

Selectboard Minutes
10/18/2021

Members Present by Zoom: Bard Hill, David Sander

Members In-Person: Christine Werneke, June Heston, Jay Furr

Absent: none

Others Present In- Person: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Mary Houle, Jim Feinson, Jack Linn, and the meeting was recorded by MMCTV

Others Present by Zoom: Kathy Daub-Stearns, Admin.; Kendall Chamberlain, Water & Sewer Superintendent; Ravi Venkataraman, Planner; Linda Parent, Town Clerk; Connie Bona, Finance; Fred Duplessis, CPA, Sullivan & Powers; Laurie Dana, Rod West, Duncan M., Gretchen Paulsen, Judy Rosovsky, uere Steuer, Abby Bruzas (Cassella); Ian Bender, Connie van Eeghan, Madeleine Dougherty, Ann Naumann, Zoom User, Ryan's iphone (Cassells), Patty Brushett

Called to Order: 7:02 PM

Welcome by Christine

Public Comment:

1. Mary Houle said she wanted to have a discussion regarding her putting up a sign at Town Center saying she had asked five (5) times with no response and wanted the Selectboard to please tell her what she needed to do to have the same consideration as anyone else. Christine responded that Mary could put her request in writing adding that the Black Lives Matter sign was put up by the Selectboard using the "Government Speech doctrine" through a resolution that was renewed. Christine said the sign Mary was asking for would be different. Mary replied that the Selectboard could have let her know to put her request in writing for it to be considered.

I. Additions or Deletions to Agenda

1. Josh reported that item K not ready and would come back before the board when it was. Item K was deleted from the agenda.

II. Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

a) Reminder that applications due for appointment to the American Rescue Plan Act Funding (ARPA) Committee are due by Oct. 20

Christine reported:

- that through the American Rescue Act funding \$1.2 million dollars of ARPA money was coming to Richmond and a committee had been formed to provide the process and structure for spending the funds, she encouraged people in the community to join the committee
- that the committee will put a process together and make recommendations, but not decide how the funds are spent, Jay added that a scoring system would be put in place to help in deciding which suggestions would be funded
- that the time commitment would be significant beginning with the documentation needing to be read in order to understand what could and could not be done.
- that the Town has until 2024 to decide on how to use the funds and until 2026 to spend the money
- that the Town website had more information available

- that disbursements from the ARPA money could be made before 2024

b) Consideration of approval of a contract for the Town Manager

Christine reported:

- that Josh Arneson, the Town Manager has had a contract but that it was about to expire so contract review needed to be done
- that the contract was updated for another three (3) years

Discussion included:

- that Mary Houle thought \$78,000 was a lot of money. She asked why is this was happening mid-year with the new contract beginning in November, Jay noted the start date should be corrected to reflect "2021". Kendall said a consultant is looking at wages and asked if there was a provision in the contract that if the compensation was determined not to be adequate it could be adjusted, Christine said annual increases are provided for, June said there are increases allowed if approved by the Selectboard, Kendall replied a contract usually has to be broken, Jay thought having another bullet that allowed for increases could be done, Christine asked that the language be added, Jay responded with: the managers salary may be adjusted based on the 2021 compensation study and job description review. Mary Houle felt it should be for a specific time frame, and thought compensation studies have been done several times so suggesting there had not been any type of compensation adjustment was not accurate

Jay moved to approve the three (3) year contract with Josh Arneson for the position of Town Manager as amended by adding the correct effective date and clause related to the compensation review study, June seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine, voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

c) Consideration of approval of use of the Andrews Community Forest Fund to pay for expenses related to boundary painting and the gate in the Andrews Community Forest

Christine:

- these were expenses incurred by Preston Wright adding the Andrews Community Forest Committee had recommended he be reimbursed

June moved to approve the use of \$337.61 from the Andrews Community Forest Fund to pay for marking the forest boundary and for supplies related to a gate and to approve the warrant for these same expenses, David seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Christine noted that this was done as a separate Warrant.

