Town of Richmond Selectboard Meeting Minutes of May 2, 2022

Members Present: Bard Hill, David Sander, Jay Furr, Jeff Forward, June Heston

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Duncan Wardwell, Assistant to the Town Manager; Connie Bona, Finance Director; Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner; Kyle Kapitanski, Police Chief; Pete Gosselin, Highway Foreman; Kendall Chamberlin, Water and Wastewater Superintendent

Others Present: Meeting was recorded by MMCTV, Alise Certa, Brandy Sexton, Connie, Connie Van Eeghen, Debbie, Erin Wagg, Glenn Murray, Jason Barnard, Jen Holliday, Joseph McLean, Judy Rosovsky, Lauck Parke, Martha Nye, Mary Houle, Michele Morris, Patty Brushett, Rachel Skaggs, Raymond Wilson, Rod West, Sarah Reeves, Virginia Clarke

Call to Order: 7:00pm

Welcome by: Heston

Public Comment:

Houle: I am not coming back tonight after Executive Sessions. I am hearing reports about vandals ripping out copper wire from charging stations.

Forward: I have not heard that about our local charging stations.

Houle: Also, I suspect that three mailboxes were intentionally beheaded in last snowstorm. Was it vandalism or snowplows that take out mailboxes?

Heston: If there are reports of vandalism then it should be reported.

Forward: The plow took out my mailbox without any ill intent as it was a difficult snow.

Additions or Deletions to Agenda

Arneson: Item f) will be moved to next meeting.

Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

Executive Session: Pending litigation related to Williams Hill Rd.

Forward moved to find that premature general public knowledge of the Selectboard's discussion of a pending civil litigation related to Williams Hill Rd. to which the public body is a party, would clearly place the Town at a substantial disadvantage. Furr seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Heston, Hill, Sander in favor. Motion approved.

Sander moved to enter into executive session to discuss a legal matter under the provisions of 1 VSA 313(a)(1) of the Vermont State Statures and to invite the Town Manager, Josh Arneson, Attorney Joe McLean into the executive session. Forward seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Heston, Hill, Sander in favor. Motion approved.

Forward moved to exit the executive session. Furr seconded. Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Heston, Hill, Sander in favor. Motion approved.

Chittenden Solid Waste District FY23 budget presentation and consideration of approval

Reeves: I am the Executive Director of the Chittenden Solid Waste District. We are a municipal district to manage material. We are funded through User fees, Solid Waste Management Fees (SWMF), Material and product sales, State grants for material management. Solid management fees are when hauler bring material to Coventry Landfill. We do not receive any funds from taxes or member assessments. Richmond has \$5,000 for Solid Waste prevention and options for projects. We budgeted for the full liability. Every year, Richmond will have \$5,000 to spend the money in the community for different positive change. The breakdown of the 270,207 tons of materials generated, 57% is recycled or diverted and 43% is landfilled. The FY23 Budget Proposal shows and Income of Operations of \$50,822 with \$768,607 in Income After Capital & Allocations. Each year, we need to "get to zero" so allocations need to be transferred to reserves. We are seeing increases in expenses for processing, hauling, and disposal fees. Solid Waste Management Fee but will be modest increase in next few years. We will most likely be subsidizing this center this year. The Drop Off Center fees will range from free (for certain materials deemed important to accept based on hazards) to a slight increase from last year (for other non-hazardous materials). We are looking at heavy capital investments for the next three years. New Board of Commissioners approved project for new Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) to be presented to Chittenden County voters in November. We ask member Towns to approve the adopted budget every year.

Hill: Everywhere I go people are talking about the workforce variables. Do you have any perspectives to share?

Reeves: We are holding wages and benefits steady. We are struggling to fill critical positions. We are sweating it out to hiring our drivers. If you have your CDL license you can write your ticket for many jobs. It has been tough to hire in Chittenden County and we used a compensation study last year to make sure we are in market range.

Furr moved to approve the FY23 Chittenden Solid Waste District budget. Forward seconded. Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Heston, Hill, Sander in favor. Motion approved.

