

Selectboard Minutes
11/1/2021

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; Kendall Chamberlain, Water Sewer; Dennis Gile, Fire Chief; Gerald Levesque, Asst. Fire Chief; Mary Houle, David Villeneuve, Eric Wood, 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; Keith Osborne, Zoning; Kyle Kapitansky, Police Chief; Pete Gosselin, Highway; Jeff Forward, Rod West, Ian Bender, Martha Nye, Rebecca Starks, Patty Brushett, Lauck Parke, Connie Van Eeghen, Bonny Steuer, Allen Knowles, Sherry Gile, Brad Statler, Jana Brown, Waficfaour, Alexis Latham, Gabrielle, Lana Cohen, Annie's iPhone, Eveline Killian, Gretchen Paulsen, Stefani Hartsfield, Linda Donovan, 802-72-6127

Called to Order: 7:01 PM

Welcome by Christine

Public Comment:

1. Mary Houle stated that if an individual believes they can make a difference they can, she said she had made a difference over the years planting 3000 trees on her land, she made a difference by her volunteerism, she said she makes a difference without the need for a committee to be formed. She wanted the Selectboard to remember that an individual can make a difference without the need for the town to make contributions to a committee.

2. Mary Houle said the town water had an awful smell since the construction began and brought samples from before and after the construction for the Selectboard members to assess. She said she knew there had been complaints and the Water company says there is no problem, but she thought the water needed to be tested. Josh thought the smell was because of the use of a hose. Kendall said that once the line was operational the smell would go away. He said water is free for the users with temporary lines and they should run it to get fresh water.

I. Additions or Deletions to Agenda

Item E is not ready so was going to be deleted from the agenda.

Josh reported:

- that David Villeneuve, requester of access permit was present, Keith said the access permit crosses wetlands so it would need a waiver from the DRB and so this cannot move forward yet. David V. said he met with the road commissioner, had been to the Town Offices three times and thought it was ready to go, he said he wanted an access permit where the road is going to be, he said he had no access to his land on the Richmond side and that he was just asking for access for his land. He said every time he comes there was another problem. Christine said she was sorry but there was nothing she knew of that was opposing this but there were steps he was needing to go through, Keith said David V. was encroaching on wetlands and by law he needs DRB approval, Josh said if the Access Permit was approved, David V. would need to have DRB approval and there was no guarantee the

access could be in the same place so having the DRB approval first made more sense, Keith said if the Board was going to approve the Access Permit there would need to be wording about needing DRB approval before constructing the access. David V. said he met with state, had the permit to have the work done, he said he was not going to build a bridge at this moment, so he did not understand why when he had the state permit it was not enough. Mary Houle said stream alterations, are June to Oct 1 so she did not know if David V. was working in the stream, but he should know he was limited to those dates. Mr. V said the stream was 40' from where he wanted the access. Christine thought this should be considered now and asked Keith to provide wording for the motion contingency, Keith said: no development can happen without DRB approval of construction or development for access to and on parcel. Mr. V said this was confusing to him because he had been to the office so many times. Keith said it takes a variance process, then a zoning permit after that, it was two separate processes.

June moved to approve Access Permit 2021-018 for parcel ID GP0760 contingent upon DRB approval with no construction or development for access to and or on parcel without it; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, June, Jay, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

II. Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

a) Consideration of appointments to the American Rescue Plan Act Funding (ARPA) Committee

Christine reported:

- that there were five applicants being looked for with one of them being a business owner
- that there were two applicants and two additional emails had been received

Jay moved to appoint Molly Dugan, Rebecca Starks, Ellen Kane, Linda Donovan (Business owner) and Jeff Forward to one-year terms on the ARPA Committee; June seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, June, Jay, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Discussion included:

- that Rebecca Starks said she was interested in hearing from people on this topic and that was why she was interested in being on the committee
- that Jeff Forward said he sent an email expressing interest as well and thought he could be helpful on this committee
- that Bard noted the Board usually have a conversation with applicants before they are appointed. Christine said we have applications from the others, Rebecca and Jeff are here, she said she knew each of the people personally and was comfortable appointing them. Jeff Forward said he did not put a statement together because he was a know quantity, knew the board members and had done a lot of public service, he apologized for not doing a more thorough application.

b) Consideration of making an appointment to the Water and Sewer Commission

Christine reported:

- that this was a volunteer position that would fill June Heston's seat

Discussion included:

- that David said at the Water Sewer meeting the Commission had hoped Mr. Tucker would attend the Selectboard meeting to have a discussion with him. Bard, Jay, and David agreed. Bard thought being able to do some due diligence about who people are before appointing them was important. As to Mr. Tucker he was not as well known and thought having a chance to hear him speak would be helpful. June said we have someone stepping forward who has lived here 14 years and thought giving him a shot was a good idea. Christine did not know if this was different than other committees where the Board had moved forward without having an applicant present. Mary Houle said the Water Sewer Commission members serve at the Selectboard pleasure so if the Board was not satisfied with him, he could be removed. Martha Nye agreed with having new people on boards and committees and thought he was a great guy. Christine noted we welcome new people we just did not know him.