d) Consideration of accepting the Grant in Aid funding

Christine reported:

- that the Board previously approved the application and now needs to approve the receipt of the grant that is used for roads

June moved to accept the Grant in Aid in the amount of \$20,200; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

e) Consideration of approving use of \$2,500 from the Conservation Reserve Fund for the Richmond Land Trust to use for an engineering study at Beeken Preserve

Christine reported:

- that there was a member present and introduced Jim Feinson

Jim Feinson reported:

- that there are two (2) projects that need an engineering study done. They would turn a temporary parking lot to a permanent parking lot and by create a new lot, close and rehabilitate the old lot. He said that to the east of the lot there is a trail where an eddy has been eroding near Cochran Rd.

- that how work will be funded would be a future discussion saying this was for the engineering study only.

Discussion included:

- that Judy Rosovsky said she supported the preliminary steps, and the Conversation Committee supported this as a good first step in solving the problems there

Bard moved to approve the use of up to \$2,500 in Conservation Reserve Funds by the Richmond Land Trust to cover the cost of an Engineering study to resolve parking and erosion issues at the Beeken Preserve. The funds must be used by 10/12/2024; June seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

f) Consideration of approving use of \$2,500 from the Conservation Reserve Fund for a wetland's delineation for Overrockers Park

Christine reported:

- that this was discussed as a request to the Rise VT Grant at the last regular meeting, Josh noted this is in addition to the Rise VT Grant

June moved to approve the use of up to \$2,500 in Conservation Reserve Funds to cover the cost of the wetlands Delineation for Overrockers Park. The funds must be used by 10/12/2024, Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, Christine, June, Jay, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

g) Consideration of approving use of \$1,000 from the Conservation Reserve Fund for a plant survey by the Lake Iroquois Association

Judy Rosovsky reported:

- that they had received a grant to get rid of the milfoil and the survey to show how the treatment worked may not take place until next year

Jack Linn reported:

- that the loss of native plants to invasives caused the need to use ProcellaCOR an Aquatic Herbicide

- that it had been fourteen (14) years since the last survey was done. The survey is to keep track of what grows in the lake both the good and bad.

- that there is a dramatic difference having used the ProcellaCOR - photos were shown of the difference from one year to the next

- that in order to keep invasives out boats have been cleaned

- that having the Town support has been appreciated

June moved to approve the use of up to \$1,000 in Conservation Reserve Funds to cover the cost of a plant survey by the Lake Iroquois Association. The funds must be used by 10/12/2024, Jay

seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, Christine, June, Jay, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

h) Discussion of audit and review of quarterly financials with representative from Sullivan and Powers

Fred Duplessis, CPA from Sullivan and Powers was available for questions.

Discussion included:

- that Josh let the Board know the audit report was not yet complete
- that June said the financials Connie provides drive her crazy because when looking at property tax revenue what is reported is what is budgeted, not received, but is listed as "Actual", she said Connie told her it was a NEMRC thing, Fred replied, that it was not, it is how the town chooses to report it. He said the idea of the report is to provide information to the Selectboard and the town is reporting the full receivable it is billed, then there are adjustments, that is true "accrual basis". Some towns only record what they get and have meaning they are on a "cash basis". What the board has to decide is what the most important information they want to have, and his firm could help Connie provide that. He told Connie she could show the revenue and the amount due, so it was possible to see what you expect to get in and eliminate the huge variance by booking the payable. June thought that would make sense by putting the information in on in the liability side too. She asked about having a balance sheet, he said yes, Connie said no, that she provides a spreadsheet, but that June wanted a report generated by the software. Connie described the report Josh displayed. Fred and Connie discussed the mechanics of making the adjustment June is looking for. Connie said the report would not show the information accurately. Fred said it would not show collections but would show what was billed, that Connie was right you can only see one, not both. Connie said her spreadsheet shows them where we are today, what was billed, what is still due. Fred said there are people that pay the full year so it can be deceptive. Cash Flow is a different thing. Fred said he would only want to see what the Town was receiving. Fred said if her spreadsheet was helpful to her, she should use it, but not share it.
- that June said it is hard to ask questions about an audit that was not available
- that Bard asked about the amounts to keep for the fund balances
- that Christine asked about implications and findings of the audit that could be used for budgeting, Fred said he writes three (3) letters, the firm think's everything is materially correct, a letter of compliance means it is an internal review and in there are any material weaknesses and what the town's response is, he said the Board should follow up on those quickly, the material weakness should be on the top of the agenda and then deficiencies, then lastly there is a letter of recommendations that can be accepted or rejected. In terms of the timing, he was reviewing a draft of the agenda that the town should have next week.
- that Mary Houle said when it comes to the review it is stamped, she asked to see a name, who was responsible, not just the firm in the signature area. She said for the cost, someone should be signing the reports with their name printed. If it was not possible, she should know now. Fred said they operate under standards that require the firm sign, no one person is responsible, the firm is responsible.

i) Review of FY22 first quarter financial reports

Fred Duplessis, CPA, from Sullivan and Powers said when the report was done the adjustment could be made and Connie would know when she first puts the numbers in then she would need to make an adjustment in March that would change it a little bit. Fred said education money should not show up in the Town's financials since it is not the town's money. Fred said it would be shown as a liability, Connie could hit the button and create a balance sheet. Connie said to be clear it would not change when each person pays, June said the report and the balance sheet would show what was paid at any given moment in time.

- that Connie asked if there was anything anyone wanted to see, Fred said he would like to see the budget status report and would want an explanation as to why there is a large discrepancy in the margins so the board can plan and if things are going to go over the budgeted amount the Selectboard needed to know. Christine said she finds it hard to look at a moment in time, she is used to seeing more information to see trends and finds it helpful to see the prior year and year to date actuals. June said the Water Department salaries are adjusted at the end of the year. Connie said she does not have the ability in NEMRC to print to two different accounts and so goes thru the general checking account and the Water Department reimburses the general account then at the end of the year she does the 30 (water) -70 (sewer) % split. Fred asked if the split was reflective of the percentages, he said it could be set up in the master file and it would happen every paycheck. Fred asked why she had another checking account for the Water Department, he said it was just more work. The accounting system will track the money, if the payroll is set up right there would not be a need to move money around. Connie asked about grants and federal funding, Fred said it would be ok. It would be a good way to save time, be effective and get done what needs to be done. Bard suggested this area of discussion move to the Water and Sewer Commission.

- that Fred stated governmental accounting is more complicated than for profit or non-profit accounting and that VLCT does a Selectboard module that may be helpful

- that Fred invited Connie to follow up with him, the Board thanked Fred and Connie.

j) Discussion of resolution to display the Black Lives Matter sign and flag

Christine reported:

- that Bonny Steuer, a representative of the Racial Equity Group, was there to speak to this item

Bonny Steuer reported:

- that it became clear that writing a new resolution was not what was needed, she said the Richmond Racial Equity group has been doing great work and the community needs more conversation around town business. There is a state-wide discussion being had by implementing a strong statement of welcome. Richmond Racial Equity asks that the declaration would include the town making changes in policies, she would like to come to the Selectboard with a budget request.

Discussion included:

- that Eveline Killian said Milton has developed a statement that includes welcoming of all people, established a police advisory committee, developed training programs, and examining policies, hiring policies and personnel guidelines and she said this was what the Racial Equity Group wanted for Richmond.

- that June said there was a day at the VLCT Town Fair she attended about inclusion and there was an effort to have towns have a formal declaration of equity and inclusion.

Having a committee formed that would research trainings not only for employees, and

they would review policies and make recommendations, she said there were a lot of great ideas that came out of the VLCT Town Fair. She thought there was more to do than putting a sign up.