Consideration of approving an access permit for Strode Farm Lane, also known as Town Highway 27 or Legal Trail 2

Arneson: The only change has been to move to access 30 feet to the north. We won't put a culvert in. We need to confirm with e-911 to see if the Rosens can keep their same address as Dugway Rd.

Barnard: They wanted the driveway moved to the north to approve the access permit.

Forward moved to approve access permit 2022-02 for Strode Farm Lane. Hill seconded. Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Heston, Hill, Sander in favor. Motion approved.

Consideration of approving purchase of wheeled bucket loader and wheeled excavator

Gosselin: We received three bids. The information is in the packet. We received the highest trade value from United Forestry Equipment. It was a good bid, and I was pleased the amounts.

Heston: Where is the money coming from?

Arneson: I maked up the PO to show for the bucket loader \$13,000 for FY23, \$117,000 from unassigned funds. The excavator is \$33,750 for FY23 and \$191,250 from unassigned funds. We will pay and receive in July.

Furr moved to approve Purchase Order 4368 to United Forestry Equipment in the amount of \$208,924 for the purchase of a wheeled excavator. Forward seconded. Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Heston, Hill, Sander in favor. Motion approved.

Furr moved to approve Purchase Order 4369 to United Forestry Equipment in the amount of \$107,744 for the purchase of a wheeled bucket loader. Sander seconded. Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Heston, Hill, Sander in favor. Motion approved.

Consideration of approving a request to use \$5,500 from the Conservation Reserve Fund for milling and firewood processing of ash trees

Rosovsky: The Selectboard has funded our previous Emerald Ash Borer projects. We received a grant for \$15,000 for \$20,000 Conservation Reserve fund match. This is the final phase of this project. There are a lot of Ash Trees on Dugway Rd. Some of those were milled and have been stored in Jeff Forward's garage with the hopes the Town could use them in the future. Wood will also be processed into firewood. We identified one contractor who would mill the rest of the wood and process the firewood. We considered having Town people process it but there might be some liability. We have an estimate of \$5,500.

Hill: Are the planks 36" wide?

Forward: Yes. We have pictures to illustrate the planks currently stored in my barn. The lumber is beautiful and hopefully it will dry properly which is why I offered my barn. You can view the pictures in Caitlin Littlefield's Application letter.

Forward moved to approve the use of \$5,500 from the Conservation Reserve Fund for milling and firewood processing of ash trees. Hill seconded. Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Heston, Hill, Sander in favor. Motion approved.

Update on Lake Iroquois Recreation District

Heston: Moved this item to the agenda for May 16th

Consideration of accepting the Compensation Study

Heston: This was a lot of good information.

Arneson: We looked at 50th percentile and 60th percentile based on two different comparable municipality groups. Some of the pay bands end up being the same. Option

1 (75+ towns) & 3 (includes Chittenden County) are the same pay for some positions. Options 2 & 3 are the same for other positions.

*Option 1 is the top comparable municipalities (at 50th percentile)

*Option 2 is the top comparable municipalities (at 60th percentile)

*Option 3 is the top comparable municipalities including Chittenden County (at 50th percentile)

*Option 4 is the top comparable municipalities including Chittenden County (at 60th percentile)

At the Water & Wastewater Commission we looked at just their employees. She did the same thing for this meeting where we take out Water & Wastewater employees. We will look at Highway employees and other Town employees as a group. We have a \$50,000 contingency in FY23 for adjustments in the general fund excluding Highway and Water & Wastewater. We have a \$30,000 contingency in FY23 for Highway employees.

Skaggs: I am first showing everyone but Water & Wastewater and Highway. If you look at the total for each option: \$45,000 (#1), \$49,000 (#2), \$63,000 (#3), \$69,000 (#4). Some numbers may or may not change across the grid, for instance, mid-level pay ranges being very similar.

Heston: Looking at Option #1 and #2 for pay band E, why does it go down for that band?

Skaggs: It is based on longevity and certifications. The overall range will go up by about \$1,000. Similarly for Highway, you can see the total cost of implement each option: \$23,000 (#1), \$29,000 (#2), \$23,000 (#3), \$29,000 (#4).

Furr: We asked at the Water & Sewer meeting, we clarified that this does not include health and benefits. This is just the wage and not the taxes. The full cost to implement will be more due to health care and other expenses.

