Richmond Land Trust

45  
46 Steve Libby from the Vermont River Conservancy and Lou Borie from the Richmond Land Trust were  
47 present to explain their application to the Conservation Reserve Fund for \$10,000 to acquire the  
48 Huntington Gorge. The Conservation Commission had recommended this application for approval by  
49 the Selectboard.

1 For the record, the property in question is known as the upper gorge where the waterfall is located.  
2 This is currently owned by Huntington River Gorge, LLC and the LLC is led by Gary Bressor. Gary  
3 Bressor led the private purchase of the property in 2008. The upper gorge is known for the many  
4 deaths that have occurred over the years, being noted on a prominent road sign. The Richmond Land  
5 Trust owns property downstream which is also known as part of the lower gorge, where numerous  
6 swimming holes are located, among them Triple Buckets. The lower gorge is not known to be as  
7 treacherous a place as the upper gorge.  
8

9 Mr. Libby explained that the Vermont River Conservancy would first acquire the gorge parcel from  
10 the current owner, Huntington River Gorge, LLC. The Conservancy would then place a conservation  
11 easement on the property, as would the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB). The  
12 property would then transfer to Richmond Land Trust.  
13

14 Mr. Borie explained that the Richmond Land Trust wasn't doing this to encourage unsafe use or more  
15 recreation at the upper gorge. There would be a management plan and increased signage. The area  
16 would be encouraged to be used as a scenic and cultural attraction and encourage responsible use.  
17

18 Mr. May said he was worried about a spike in traffic on Dugway Road and asked if this would  
19 increase the profile of the gorge. There was some discussion on this, and parking on Dugway Road  
20 that could get crowded in the Summer as people went swimming.  
21

22 Ian Bender said he didn't see much parking enforcement in the banned areas but it was always full and  
23 there was sometimes a safety risk for people on the road. Mr. Bender lived on Dugway Road and said  
24 people would sometimes park in his driveway but he allowed it as he could.  
25

26 Cara LaBounty did not support giving public funds to the gorge purchase. She wanted a town vote on  
27 this and other uses of the Conservation Reserve Fund, and requested that we make this contribution  
28 based on a vote.  
29

30 Bruce LaBounty said that you couldn't make this place safe, and don't give money towards this  
31 purchase.  
32

33 Patty Brushette fully supported the purchase and said it would be good for the town. Mr. LaBounty  
34 said his issue wasn't whether it was a good purchase or not but to not use taxpayer dollars.  
35

36 Mr. Hill noted that the full project cost was \$65,500 but \$20,000 for the land itself. Mr. Libby noted  
37 that the transaction was \$20,000 but there were site improvements to be made, a survey, and other  
38 items in the project budget.  
39

40 The Selectboard appeared ready to table the measure until the Conservation Commission Chair could  
41 be present. However, more discussion followed.  
42

43 Following this discussion, Mr. Ackerman offered a motion to approve the application for the use of  
44 \$10,000 from the Conservation Reserve Fund to the purchase of the Huntington Gorge by the Vermont  
45 River Conservancy and the Richmond Land Trust. Mr. Sander seconded the motion, and the motion  
46 carried 3-1 with Mr. May voting against.  
47

48 The Vermont Naturalist Program recommendation was deferred to the next meeting so that the  
49 Conservation Commission chair could further explain the application.  
50

## Telephone Analysis

Finance Director Connie Bona had been researching costs for both our current telephone provider, Waitsfield Champlain Valley Telecom, or moving to VOIP through Comcast. The basic analysis revealed that the town would save several thousand dollars by switching service, however, there were numerous technical questions still unanswered. The Comcast contract would be for two years, but could be renewed however the rate at that time is unknown.

Maureen Kangley spoke against going to Comcast. She said we could save that much in heating cost by closing wedged open doors. WCVT was an old, independent Vermont company that cared. Similarly, a pharmacy in Richmond closed up many years ago because people wanted to go to Williston. She urged the Selectboard to choose to keep WCVT.

Mr. Sander said he was sensitive to both tax dollars and local companies. He didn't feel this was a long-term commitment and we could switch back at some point if we didn't feel it was right.

Bruce LaBounty said that the costs seem high. He asked if this included cell phones, and it did not.

Mr. May asked if there was an RFP or just a side by side comparison. Ms. Bona said it was a side by side. Mr. May asked the board if a full RFP should be done.

There was additional discussion. Ultimately, Mr. May offered a motion to approve accepting the Comcast contract, and this was amended by Mr. Sander noting we need in writing that we could renew in 2 years at a similar rate and no additional installation charges. Mr. Ackerman seconded the motion. The motion carried 4-0.

## **3. Other Business**

### Warrant Timing

The Manager explained that in response to the comments from the previous meeting about warrants, he and the Finance Director have agreed to place copies of the warrant out prior to the meetings. The schedule for turning in bills and producing the warrant shouldn't change as the rules have been tightened up, reducing errors.

### **Approvals**

#### Approval of Minutes

Mr. Sander offered a motion to approve the minutes of February 5, 2018 and was seconded by Mr. May. The motion carried 4-0.

### **Reports from Selectboard and Town Manager**

The Manager noted the police report.

The Selectboard reviewed the Budget Status. As Peter Gosselin reported, salt and sand are almost expended for the season, with another couple of months before winter weather is over.

1 Pre-Town Meeting will be held at Camels Hump on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March. Presentations on the budget and  
2 the special public information sessions for the Police Building question and the Water Infrastructure  
3 bonds will be held.

4  
5 FEMA Hazard mitigation elevations will begin this year, mostly in the mobile home park. There are a  
6 couple of pending applications that we still have more work on, and we'll get to contacting those  
7 homeowners shortly to determine how to proceed.

8  
9 The Manager reported that he and Connie Bona prepared the refund for overpayment regarding the  
10 Cote appeal, including interest, for Mr. Cote – that refund is on the warrant. Ed Clodfelter will come  
11 in and speak with a couple board members first before we discuss this issue in public.

12  
13 Cara LaBounty noted she had asked not that NEMRC be removed as a contract appraiser, but that Lisa  
14 Truchon be removed as Richmond's assessor under NEMRC. She wanted the Selectboard to insist on  
15 that change. She spoke again of the Cote appeal evidence provided during the BCA appeal by Ms.  
16 Truchon and said that it was wrong. She noted the costs of the appeal and wanted a full accounting by  
17 the Selectboard.

#### 18 19 Approval of Warrants & Purchase Orders

20  
21 Warrants were reviewed and approved.

22  
23 Mr. Sander offered a motion to approve Purchase Order #3478 to Breadloaf Architects in the amount  
24 of \$29,633, and was seconded by Mr. Ackerman. The motion carried 4-0.

25  
26 Mr. Sander offered a motion to approve Purchase Order #3479 to Mount Mansfield Modified Union  
27 School District for quarterly tax payments in the amount of \$1,459,404.81 and was seconded by Mr.  
28 May. The motion carried 4-0.

#### 29 30 **4. Adjourn**

31 Motion by Mr. Ackerman to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 p.m. Seconded by Mr. May. So voted.