June moved to appoint Greg Tucker a one-year term on the Water and Sewer Commission to fill the remaining time on the seat reserved for customers of the Water and Sewer Department. Mr. Tucker will replace Selectboard Member June Heston, who has been temporarily filling the seat until a customer member could be found; Bard seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, June, Jay, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

c) Consideration of applying for Grant in Aid Equipment Grant

Josh reported:

- that this was a grant that we typically apply for
- that this was before the Board again, because of supply chain issue we could not get the equipment to fulfill the grant on time. More money because available so we are applying again.

June moved to approve the Letter of Intent to participate in the Grant In Aid program to fund 80% of the cost of a haybale shredder; Bard seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, June, Jay, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

d) Consideration of approval of road name for new road off Palmer Ln.

Christine reported:

- that because the Selectboard had recently done a survey on Palmer Lane the area was familiar, she said the map that showed a driveway that needs to have a name now that it serves more residences, but the map indicates the wrong name in the packet, the correct map was shown to be clear about what was being approved

June moved to approve the name of Owl's Nest Road for the road off-of Palmer Lane; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, June, Jay, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

e) Consideration of approval of Access Permit 2021-018 for Parcel ID GP0760

This was heard at the beginning of the meeting under Additions or Deletions to Agenda.

f) Consideration of adopting Declaration of Equity and Inclusion

Christine reported:

- that this was a follow up from the last meeting
- that the information was available online

Bonnie Steuer reported:

- that this is an initiative moving across VT that declares in a public statement of support and inclusiveness. She said after the declaration an equity committee may be formed that would look at policies and practices.
- that the declaration was displayed and reviewed

Discussion:

- that Eveline Killian said she met with the Town Manager in Milton who was willing to speak with the Selectboard if wanted

June moved to approve the Declaration of Inclusion for the Town of Richmond; Jay seconded.

A Friendly amendment was made to add the word equity:

June moved to approve the Declaration of Equity and Inclusion for the Town of Richmond; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, June, Jay, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Discussion continued:

June asked that Don Turner, the Milton Town Manager be brought in to discuss the process Milton undertook. Christine suggested Josh connect with him. Eveline Killian said she would help in any way.

g) Consideration of calling a Special Meeting to consider expansion of the Water and Sewer District

Josh reported:

- that the meeting was to discuss the expansion of the district.
- that this was the result of a few years of discussion
- that if the vote passed it would give the ability, but not the obligation, to expand the water and sewer lines and this was an important first step
- that the Warning was in the packet online

Discussion included:

- that Jay said at first, he was confused but for approval just the residents who live in the district and the area to be expanded into get to voice vote the decision and that just because the expansion gets passed it did not mean the expansion would take place
- that June said the warning says the expansion would be paid for by the users, but does not say grants could be used and we are actively looking for additional funding beyond the \$147,000 already approved for Phase 1
- that if there was new construction, there could be a larger tax base
- that Bard said there were people that supported the expansion for affordable housing possibilities
- that Patty Brushette said she would be hesitant to vote for the expansion if planning was not in place for the gateway and wanted there to be no retail there, she thought it should be multi-family residences and did not want a Dollar General in the gateway
- that Ian Bender said you have to be a user in the district to vote, Jay say it would also be the residents of the proposed expansion area

Jay moved to adopt the Resolution for Expansion of Water and Sewer District; David seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, June, Jay, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Jay moved to approve the warning for the special meeting of the users of the Town of Richmond Water and Sewer District to be held on December 7, 2021; June seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, June, Jay, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Discussion included:

- that a hybrid meeting is not allowed and because there is not a state of emergency Australian Ballot is not allowed either. A paper ballot for those present can be done and the Justices of the Peace and Linda Parent will be prepared for that, Linda said she was ready with the checklist.
- that Christine said she was concerned about people feeling they cannot attend because of not being able to socially distance. She asked if there was another way to do this and was uncomfortable endorsing the plan. Josh said at a Town Meeting it could be voted to change the way it is voted, June proposed to have that happen. Christine wanted the doors propped open and seating spaced 6' apart for safety. David thought if everyone that was able to vote came it would be less than 300, Linda said every registered voter is eligible to vote so if there is more than one registered voter per household, they all get to vote.
- that Jeff Forward said you are voting to expand the district and not spend any money. He asked if money was going to be spent would require another vote, Josh said yes.

h) Update on discussion with Fire Department regarding Fire Department Bylaws

Christine reported:

- that there has been a review and fire departments can be autonomous and ours is operating as both a department and an independent entity
- that the roles and responsibilities are being more defined

Josh reported:

- that it was through the process of updating the bylaws that the questions came up

Discussion included:

- that Christine proposed having a few members of the Board meet with Dennis Gile, saying Josh met with Dennis Gile, Gerald Levesque, and Sherry Gile to review the attorney's recommendations
- that Sherry Gile said the hurdle was that they do not want to be a full-fledged town department and are trying to figure out if they would be considered a town employee, there needs to be some clarification about employment, are firefighters, town employees or not was the big question. Sherry said it was preferred to continue to use Bylaws because the firefighters want to be as active as they can be in the decision-making process and like having a say about how the fire department is run at the same time, she said they do not want to violate Town policies either. Adam Wood said he agreed with Sherry Gile.
- that Christine thought having a Selectboard member or two involved in discussions then come back to the Board with additional information would be best. She and Jay will be the board members.

- that Kathy said insurance would be impacted if the Fire Department was not considered a volunteer department
- that Mary Houle said Don Turner, the Town Manager in Milton, might be able to help since he was Fire Chief there when they grew to the size they are now

i) Update on Town Staffing

Christine reported:

- that there were several reasons the board had been looking for updates on staffing and this would happen with the quarterly financial reports moving forward
- that on a national level there are staffing shortages with people moving from one place to another and noted the struggle the Highway Department had been having retaining and hiring qualified employees
- that the Board wished to have a good understanding as part of their role in Town management and operations

Josh reported:

- that he looked at departments where there were vacancies saying Highway has found one PT person to fill that vacancy on a temporary basis through the winter, Highway was also looking for a FT person who could fill one of the larger plowing routes, he said Pete had noted we may need to pay drivers more due to openings at other places of employment that are paying more and a shortage of qualified drivers. He and Pete had a scheduled meeting to review retainage of employees.
- that the Police Department was looking for one FT officer and that Chief Kapitansky was looking to promote Ben Herrick to Acting Sargent due to having one officer deployed and wanting the promotion to be fair between all the officers. He said there are applications in for the FT position and some of the candidates are fully qualified and some are not. The collective bargaining contract was almost finalized and should help with recruitment. Currently, there is one per diem officer while we are budgeted for three. Right now, they are harder to find due to officer's home agencies not allowing them to work in other departments.
- that Douglas Barnes, a long-time employee, had retired from the library, and had not been replaced yet, he said Rebecca was having difficulty replacing him. She did hire another person PT to fill in, but that person has a FT position in another library.

Christine reported:

- that Kathy Daub-Stearns was recently promoted to Town Manager's Assistant from Administrative Assistant which supports the Town Manager in a more meaningful way, she clarified that the position was not Assistant Town Manager. She congratulated Kathy and let everyone know this had been discussed with her beforehand. She said staff has a lot on their plates and deal with challenges and complexity that are extraordinary. She said the responsibility on Josh's plate keeps growing and required a learning curve. She said she has been going over these things with Josh and as a result had hired an owner's rep to help with the town center buildings. She said in the past budget meeting Keith's hours would be increased to help with the number of applications and work. She said the Selectboard needs to make sure there is not undo stress on town staff.

Discussion:

- that Kendall read a statement he had prepared, in that statement he provided information on his own employment, he went on to say he was publicly bringing to the attention of the Town Manager and the Selectboard the question of favoritism in regard to