Hill: I think there is some mathematical basis for the correlation of the higher the salaries the higher the insurance contributions by the employee. We currently provide full compensation.

Forward: I was surprised by how much our health insurance costs are for individuals. A public entity provides unique benefits that are no longer available from private employers.

Heston: Benefits need to be considered with the wages. We need to show what we are providing for our employees. We are responsible to our taxpayers.

Bona: The benefits are listed on our paychecks so everyone is aware of the costs.

Forward: Another benefit is we are above average on holidays, vacations, and sick days. We should highlight those as well.

Bona: We are actually below in holiday, personal, and vacation. We are above in sick but there is no pay back on unused sick days. The CPI is currently 7.4% and we have only received 1.5% increase on our pay grid. We would like to know what happens to the grid in the next 8 weeks. Is it standard 1.5% and put us behind or are we going to go higher this year.

Heston: Connie mentioned last time that we should not do this twice. Do we present something before July? We have had this information for two months.

Furr: The Water & Sewer looked at implementing. We want to think about the midrange employees compared to Department heads. We thought about picking one option then adjusting the range for the mid-range employees. I could support Option #3.

Hill: CSWD cannot find CDL drivers. We need focus on the middle to bottom earners, where there are the greatest recruitment and retention challenges.

Heston: What does Jay mean by changing the range?

Arneson: When looking at Option #3 in Water & Wastewater, there was a significant increase for Superintendent but the 3 staff members would have a smaller increase then in Option #4. So we proposed taking the Option #4 pay band for the staff members and slide it into the Option #3 for Superintendent.

Heston: We spent a lot of money on consultants to get this information. Is there an equity issue if we start doing that? Shouldn't we be consistent across the board.

Furr: I am fine with taking everything to Option #4. If there is sticker shock then I do not want it to be at the cost of the mid-range employees.

Heston: I wasn't looking at #3 or #4. The data for Options #1 & #2 are based on other Towns that look like Richmond. There are other benefits to working in Richmond. I do not think the data for Options #3 & #4 are relevant.

Furr: I could go with Option #2 as it does not include the data that you feel is irrelevant.

Hill: I see Burlington as a competitor for Truck Drivers but not for Managers and Department Heads. I may be biased in some fashion. Maybe we change to the 60th to 70th percentile. Can we look at a few more percentiles like 70th and 80th.

Bona: If you mess with the middle sector then you risk having to hire someone at Step A if a Department Head retires. That new person will barely be making above the lower pay grade employees. What happens when so many of our Department Heads are maxed out. What is the grid going to do with an increased CPI? What does Rachel recommend when dealing with CPI or maxed out employees.

Skaggs: When people are at the max then there should be an annual adjustment or a merit performance bonus. We have a lot of clients looking at the 60th or 75th percentile to help with the issue of inflation.

Hill: It would be useful to see other percentiles.

Heston: I propose we look at 65, 70, and 75 percentiles. We should also look at FY23 budget. I do not think we are ready to make a motion tonight.

Arneson: We are going to look at Options #1 & #2 on 65, 70, 75 percentiles. We will update the wages and the benefits tied to wages.

Kapitanski: How will we account for the lack of data for some positions like Chief is only 1 out of 8 while others are only 3 out of 8. How do we account for this?

Skaggs: We need 3 data points to develop a analysis. We will not include data if there are less than 3 points.

Gosselin: I would like the Selectboard to entertain options for Highway employees and job-related options. It would be an incentive for the current employees that is job related. It would like to propose something at the next meeting after we talk about the new options.

Hill: Does this involve money? Or are you talking about working conditions or compensatory plans.

Gosselin: I want to compensate an employee to be on call for road monitoring duties, oncall pay which Highway doesn't have. I also look at direct changes for opt out insurance. Right now, most of the Highway Operators are on the lower part of the grid. It isn't going to be close to hire some with a CDL. CDL operators are in demand. I look at the pay grid and the steps are incorrect for a Highway Operator.

Reeves (via Chat): "I am wondering if there is a way to compensate the employees that have been waiting several months for their wages to change? What is keeping them from seeking jobs elsewhere that already offer a more competitive pay?"