- that Bard said the state had been working on this for about a year and he learned knowing what the intended outcome of trainings would be was important, he said the science of attitude change is an interesting field but what he found useful was discussions about how bias's work. As we think about the trainings and the outcomes we are looking for we need to be thoughtful about who is selected to do the training and who takes it. That some trainings are specific to specific groups. He said in hiring not looking to education or years of experience and instead looking at potential which would be more inclusive of disadvantaged groups. Jay asked if Milton had come up with a set of metrics to measure the outcome of their efforts, he said if Richmond did something similar to Milton, he would want to know what the expected outcome would be. June said the VLCT training stressed clarifying goals and creating a culture of respect surrounding inclusiveness and equity. Christine asked if VLCT had a template. Bonny said she had a template that had been used and shared her screen.

- that Ian Bender asked what the goals were for all the work. He asked why it was needed and if it could be something other than Black Lives Matter. Bonny said she would like to see a display that has that humanitarian message 365 days a year and it is difficult for her and the people that are represented by it that the town is putting it only 60 days. She thought it was unfortunate it has become a divisive issue instead of a humanitarian message, she said she was proud of our Selectboard that there would be a statement of support for our black community members. Ian said "Black Lives Matters" means different things to different people and things are happening that are related to the movement that are not good like defunding of the police. Ian said the things the Richmond Racial Equity group are working on are healthy but there were unintended consequences and that the Black Lives Matter movement had generated the problems. Bonny said having a declaration and good conversations, like this one, would be what was needed. Jay said we need to look at whether having the police keep the same role should be considered that there were other places our money should be going. He said he liked the resolution.

- that Zoom user identified herself as Kristy Safford, said she had heard Ian's remarks and Bonny's remarks, and as a community she thought we could do better than the Black Lives Matter movement which brings decisiveness, contention and animosity that is hard to get past. Finding other ways of making people feel welcome is what we should be doing. Christine said she had time to reflect on this and it was more of a human rights issue, and the Selectboard had wanted to recognize that moment in time, and give recognition to what was happening, she said it was a step to deciding what was needed for real change and finding a way to do that. Christine welcomed Bonny to come to the budget meetings and see how she might craft a request. Bonny said the Milton Town Manager said would speak to the Selectboard if wanted. Bard said as this was warned it should be brought back at another meeting. Jay said he thought we were ready to take the next step. Ian asked, if living in Richmond that this was not an inclusive town, Bonny said, everyone is racist, everyone is biased, she said she was part of the white majority and thought others would say differently. Connie van Eeghen, OCCC Camp, said members of OCCC camp have relayed stories of racially directed comments heard at Cumberland Farms saying they should go back to where they came from. She said she was also part of the Housing Committee and there are zoning issues that perpetuate the problem of affordable housing. Jay said Radiate put murals up that were accurate, Linda Parent received angry phone calls, he said pointing out facts infuriated people and maybe

they should be upset by them, Ian said some of the issue was that it was on the Town Center, not the art itself, Jay questioned their values. Christine said she appreciated having the conversation, seeking to understand was absolutely what was needed. In order to adopt a declaration, it would need to be on the agenda as a decision item, separate from that is the budget process being worked through. June asked who the group was going to be needed to be worked on, Christine added that understanding the matrix of what outcomes were being looked for was important and she thanked everyone.

k) Update from the Lake Iroquois Recreation District

Removed from the agenda but will be brought back when ready.

l) Review of communication plan for transition in operators of Solid Waste Transfer Station

Christine reported:

- that there was confusion about the transition to Casella and a FAQ sheet had been put together with guidance from both Casella and CSWD

Discussion:

- that the FAQ was reviewed and was available on the Town website
- that Ryan from Casella said there would be Front Porch Forum ads to help explain the transition, and in combination of the FAQ they would be answering any comments they received.
- that June said in June Casella would open, Ryan said CSWD would run it through the holiday even if some things were not available, then Casella will take over and by March they would have everything operating, after that they would begin taking the bulkier items like couches and fridges, then open the reuse area.
- that the FAQ would be a living document updated with information

m) Review of Richmond Rescue Quarterly Report

Christine reported:

- that she was pleased to have the quality rescue organization we have in Richmond
- that in her line of work it is clear that the state and nation have been overwhelmed by COVID

Jay encouraged people to see the actual numbers, that the service is first rate, and they have a tough job.

III. Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders

Minutes:

David moved to approve the Minutes of 10/4/2021 amended as noted; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, June, Jay, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Edits requested were adding to the "in person" attendees Jim Feinson and Mary Houle and on pg. 6 Mary indicated she did not say anything about the the Farmers Market, she asked about whether the community garden was open to the public now that they are receiving funding.

Discussion continued:

Ian Bender asked Jay if he could meet with him or Christine about the Racial Equity Group issues.

Purchase Orders: none

Invoices and warrants:

June moved to approve the warrants as presented; Bard seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Discussion included:

- that June asked about PO 4211, she wanted to know who made the changes as well as the ones on PO 4359, Josh replied, the first one needed to be signed by the Board and was done before it was signed, June wanted the changes initialed. Josh said on the second one, PO 4359, he did initial the changes.
- that on the invoices there were notations on a Detail Transaction Report that had \$5375 twice, Josh said it is a recurring monthly expense. The same would be true of the listing services and the Richmond Rescue. Bard said if there were better notations it would be easier to understand, he also wondered about having handwriting on the report, Josh said until it is paid it doesn't show up and the detail was added to the PO to keep the handwritten notations off the PO. June asked if Connie could do a year-to-date look, Josh said he would ask Connie, Connie said she has never found a way to do multiple years and would have to do what she does with the budget using a spreadsheet. Connie said she could do a status report, but it would not be giving good information, maybe a quarterly report. Christine said having a notation would be helpful.

IV. Discuss Items for Next Agenda

Iroquois District report

Parking advisory

United Way grant presentation

DEI resolution

ARPA committee appointments

Warning and Vote to expand the WS District

Andrews Forest Trails may be ready

Discussion included:

- that the Audit draft would be available next week and would be provided to Selectboard members then

V. Executive Session: Legal Matter

David moved to find that premature general public knowledge of attorney client communications between the Selectboard and Town Attorney as to matters for which legal advice is sought would clearly place the Town at a substantial disadvantage by disclosing privileged communications and waiving attorney-client privilege; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

David moved that we enter into executive session for the purpose of receiving legal advice and invite Town Manager Josh Arneson; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

The Board moved to a breakout room at 9:50 PM

June moved to exit Executive Session; David seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

VI. Adjourn

June moved to Adjourn; David seconded. Roll Call Vote: Jay, June, Bard, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed. Meeting ended at:10:16PM

CHAT

From MMCTV Erin to Everyone 07:16 PM

Could Christine's mic be pulled a bit closer?

From Jay Furr to Everyone 07:35 PM

<https://www.lakeiroquois.org/news/post/what-a-difference>

From Ann Naumann to Everyone 08:36 PM

oh We know!

From Madeleine Dougherty to Everyone 08:48 PM

I do not have a working microphone but would like to respond. "Black Lives Matter" does not have multiple meanings - it is a complete statement with a specific meaning laid out by the Black women who created the movement. If you claim that anti-racist work is good, then you wouldn't have any reason to disagree with policies that improve life for Black people. If that is a "leftist agenda" then fine by me. I want Black people to be safe and welcome in our town.

From bard to Everyone 09:06 PM

this is fairly powerful:<https://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice>

From Connie van Eeghen, she/her to Everyone 09:11 PM

Appreciate this way of recognizing our history. Thank you, Bard