

**Town of Richmond ARPA Committee
Minutes for the meeting of May 25, 2022**

Members Present: Cara LaBounty, Connie Bona, Jay Furr, Jeff Forward, Linda Donovan, Molly Dugan, Rebecca Starks

Members Absent: Josh Arneson, Sacha Mailloux

Others Present: Duncan Wardwell, Assistant to the Town Manager, Kendall Chamberlin, Water and Wastewater Superintendent

Call or Order: 4:00pm

Welcome by Furr

Public Comment: None

Additions or Deletions to Agenda:

Forward: I talked with Marcia at the Food Shelf and we had a good conversation. She would be a good resource to help people who are in need.

Furr: I would like to welcome Cara.

LaBounty: I wanted to be involved in the process at the beginning instead of the end. I want to lend a helping hand rather than hinder the process.

Furr: You have a great analytical mind.

LaBounty: I come with a Non-profit perspective that served youth from ages 10-18. I provide a Non-profit and a fiscal responsible lens.

Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

Review and discussion of draft of survey

Starks: Do we remove questions that might present all possible suggestions even if for large municipalities?

LaBounty: Does the survey get ideas from the community? I like the ideas of what you are asking. I feel that the survey is too broad when we need to prioritize. I think the first question can be eliminated as it has impacted everyone in some way. How do we spend to help the community with the limited funds? My concern is asking a question when we already know the answer. I thought they were too invasive.

Starks: We wanted some questions to make sure we reached out to groups that might not have been representative.

LaBounty: I question the data we are collecting. The dataset is public record. I am concerned.

Starks: Is Question #1 the primary one that does not fit the criteria?

Bona: Question #1 was about the need out there. What groups are available to help funding certain people who respond to the survey? We can send them into the right direction. If we get a bunch of people who cannot pay utility bills, then we can look into certain programs. If we know the problem exists, then we can do something about it.

LaBounty: I think the All Together Now VT group is a community well-being programs that helps connect people to resources. The assumption is we can help them based on the question.

Donavon: Anybody can call 2-1-1 to find those resources as well (<https://www.211.org/>). I don't this money is to help pay mortgage or bills. All those bullet points will keep people from completing the survey.

Furr: We will not know how the survey is or is not representative. If we see a bunch of people asking us to spend on food that might help us understand the situation.

Starks: Question #1 was not originally part of the survey.

LaBounty: I want to do some research on the non-profits that serve our local community. They might have a better handle than asking individuals. If we have 10 non-profits and 4 of them are in need, then they can help us prioritize that budget.

Bona: The purpose of the survey is to reach to all of Richmond residents to see what they think they need.

LaBounty: I am not going to pay someone's mortgage or bills until we see financial documents.

Bona: I do not have the capacity to manage loans for mortgages. The Selectboard does not want us to make decisions but to find out what the people of Richmond want. I do not think it is appropriate to just look at the non-profits.

LaBounty: We should filter our dataset to include individuals as well as non-profit organizations.

Bona: Maybe we provide questions about business, non-profit, or individual. We have to be careful about making the decisions about the community.

Starks: We keep getting stuck on this survey. We modeled this off of a Jericho survey suggested by Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT).

LaBounty: Maybe this survey comes after public comment during a public forum.

Bona: We do not want to filter and lead our data.

Furr: Do we strike the first question?

Forward: The Selectboard formed this group to investigate how we can spend this money. One is on needs, and one is on wants. What do people need now due to COVID? Are we soliciting information or are we addressing needs? We can also help some other organizations. I think we can do the survey and the forums or hearings. It will be subjective data.

Furr: We should not overlook good ideas for how to spend this money. It is unscientific but if we see some people orbiting around a particular need that will influence our scoring. A scoring system could take into account the number of people for different issues. I would like to get the ball rolling. I like the different examples to show people what is in the ballpark.

Bona: I would like to tweak the first question and delete #2 & #3.

Forward: Childcare is a big issue, but this committee is not going to solve that problem. The bullets in #1 looks like a laundry list of things we could spend on organizations like the Food Shelf. I don't see how we could support health care expenditures.

Donovan: There are many programs not specific to our Town that will help in those situations. Water & Sewer does not do anything for a lot of us in Richmond. We have two buildings that need support that would benefit everyone.

Starks: I think we are still trying to decide this ourselves.

LaBounty: Start with the forums first. Hear from the community about all of their ideas from forums and then build your survey. Start with the community's voice first.

Furr: We have a possible fund for Town Center renovation with Senator Sander's earmark. Which came first, the focus group or the survey? I think we need to promote ARPA and illustrate some ways to attend these focus groups. We can hand out surveys before focus groups.

LaBounty: How about they just send their recommendations? We do not need the survey first.

Starks: We can use the money almost any way we want and we haven't adjusted to the new rule.

Furr: Can we show hands in favor of striking the first question? Two hands in favor of keeping, four hands in favor of deleting the first question? Should we hold focus groups first and then develop the survey? The group would like to do the focus groups first.

Forward: Let's table the survey and talk about the infographic.

Review and discussion of infographic

Forward: It is simple, and it tells who we are. This is the basic question we want to ask people.

Furr: We should add dates, about when we are getting input, when is money allocated, when is money spent. I would add 2022-2023 under Community Input and other dates under ARPA Committee Review.

Dugan: I think we should spell out what ARPA means.

Furr: We could also have a URL and QR code.

LaBounty: Are you just looking for Richmond residents and business input? You could ask non-profits from other Towns that serve Richmond. Or we might bundle with other Towns. I think this graphic is perfect for our focus groups.

Furr: I think we need to define what ARPA is. I would like to put somewhere in here to revive Richmond, recover from COVID.

LaBounty: Maybe we use the VLCT bullet points.

Dugan: I think if we add any more letters on the graphic, it is too busy. We can explain the other stuff in a link or forum for other information.

Forward: Maybe we can put on dates. It can fit in the line.

Furr: It should read “projects” below the blue ARPA Committee Review. Money must be decided by X spent by Y.

Dugan: Project to me is a capital project. Do we use initiatives? I think we can keep it more general.

LaBounty: How about Work Begins?

Discussion of timeline, statistics, groups to reach out to for feedback

Furr: When do we start the timeline for setting up focus groups? Are we thinking June? September? We want to reach out to school kids, senior centers, and non-profit businesses. The two biggest questions are where and with whom do we want to hold these focus groups? Can we have one at different locations in Town. For next meeting, come with a list for constituencies and locations and timeline suggestions.

Forward: I think we can do something in the summer.

Donavon: I think we have to do something in the summer and in the fall due to kids, weddings, etc.

Furr: Are there any groups we are forgetting?

Forward: In regards to statistics, the Housing Committee conducted a housing study and the appendix has a lot of demographic data. I recommend looking at the Richmond Housing Report: http://www.richmondvt.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Richmond_Housing_2022.pdf

Furr: I appreciate everyone’s feedback.

Forward: I agree. We have built this survey for so long and it has developed good conversation.

Next meeting

ARPA meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday at 4-5 pm.

Next meeting on June 8th

Adjourn at 5:00 pm