Furr: It would be awkward to compensate on a back pay.

Heston: Retroactive pay is very difficult to do. We are having these conversations to get it right. We did have an increase at the end of last year to try to bridge the gap.

Bona: That increase was in Water & Sewer and Highway. Retroactive pay is very complicated as it impacts many other items. The chat is referring where is it going to go. There are people before my time who don't expect it to go anywhere. I have seen it drag on for 3 years now. We have employees who are being pursued. I do not know what will happen to Richmond if we lose a couple of people and we have a hard time replacing them.

Hill: There is significant evidence that increase in wages have a short term benefit in morale that fades over time. The State employees agreed to 3% across the board increase (July 2022) and step increases which average 1.9% per year. In July 2023 it is a 2% plus step increases. In January there is a lump sum payment of \$1,500.

Bona: What are the Highway workers making at the State? I do not have those numbers but we have to be careful when comparing to a percentage as it depends on the original amount.

Heston: We hired professionals to give us data and we need to pay attention to that data.

Gosselin: We are talking about a small Town with 20+ employees who provide a dreict service to people who know our names. It is not the same at the State level with thousands of employees or a private business with hundreds of employees. You need to value that as it is not the same as making comparisons to a big business. Personal service is the key.

Heston: The chat discussion includes Kendall: "The town should consider a bonus to the existing highway guys to keep them. If you lose anybody, you will find it very difficult to replace them." The Study points out we should look externally and internally for equity. The chat discussion includes Gabrielle: "How many employees is the state down currently? I don't think that their pay scale is working." I am not sure of that.

Review of quarterly financial report

Heston: In the packet you will find the Budget Status, General Fund Financials (Q3) and Backup documents (Q3) and the Debt Schedule. Have we received only one payment from ARPA funds?

Bona: We have received half of the amount in two payments. One in August, one in September and that will be the same this year.

Heston: I would love to see a to date balance sheet in the financials so we have the big picture on one page.

Bona: I did provide it the last time. The problem is it only shows assets and liabilities there is no owners equity. You would see the fund balance it was on June 30th. I am in contact with NEMRC and we can plug in our unassigned funds but it is not a number that will update through the year. It is an adjusted entry at the end of the year. The balance sheet will show assets and liabilities.

Consideration of adopting Zoning Changes. Town wide Wetlands, vehicle fueling station and non-conforming uses and structure

Heston: We had our Public Hearing last week and are looking for clarification.

Venkataraman: We looked into the "Ability to Serve" letter and I spoke to three different Green Mountain Power representatives. They clarified they issue two types of letters: Ability to Serve and a Conditional Ability to Serve. The Conditional Ability to Serve letter outlines the improvements required for infrastructure. They do not issue letters of denial. At this point, I recommend that the Selectboard adopts the amendments or remove the requirements for the DC Fast Chargers.

Forward: I believe the best course of action is to approve the changes as they were presented.

Forward moved to adopt zoning bylaw amendments as enclosed to Richmond Zoning Regulations Sections 2.4.2, 3.3.2, 3.4.2, 3.5.2, 3.6.2, 3.7.2, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11, 4.12, 4.13, 5.7.7, 5.10, 6.8.15, 6.9, 7, and Appendix A1. Furr seconded Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Heston, Hill, Sander in favor. Motion approved.

Discussion of appointing two Selectboard members to explore potential zoning changes for Jolina Court District

Venkataraman: I have been exploring the housing needs. I reached to Buttermilk about increasing their housing units to accommodate unrestricted affordable housing units. You can see the response in your packet. This item is on the Planning Commission's agenda for this Wednesday. I hope we can create a task force to present to Planning Commission and Selectboard.

Hill: This isn't a new conversation. How do we see the role of Selectboard compared to the Planning Commission and affordable housing group?

Forward: I am unclear of the Selectboard's role.

Arneson: Does the Selectboard have an appetite for going forward? If not, then we would take a different path. If they are interested in this concept, then we can move forward.

Venkataraman: I wanted to get the go ahead from the Selectboard and to include them in the conversation.