the change of the Administration Assistant's position, title and compensation, he wanted confirm whether this was the action of the entire Board, he said favoritism benefits no one, was extremely detrimental to the entire organization, and affects individuals in the long run. He said he personally suffered material consequences as a result of favoritism in Richmond once and he had sworn he would never be silent about it again. He said there should be no compensation or job changes until after the wage study was completed. This he said was attributable to another public statement from the Board where it was suggested the Town Manager was not the person to make substantial changes to job descriptions and levels of compensation for employees due to a potential conflict of interest, a special consultant had been hired to impartially do so. Despite this the Town Manager and the Board has made an enormous change to one position that has the most personal benefit to the Town Manager. He felt that met the definition of preferential treatment and the change should have waited for the wage study to determine if the change was warranted just like all the other positions in town are waiting. He thought the Town Manager and Board may not be aware there is a staffing crisis across all departments, he said allowing other dedicated employees be underpaid in a job market that inundates them with offers was bad policy and very bad for moral. He said they had staff making \$15 an hour in Wastewater and \$18 an hour in Highway, he felt immediate increases were warranted to retain or hire replacements. He asked that the Board state publicly about why and how this one position overrides or mitigates his claim of bias. He asked to have an explanation why in a span of a little over 2 years a position that was almost eliminated of 20 hours with no benefits has gone to 30 hours with full benefits and is now receiving a substantial promotion of over \$5 an hour wage increase. He said this has happened over the same time period Richmond has lost a significant of its employees across all departments. He asked why this one position now and not all positions. He said there was no debate, Richmond needs to retain essential personnel, he said he was pleased that this one position has received more than \$30,000 in increase before the new raise, however, selecting only the position closest to the Town Manager and Selectboard for an additional \$10,000 increase in compensation during a wage job study was ill-timed, and raised the question of favoritism. Any further lucrative enhancements for this one position, especially now, appears to be blatant special treatment. He asked if there was no merit to his bipartisanship claim before thanking the Board, gathering his paperwork, and asking for any comments. Christine responded that she had been working with Josh on review for the position of Assistant to the Town Manager which was a position that had existed and had a salary component attached to it. It was determined that the position was needed, we looked at the person doing much of the work from within the Administrative Assistant role and decided that it was within the town policy to promote an existing staff member to a position that already existed. She said she did not believe that this was favoritism to Josh, she believed that the Assistant to the Town Manager serves the town, not a person, and serves the responsibility of what needs to happen to all members the town staff, not a person and if all members of the town staff do not wish to take that person's assistance that was on them. In addition, the wage and compensation study was inferred as a future wage increase, that is not guaranteed, the wage and compensation study is a study to do two things, look at job descriptions and make sure they are up to date, then take the job descriptions and compare them and decide if the appropriate wage is being paid for that job description according to the market. She said it may show salaries are in range, below range or over range and that is what the compensation report would provide. Then a decision about how to be in range and how soon and possibly where do we want to move above range knowing that there are unique challenges and those were decisions the Board would

make once they have that information. A timeframe would have to be developed for the implementation of any changes, would changes be retroactive to the time the study began, would it have to wait until the next budget period or someplace in between. She said all those things need to be discussed but the information needed to be in front of them before doing so. She said she thought there was zero merit to Kendall's claim of favoritism, unless he was saying Josh was showing favoritism to his town staff, all of them, being that we are trying to find the ability for everyone to be able to do their job effectively, she said this needed to be done as a team, but if he was concerned about various people getting something before others, that was not going to work and suggested it would have to be figured out and offered to have a one on one conversation with Kendall where it could be broken out, she said if there were concerns about what it is that you need, then they should have that conversation to address what the needs are, but not at the cost of holding somebody else's change up because that is what is best for the overall town staff. Kendall replied that if Christine felt the raise and that merit stands on its own then he would wait for the weigh in of public comment.

- that Mary Houle said at one point our current financial manager threatened to quit her job around the same time the former Town Manager was preparing to leave unless she got both a promotion and a raise, both were granted, and she was now a department head. Mary was curious about how this particular piece of information about the monetary increase Kathy was receiving got shared, she said she understood the advancement of the position. Mary then said she thought the financial manager, who is a department head, should be on salary, and noted she just put in for \$3000 of overtime to be put in the budget. She said we understand Josh's salary because we reviewed the contract, but what individuals that work in departments make was none of her business, and whoever chose to share that information needs to be held to account for that, she felt it was private information, the promotion was not but to share the amount of detail and to elicit such a huge response she felt needed to be looked at, she felt nobody should be able to screw around with anybody. She said that if the financial manager is a department head and asked if she was the one sharing information, she wanted to know and said if she needed to do a FOI she would, she felt it was unfair for that kind of information to be spread. She said that contracts that come before the Board is information that the public gets to see, she said when she was on the Selectboard before having a Town Manager the Board was allowed to see what each individual earned saying that is not public information now, the payroll at the end was but the details were not. Mary was concerned that the financial manager was not managing her time well and should be able to do her job without overtime. She then thanked the Board.

