

**Town of Richmond ARPA Committee
Minutes for the meeting of December 8, 2021
Town Center Meeting Room and via Zoom**

Members Present: Josh Arneson, June Heston, Molly Dugan, Connie Bona, Rebecca Starks, Jay Furr, Linda Donovan, Jeff Forward

Members Absent: Ellen Kane

Others Present: Katie Buckley

Call or Order: 3:30pm

Welcome by Josh

Discussion of strategy for community outreach

Discussion with Katie Buckley from Vermont League of Cities and Towns.

Katie Presented the following information regarding ARPA Funds:

- Reviewed what ARPA funding is and amounts that Vermont and municipalities are receiving
- Country allocations of ARPA funding are going directly to Municipalities
- Richmond's allocation is \$1,231,427.80
- Funds must be obligated by Dec. 31, 2024 and spent by Dec. 31, 2026
- Follow the rules and be prudent with expenditures
- Reviewed the seven categories and 66 expenditure categories that apply to the APRPA funding
- Reviewed that the funds cannot be used as non-federal match, pension funds, infrastructure not addressed in ARPA or rainy day funds
- You can pool funds with neighbor municipalities or transfer to non-profit organizations
- Encourage towns to be patient and think bigger for projects
- Reporting is due April 30 each year directly to treasury in their online portal
- Reviewed reporting guidance update regarding granting to organizations
- Reviewed community engagement examples from other communities
 - Jericho has set up a robust webpage for collecting feedback
- Water and wastewater are big discussion items on ARPA funds throughout the state
- There is a tracker on the VLCT site that shows projects that are being funded nationwide. This could be a good guide as we evaluate projects.
- Katie is here as a resource to help municipalities demystify the funding. She is available for follow up questions anytime from Richmond.

June: Can we have access to the list of eligible project categories as a reference for the public?

Katie: All towns are doing things differently. Most towns are just gathering information and engaging the public. Few towns have spent money yet. You can use any of our resources on your ARPA page for the community.

Jeff: Thanked Katie for giving him confidence that we can get through this project. Why did Jericho close their survey so soon?

Katie: I don't know. Each town is doing things differently. You can do what is right for Richmond.

Linda: I heard they closed it because they were getting too much feedback and wanted to pause until they know more about the funding.

Katie: Regina from CCRPC may have more information on Jericho. Remember there is no reason to rush to spend. Take time to strategize and get it right.

Jay: Can we use the current website or wait for the new website?

Josh: We should put it up when we are ready and change to the new website when it is ready.

Jay: I like to keep as much info on our site as possible and limit 3rd party links to the critical information.

Katie: The category page is on the VLCT website.

Jay: I would like to figure out if extending the water and sewer line is covered. I have seen conflicting information.

Jeff: I would like to wait to see how the infrastructure money pans out.

Katie: You can combine the infrastructure money with the ARPA money. It generally follows the Revolving Loan Fund rules. There is a webinar tomorrow about the infrastructure bill tomorrow and the recording will be on our website. I can work with you to look for resources for funding water and sewer projects.

Jeff: Didn't you say we could not use it as match?

Katie: You would need other capital as the match and use ARPA funding as part of the project that is not match. The ARPA money uses the EPA rules and not the State CWSRF rules.

Jeff: How long will this committee run?

Katie: If funds have to be obligated by 2024, then 2024 may be the end of the Committee.

Jay: We could largely copy Jericho's website.

Katie: I can be a resource to ask if a project is eligible. I will ask questions to get more details about the project to see if a project may be eligible.

Connie: When we pick a project and we believe it is covered does it get approved before the project is done?

Katie: No. You need to do due diligence on the front end to try to avoid claw back. You need to make the best decision you can based on the information that you have. There is a lot of guidance existing to allow you to try to find projects that will comply.

Molly: I am not that worried about claw back because we will do our due diligence with the guidance that is available. This is set up for success.

Katie: If you have used federal money before then you have already gone through this process and this will be easier than most federal programs. I am happy to work with you on determining eligibility for projects. You need to look at your project through the lens of ARPA. Think about how the project addresses COVID.

Jeff: One of the items on our plate in Town is to renovate the Town Center building. Ventilation is one of the needs. I am surprised that ADA accessibility is not part of this for a building because equity is part of the funding?

Katie: ADA should be done regardless of COVID. Infrastructure is different because it is specifically named in the funding guidance.

Jeff: Propose we focus on committee organization and outreach and table the project ideas for now.

Jay: I would like to focus on a scoring system.

Linda: Reach out to Regina to see why Jericho closed the survey.

Josh: I will talk with the Jericho Town Administrator.

June: I think we need to create a strategy and timeline before we start to gather community outreach. I would also like to try to hire someone to help us see all the details through in trying to help us organize the details.

Connie: I would still need to have the details. I think we don't need to hire anyone because I think I can absorb this.

June: I think we should discuss a contractor or staff person.

Molly: I would like to see what kind of staffing we need. It seems we may need a staff member for the meeting. I don't know what staffing we have at the Town level to help staff.

June: Yes, this person would help us organize the meeting.

Molly: I feel like this is a Town responsibility and Josh and Connie will already be doing that.

June: They would be doing administrative items. There are a couple of consulting firms that will help with this.

Josh: Let's add this to the next agenda. June, please bring information about what consultants can do.

Connie: I talked with NEMRC and they have not heard about any towns hiring anyone to help. Maybe the consultant could help assume some liability of deciding on projects.

June: I know there will be a lot of reporting and I don't think we can ask Connie to add that to their plate.

Linda: Let's ask Jericho what they are doing.

Jeff: Could be part of the Assistant to the Town Manager's role.

Discussion of organization of Committee and regular meeting date

Chair will be determined at next meeting.

Clerk will be Josh Arneson

Regular meeting date and time: Second Wednesday at 4pm.

Next Agenda:

- Discuss staffing needs for Committee and funding management
- Discuss timeline and strategy for public outreach
- Discuss scoring criteria for project evaluations