Clarke: This started with the interim zoning put in by the Selectboard. It has a role in the amount of commercial space and the density. The Planning Commission ran aground with affordable housing when we layer on top of these other issues.

Hill: One or two Selectboard members does not guarantee anything. We are interested in affordable housing. I am not convinced 1 or 2 people gets you anything.

Furr: In other words, by taking part in the conversation it is not an endorsement. I am interested in that might facilitate affordable housing.

Heston: We all believe in affordable housing. I would like to have two people step forward.

Furr: I would like to do it.

Hill: I am interested but cautious of my boundaries with the Regional Planning Commission.

Heston: Jay & I will apply for that appointment.

Presentation of Richmond Housing Study

Venkataraman: Last year we received a grant to look into zoning changes to increase our affordable housing supply. This is a Municipal Planning grant that is distributed every year. Brandi Saxton has put together a study after a lot of data collection, focus groups, and conversations with local Commissions. Thanks to everyone who participated. Brandy has slides to share from the report in the packet.

Saxton: Community input and three components from the survey. Richmond more similar to rural towns than more urban towns. Older adults moving to Town. Mostly 1 person households. Average income is pulled upward. Change over time. Small town like Richmond. Mobile homes are mostly your affordable housing. Beyond life expectancy. 1980 built 30 homes per year and around 10 home per year. Community Input. Owners unlikely to move while renters likely to move. Purchased less than \$300,000, less than \$1,200/month. More housing wanted in the Village but not a specific place identified.

The Richmond Housing Report Summary

*Housing Needs Assessment, Community Input, and Zoning Audit guided our recommendations

*Housing Needs – People: Richmond is more similar to rural Towns outside of Chittenden County. Residents are typically older. Richmond has higher income levels than the county or the state

*Housing Needs – Home: Single unit detached homes the most common residential building. The number of mobile homes are decreasing. Majority of homes build between 1960-2000. The median sale price in 2021 was \$442,000. A household would require an annual income of \$121,000 and \$40,000 down payment.

*Community Input – Resident Survey: 339 Richmond residents responded but were not a fully representative sample of Richmond. Young adults were under-represented. Oneand two-person households were underrepresented. A majority agreed more housing should be build in the Village. There was less support for additional housing outside of the Village.

*Community Input – Non-Resident Survey: 160 people responded most of whom were living in Chittenden County. Respondents were interested in moving to Richmond because of the character of the natural environment and recreational opportunities. *Community Input – Older Residents Focus Group: Older residents want to stay in Richmond but have few choices if current home does not meet needs. Walkable Village is good for seniors. Transit would be important if housing not walkable to downtown. *Community Input – Younger Residents Focus Group: Cost of housing and lack of rentals limits young adults. People worry about their incomes staying in front of housing costs. Rural areas of Town need to be more walkable and bikeable

*Community Input – Employer Focus Group: Employers rely on people commuting from other communities. Town needs more diverse housing to support diverse population. There are concerns about the length of time it takes to get permits and approval. There is a fear of change with the conflict of need for housing yet protecting rural character.

*Community Input – Builder/Developer Interviews: Permits and approvals and major concern in regard to uncertainty and length of time. Opposition to a project builds quickly while people don't come out to speak in support of a project (NIMBYism seen as strong in Richmond). New home constructions costs at \$550,000-\$600,000. Suitable land is in short supply. There needs to be a way to get conditioned local approvals prior to getting State permits. State regulations influence development outcomes more than Town regulations.

*Zoning Audit: State guidance promotes higher density housing in Village. Need to consider allowance for small-scale multi-unit housing. Planning Commission listened to many Village residents who did not want multi-unit housing in their neighborhoods. *Recommendations: Be pro-housing. Connect with other organizations with shared interests. Eliminate regulatory barriers. Produce an annual report that tracks housing creation and availability. Revise Village and Gateway zoning districts. Establish a Village mixed use district. Establish a Village residential district. Establish a neighborhood development district.

Hill: Affordable housing relies on Water & Sewer and it needs to be scaled appropriately. We are talking about more than 5 units.

Saxton: In order to get State funding, it needs to have Water & Sewer, in the Village center, and don't consider anything under than 20 units. The types of housing built in the 1990s are not built that way now.