- that Bard thanked everyone for their comments saying it was clear this was a sensitive subject on several aspects, he thought compensation and reimbursement was a challenging subject. He thought the question of authority was a reasonable one and was thankful for the explanation of the Town Manager decision vs the Selectboard, he said it would need further discussion when the compensation review is available. He said Christine's explanation of the possible outcomes was accurate and that there are staffing challenges everywhere. He thanked town staff for staying the course and serving the interests of the towns citizens and recognized it was a challenging time. He asked everyone to be kind to each other and to have patience.

- that June responded to Mary's comment on the finance manager not being on salary and she thought it had to do with statute about who could be a salaried employee and who could not. She asked if it could be part of the compensation study. Christine said she thought it could be and would be part of that positions review.

- that Christine said it was very disconcerting to her to see a team that is as important to town governance as the town directors are and to see that there may be challenges within a department but also between each other and in trying to support the Town Manager she wanted to dig into that more and offered to have one on one conversations with anyone that wanted if they felt something was not being heard. She said there are challenges but there were ways to address them possibly with ARPA funds used as hazard pay to back reimburse town staff that never got to take the pandemic break because their positions were central to the running of the town. She felt there were things that could be done to take care of the staff, she wanted to be sure people were not to be working against each other in the sense that if something is needed and it should be asked for so that everyone is taken care of.

- that Jay said if he was the Administrative Assistant constantly given the work to do that was really Assistant to the Town Manager work and expected to put in the hours and above and beyond the Administrative Assistant job description and we are dumping that much work on a person the deserve the compensation and title, he did not think it was favoritism, it was reflecting reality. He said every position would be looked at, there were no guarantees, but we would have to see. He said this was a discussion we should not be afraid to have and at no time has Josh or Christine given an indication they were unwilling to discuss any topic.

- that Pete Gosselin said he had brought these issues up to Josh several times and he was well aware there are deficiencies in Highway, he said people could turn a blind eye to it but places were paying high rates to retain employees. He said he had two openings now and some young employees that know there are a lot of opportunities out there right now, and he was extremely concerned about retention. He did not believe that Highway employees are paid within the right scale, from his research he felt it was obvious, when Kathy's promotion was announced on Thursday it sent the message to himself and a lot of other employees that this was a case by case decision, it was not someone who was evaluating all their employees when they made the decision to promote one and he did not feel it sent a good message to all the other employees if one person gets something when he has discussed these deficiencies and not had any result from it, he told Christine he did not want to talk one on one he really wanted to talk to the whole Board about deficiencies and salaries and how to better serve the town, he reiterated his concern about retention. He asked the Board to understand the seriousness of this saying it was not just in Highway that it was in other departments too. Christine responded by asking Pete if he had positions that have job descriptions and pay rates assigned to those positions that he could promote a certain person to currently, Pete replied yes, the Assistant Foreman is doing more things than his job position calls for adding and himself, that he has for years run the Rec Department, Christine asked about the Assistant Foreman, asking if there was a job that exists in Highway that has a job description and paygrade that Pete could promote that Assistant Foreman to, Pete said it would have to be a paygrade change, Christine said what she was looking for was the existence of a different job, Pete said you can move anyone wherever you want on the grid and make adjustments, Christine replied that was the difference we can change compensation which is what the compensation study is about or we can change the job where the job has more responsibilities a different job title that come with the bigger pay, if you had a job within your department that you could fill that gave somebody more responsibility and more pay that is a promotion and that is irrespective of the compensation study. The compensation study would look at that open job, when the vendor gets here they are going to look at all the job descriptions whether filled or unfilled and do rankings and analysis of that job, what she was looking for she said was are there