Forward: I am glad we have this level of detail. To my mind, affordable is not just purchase price but also the operating costs. My cohort is going to age out and need smaller spaces. Is there any movement where people take a large single family house and make it rental or sub-divide the house?

Saxton: Those are avenues going forward using existing building space more efficiently. There is a possibility for that.

Forward: Do our regulations encourage accessory dwelling?

Saxton: Vermont has been trying to expand the housing supply with accessory dwelling. There is no significant evidence to suggest if it is effectively changing the market. Some of them are also being used for the short-term rental or Airbnb market. Furr: There are examples of people wanting to move to Richmond. Zoning for single family houses with generous setbacks is intrinsically racially biased. There are no options in the short-term future afford a house with a full lot.

Saxton: Richmond is getting older because of attracting in older residents which accentuates the bump based on who can afford to buy it.

Consideration of adopting a Traffic Calming Policy

Arneson: There are lots of complaints on many roads. Recently, it was Hinesburg Rd and Kenyon Rd. Previously, it was Pleasant St, Cochran Rd and Dugway Rd. We didn't have a policy. We reached out to Traffic Calming Policies from CCRPC. The Traffic Committee reviewed along with another Staff review. This policy allows us to look at a Traffic Concern. The Town Manager, Town Planner, Highway Foreman, and Police Chief will collect data and feedback. Then there will be a process to escalate the response in enforcement to see if it addresses the issue. If not then implement higher priced, more permanent solutions like signs or guardrails or speed bumps or changing the speed limits. We ask the Selectboard to approve the policy.

Forward: This is a concern personally, from my neighbors, and other residents. This is a direct response to our concerns. How would an individual or neighborhood approach this?

Arneson: They would do the same as now by contacting Town Manager or Selectboard. We might try to review 5 roads a month. This will give us a process.

Kapitanski: Once we are made aware of an issue, we now have uniformity to address it. This will streamline things a lot more and avoid people going to Pete for speed bumps or me for enforcement.

Forward: Is it relevant to the Transportation Committee? If we start to get into traffic control devices, then we would go to Transportation Committee before presenting to Selectboard.

Venkataraman: The Transportation Committee can help solicit any requests or comments or suggestions for educating citizens. The shift is how to train people to use the road rather than change the road itself.

Forward: For instance, painting center or fog lines might be an issue to be addressed by this group.

Arneson: Yes, that would be a suggestion to consider.

Forward moved to approve the Traffic Calming Policy. Sander seconded. Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Heston, Hill, Sander in favor. Motion approved.

Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders

Minutes

Sander moved to approve the Minutes of 4/25/22 as written. Furr seconded. Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Heston, Hill, Sander in favor. Motion approved.

Warrants

Sander moved to approve Warrants as presented. Forward seconded. Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Heston, Hill, Sander in favor. Motion approved.

Purchase Orders

Sander moved to approve the PO# 4361 to Joe Cecconis Chrysler Complex in the amount of \$37,870. Furr seconded. Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Heston, Hill, Sander in favor. Motion approved.

Discuss Items for Next Agenda

*Approve appointment and committee positions *Compensation Study update *Town Planner and Finance Director salary updates *Highway proposal *Art Crawl approval *Sidewalk grant *NEMRC Training May 10th

Adjournment

Sander moved to adjourn. Hill seconded Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Heston, Hill, Sander in favor. Motion approved.

Meeting adjourned at 10:18 pm

Chat file from Zoom:

00:15:21 MMCTV Erin: The selectboard is in executive session right now. They will return

01:17:18 Connie: The benefits are listed on each paycheck so everyone is aware of the cost of all their benefits

01:39:48 Sarah: I am wondering if there is a way to compensate the employees that have been waiting several months for their wages to change? What is keeping them from seeking jobs elsewhere that already offer a more competitive pay?

01:45:51 Kendall Chamberlin: The town should consider a bonus to the existing highway guys to keep them. If you lose anybody, you will find it very difficult to replace them.

01:50:43 Gabrielle: How many employees is the state down currently? I don't think that their pay scale is working.

02:59:27 Connie van Eeghen, she/her: Thanks Brandy!