jobs and job descriptions in Highway that have associated paygrades with them that we could say: Assistant Foreman, we are going to promote you to Foreman or Chief or Head Foreman of the Town of Richmond's Highway Department, could we do that now. Pete said not without Josh's authority, he said he brought the deficiencies to Josh and the salary numbers and did not feel he has received a great response. He said he discussed it in great detail with Josh again today and the message he felt being sent, he stopped and said he did not want to beat this to death. Christine told Pete the only way to speak to the whole Board was what he was doing since he did not want to speak with her one on one. He said he was telling them there are deficiencies in Highway salaries, deficiencies in the paygrades compared to where surrounding towns are saying he had done his own research on this to back up what he was saying, there are deficiencies in job descriptions, he said there is a lot here and it was not something that we can talk about in 5 minutes and solve. This has not been solved. Christine said she was trying to parse out the statements he had made which seemed to be, we let one person cut the line and this was a very different process that was taken. The position, the Assistant to the Town Manager, would be evaluated in the compensation study as would the Administrative Assistant that exists on the books as a position that could be filled. The job description for that title will get reviewed and a rank or paygrade will be assigned to that and we will look at the paygrade that goes with the skillset and then the pay that we are saying is appropriate for that grade, she said we did not change any of those things in this process, an existing job description and paygrade with an existing salary tied to the paygrade, she asked Pete if there was an existing job, paygrade and salary that he could promote one of his staff into, if that was the case she said she did not see a reason why we could not do that ahead of the compensation study because it was different. Pete said he would like to do that for all the employees in his department. Linda Donovan responded "amen" saying the whole paygrade, pay grid is out, there is no cap anymore, she said her employees are treated with respect, like family and equally. She commended Pete and Kendall for standing up and saying we have had enough, she went on to say what was going to happen was there will not be any employees at the town, they are going to walk. Christine responded that she was glad Linda D. was able to make those decisions as a business owner, as the town we are spending the taxpayer's dollars and so there has to be a structure around it. Linda D. said they were not spending taxpayer dollars everybody's dollars were being spent saying every penny that goes up on an item in the store means it is costing every townsperson and anybody else coming through the town. She said across the US this is happening, it was happening everywhere. Our townspeople that are going out there and driving the trucks and fixing the roads and this and that everybody is suffering right now with all of this she said they were going to take the taxpayers money to make a study instead of just paying the employees, she wanted to take the money from the study to take care of the employees. David responded saying if he was not mistaken Linda D. had said that the Selectboard was elitist and pricing people out of town due to their financial decisions, so now what she was saying we are not treating our employees well and not paying them well. Christine said there were two separate things going one, first she wanted to be certain there was clarity that there is not favoritism which is where this conversation started was with a claim of favoritism. She said this was not favoritism, it was a decision by management to be sure we are staffed appropriately and get the work done of town governance. Second, there is a process that is coming up that is separate from the ongoing HR management of our town and being able to take care of staff through normal routine changes. If there are changes that needed to be made she did not see any reason why they could not be put on the table and have discussions about them. It did not change or impact the timing or

process of the compensation study. If the town has somebody that is doing a job that is higher or doing work that is a different job title, she felt was different than scenario. Then there is the work that needs to be done with the compensation study that she believed was a good decision, the money was available and having a third party do the work made sense since there would be no bias. She said she agreed there were better ways to take care of the staff and that the Selectboard was interested in doing. She said they were holding to a process that was transparent to the town and followed best practice and industry data analysis so the right investment would be made in the staff. She thought there could be creative ways to attract employees with incentives for education and other types of things. She said the Board was also looking at the ability to live and work in Richmond saying many of the people that work in Richmond cannot afford to live in Richmond and that weighs heavily on all of them, and they wanted to try and fix. She said there was no dispute that the town needed to take care of the staff. She said she did want to dispute the claim of favoritism or the claim that somebody was treated differently, and other people are not getting the same treatment, get that straightened out then move forward with the process that has been put in place for compensation and salary, then make decisions about how to invest in our staff going forward.

- that Jay asked what the timeframe for when the study would take place and reach those conclusions, Josh said he was meeting with the vendor on Thursday, and it would be a three-to-four-month process before the data would be back. Jay responded that he thought using the ARPA money to provide back hazard pay. He said the pandemic is not over even if there is no state of emergency and he hoped the compensation study showed that employees could be paid more because without it there would be no justification to the taxpayers to just give people raises. He asked that people be patient a few months.

- that Mary Houle said you cannot just hand out a bucket of money, that the research needed to be done before you build so you do not need to tear it down and rebuild and the study would provide that information. She said if there are job changes and changes in job descriptions, she said it was the responsibility of each department head to bring the changes to the Town Manager to bring them to the Selectboard to review and approve the change. She said affordable housing was mentioned and that means looking at the zoning regulations with the Planning Commission sharpening their pencils. Mary H. said people talk about equity and more housing at all levels would create more taxes that would cover the financial stresses for town property owners.

- that Rod West said he thought two different things going on saying the duties on Josh's shoulders are too much so he was happy to have Kathy take on more of that, he said he was confused because he could not recall there ever being a Town Manager's Assistant in the past so he thought Pete and Kendall might be looking at this as if it were a new position created out of thin air and while it may have been on paper he did not think anyone had ever filled the position before. He thought Pete and Kendall were saying they are in crisis, they do not know if they are going to be able to fulfill the missions of their department in the near future and that was why they were putting in on the line right here, right now. He encouraged taking some of the town reserves and giving all employees a 5% increase right away to keep the roads plowed. He said the State of VT just raised their starting wage to \$20 per hour for plow drivers because of the shortage.

- that Linda Donovan said she agreed with Rod West, everyone is just trying to get by. She said the town has some pretty unhappy people and she did not know all the logistics and was attending to see

- that Chief Kapitansky said he wanted to point to something procedurally going back to Kendall's statement, saying if the Board is going to consider whether the Assistant to

the Town Manager position was done appropriately or not, he thought the Board should look at the Personnel Guidelines, specifically section 4 under recruitment, he believed 4B and 4D would apply in this situation. Josh responded that the Assistant to the Town Manager position existed when he was hired and there had been someone filling that position before that person. The person there when he started resigned about two months into his time in Richmond. At the time he spoke with some other town staff to see what the best way to move forward was. There was a town planner at the time that wanted to pick up some extra work so the decision was made to downgrade the position and title to Administrative Assistant whose duties would not be high level more administrative, like making copies and stuffing envelopes, things like that. We hired Kathy for that, the Town Planner's hours were increased from 30 to 35 to make sure there was enough time for her to do what she needed to do, that town planner resigned, and a new town planner was hired. It was then he said that we started giving more and different duties to Kathy. Josh added that he was only into his position about six months when he made the decision to downgrade the position and looking back it was probably naïve because as he grew in the position he began to see the amount of work and level of detail that was needed and so the amount and level of work given to Kathy increased and it became apparent that the duties she was performing were that of Assistant to the Town Manager. Christine said in response to Chief Kapitansky's question this was thoroughly reviewed with VLCT PACIF and was confirmed that it was within the role of the Town Manager and the Town policies that there was not a need to bring an operational decision before the Selectboard to approve a promotion of a person to an existing job. She said the conversation started this summer and it had been months spent going through the process to make sure that this made sense. She thought it was early summer this process began to support Josh.

- that Bard appreciated having people express a variety of opinions saying this has uncovered some strong opinions and feelings. Bard thought having some one-time bonus' for retention and recruitment. He wasn't certain it was a great idea but it was an idea and wanted to take the idea off-line with the possibility of revisiting it next week at the budget meeting.

- that David wanted to recognize what Linda D. said in that it was not just a Richmond problem, and there are staffing problems everywhere and we do not know how long this will last. He said as a Board they do sincerely appreciate all the efforts the town staff has made and apologized if that recognition isn't recognized. He wanted everyone to have patience and know they are aware of the problems, and he appreciated the open dialog.

- that Jay asked about the legal framework for one-time bonus', he wanted to know if that was something that had been done before. Josh said we did it for the police at one time. Jay thought something should be done before the study was completed. He said he would support doing something, Christine said the framework needed to be put together and come up with an approach that was founded in logic, reason, or formula so it has some intention behind it. She said the bonus' would not solve some of the problems with vacancies and recruiting into vacancies. She thought there could be some ways to change things that could be helpful.

j) Update on Rt. 2 repaving project

Christine reported:

- that a response has been received that outlined what the state was agreeing to do related to the Route 2 project and she was unsure of the stormwater portion of it related to noncompliant water connections.

Discussion included:

- Josh said that Pete was happy with the state's stormwater response, paving, lights, and 5' shoulders where they can be provided, the sidewalks are not going to happen he said. As far as the noncompliant water connections are concerned Pete felt they could be addressed while Route 2 was dug up. Christine said their letter says they are on track for the project.
- that following up with Kendall would be done concerning the noncompliant water connections
- that there was consensus of the board members to "green light" the project and continue discussions with the state. Bard said continuing planning for the secondary projects should happen

k) Update on National Opioid Settlement

Josh reported:

- that there are two separate settlements, one that pays out over 18 years and another that pays out over 10 years. Between the two the amount Richmond would receive would probably be about \$30,000.
- that after reviewing the State's Attorney's website there does not appear to be a reason to not opt in
- that when the information comes in he would be back before the Board for approval
- that similar to the ARPA money it will come with some guidelines

Discussion included:

- that Christine asked Chief Kapitansky whether they carry Narcon, he said yes. Linda Donovan said they carry it also. She noted there are needle drop offs available also.
- that Kyle said the needle drop box at Volunteers Green was picked up by Rescue because of some problem. He said Stefani Hartsfield has been active with the opioid problem, and she could be helpful with use of the money

l) Update on insurance proposals for Town property, liability, and workers compensation insurance

Josh reported:

- that the Town went out to bid in 2019 and received one bid and some money was saved. Last year we tried again but was not able to get last minute information requested to Travelers for them to bid. This year the process started in February, we looked at every item in buildings, created contents list, and got the information put together. Josh thanked all Town staff for the effort.
- that last week was the bid opening
- that Kathy was creating a spreadsheet to compare the submittals
- that Josh asked for one or two Board members to be part of the review, June and Jay volunteered

III. Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders

Minutes:

June moved to approve the Minutes of 10/12/2021; David seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, June, Jay, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

David moved to approve the Minutes of 10/18/2021 amended as noted; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, June, Jay, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Amendment: Others present in the meeting Bonnie Steure name correction

Purchase Orders:

June moved to approve PO #4216 to Cargill Salt company for salt in the amount not to exceed \$55,042; David seconded. Roll call vote: Jay, David, June, Bard, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

June moved to approve PO #4217 to American Rock Salt for salt in the amount not to exceed \$39936; David seconded. Roll call vote: Jay, David, June, Bard, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Discussion:

Josh reported that for salt vendors the Town has to pre-commit so he usually contracts with more than one company to ensure we have supply when we need it. Pete said he cannot predict what will happen but wanted to be certain he would have salt available. Pete said he filled the shed at the end of last year that will last about 2 weeks maybe a little more. David gave Pete a shout out for taking such good care of our roads, he said with drivers down and salt supply restricted he wanted to thank him.

Invoices and warrants:

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

Discussion included:

- that June said having the balance of the PO available on the bottom was helpful and asked if all POs could be done that way in the future
- that Jay asked about the receipt for Gatorade and granola bars, Josh said it was for the firetruck when they are out on calls
- that Jay asked about utility bills having identical amounts, Josh said he double checked the usage, and it was just one of those things.
- that June asked what PO 4168 Apex Consulting was for, Josh provided the original.
- that June was going to follow up with Connie for clarification on a few things.

IV. Discuss Items for Next Agenda

Report on wellbeing grant and initiative – Josh said it could be December

Report back on fire

Report back on insurance

ARPA

Exploring one time bonus for employees – Josh will check with the town attorney for the legal framework and will provide the Board with the formula that was used the last time, Pete said getting salaries competitive was more important that he said if we lose more guys it's going to be a problem. Christine said last year one of the things we worried about was our guys getting sick. We had on the website red, green, yellow, she suggested using the same type of notification. She

said we also had an agreement with other towns for back up and wondered if there was anything we learned that we could use now. Pete said there was cooperation between town's but the level of service would be down, he said nearby towns are all short staffed but each town was going to want their own towns done first.

V. Executive Session: Legal Matter

Jay moved to find that premature general public knowledge of the labor relations negotiations with the New England Police Benevolent Association Local 415 would cause the Town or Person to suffer a substantial disadvantage; June seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Jay moved that we enter into executive session to discuss the labor relations negotiations with the New England Police Benevolent Association Local 415 under the provision of 1 VSA 313(a)(1) and invite Town Manager Josh Arneson; June seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

The Board moved to a breakout room at 10:45 PM

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

VI. Adjourn

Jay moved to Adjourn; June seconded. Roll Call Vote: Jay, June, Bard, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed. Meeting ended at: 11:11 PM

CHAT

- 01:05:46 Patty Brushett: This sounds like an important step for our community. I support this wholeheartedly!
- 01:06:31 Connie van Eeghen, she/her: This is an important start to work on understanding how our community can become more inclusive.
- 01:08:06 Jana Brown: Thank you select board members and to Bonny for presenting this statement on behalf of Richmond Racial Equity!
- 01:08:18 Rebecca Starks: Ditto, thank you!
- 01:08:48 Stefani Hartsfield (She/Her): Thank you selectboard and RRE!
- 01:09:56 Bonny Steuer (she/her): Thank you Selectboard for your enthusiastic support!
- 01:10:16 EvelineKillian: thanks you to the selectboard!
- 01:16:52 Allen Knowles: Other considerations aside, this is an important public health initiative.
- 01:18:39 waficfaour: Thank you members of Richmonds select board
- 02:47:10 Rod West: Josh, Thank you for that clarification. That helps.
- 03:03:24 Rod West: Has there been progress with the 6' shoulders on West Main St.?