

1 **Town of Richmond**
2 **Special Selectboard Meeting**
3 **Minutes of November 13, 2023**
4

5 **Members Present:** Bard Hill, David Sander, Jay Furr, Jeff Forward, Lisa Miller
6

7 **Absent:** None
8

9 **Staff Present:** Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Duncan Wardwell, Assistant to the Town
10 Manager; Connie Bona, Finance Director; Keith Osborne, Town Planner; Peter Gosselin,
11 Highway Foreman; Rebecca Mueller, Librarian; Anthony Cambridge, Richmond Police
12 Chief; Dennis Gile, Fire Chief; Gerald Levesque, Assistant Fire Chief; Steve Cote, Water
13 Resources
14

15 **Others Present:** Meeting was recorded by MMCTV, Amy Cambridge, Brad Elliot, Judy
16 Rosovsky, Richard, Sarah Craig
17

18 **MMCTV Video:**

19 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqHIPu0KebE&list=PLm9TgJr7n7xfcKxRghWWSdATHBzGOTgkK&index=1>
20

21 **Call to Order:** 7:00 pm
22

23 **Welcome by:** Furr
24

25 **Public Comment:**
26

27 Furr reviewed budget meetings and process to Town Meeting vote. Furr reviewed the
28 Saturday meeting where he was available to talk about the copies of the draft budget they
29 provided.
30

31 **Additions or Deletions to Agenda:**
32

33 Furr started a conversation on the approval of the fireworks purchase order and later
34 suggested moving it to the first item on the agenda.
35

36 **Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present**
37

38 **Consideration of approval of purchase order and payment for Fourth of July**
39 **Fireworks**

40 Timestamp: 0:02
41

42 People who participated in discussion: Furr, Hill, Arneson, Bona, Forward, Sander,
43 Gosselin, Miller
44

45 Bona confirmed that the fireworks would be paid in FY24 but will end up being expensed
46 in FY25 as part of the FY25 budget. Hill expressed concern that we do not have a FY25
47 budget as some of the Selectboard might not be here to approve an expense in FY25.
48 Furr stated that it was \$13,500 and the alternative would overspend FY24. Bona
49 confirmed that it has to be pre-paid, and it hits FY25 budget because that is when we
50 receive the product. Hill expressed concern about the protocol approving money that is

51 not part of an existing budget. Bona confirmed that this year's budget has already paid for
52 fireworks. Furr stated that one year we would hit twice, but thereafter, it would hit once.
53 Furr stated that when unexpected expenses have come up, we have overspent line items.
54 Arneson stated that money could be put into a reserve fund. Arneson summarized that
55 the FY25 budget could have a line item in it for \$13,000 for fireworks and then a line
56 item, for \$13-\$14,000 for firework reserves. Furr reviewed that the revenues from the
57 coin drop and vendors cover expenses for other 4th of July activities other than the
58 fireworks. Hill stated that a 4th of July/Fireworks reserve would allow for revenue and
59 expenses through budget years and transparent to the voters.

60

61 *Forward moved to approve PO# 4830 for \$13,000 to Northstar Fireworks for July 4th*
62 *Fireworks and to approve a warrant to pay for the fireworks out of Unassigned Funds in*
63 *FY24 budget. Sander seconded.*

64 *Roll Call vote follows discussion.*

65

66 Miller stated that she has looked into silent fireworks. Hill stated that less than 100% of
67 Selectboard and citizens support this. Forward confirmed that there is a constituency in
68 Town that feels strongly that fireworks are quite upsetting. Miller stated that with 250
69 drones, the cheapest price is \$43,000 for about half an hour. Forward stated that will
70 come down in cost over time. Hill recommend voting on this and building an item into
71 the budget for next year's budget. Hill suggested a conversation at the Town Meeting
72 about preferences from the voters.

73

74 *Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Hill, Sander in favor. Miller not in favor. Motion*
75 *approved.*

76

77 **Review of draft FY25 Budget**

78 See Related Files at:

79 <https://www.richmondvt.gov/calendar/meeting/special-selectboard-budget-11-13-23>

80 Included in the packet:

81 *Draft FY25 budget (in pdf and excel format)

82 *Chart showing Unassigned funds as a percentage of budget

83 *Potential versions of the Police Department Budget

84 *Draft FY25 Capital Plan

85 *A copy of past budgets with use budgeted use of unassigned and restricted funds
86 highlighted.

87 *Charitable Appropriation Requests

88

89 **Review of Unassigned and Restricted Funds**

90 Timestamp: 0:29

91

92 People who participated in discussion: Furr, Arneson, Bona, Hill, Forward, Miller

93

94 Arneson reviewed the Restricted and Unassigned funds at the end of FY23 from the
95 auditors. Arneson stated that at the end of FY24, we should have \$922,000 in
96 Unassigned funds, Highway has \$500,000 budgeted to offset taxes in FY24, \$440,000 for
97 the July flooding, we do expect \$159,000 in from FEMA claim Thompson Rd culvert.
98 Arneson stated that leave us at the end of FY24, negative \$72,000 in Restricted funds.

99

100 Arneson reviewed the operating budget for the Highway department in FY25 about \$1.9

101 million, 15% of that would be \$288,000. The General fund budget is at \$2.8 million in
102 the draft, 15% of that is \$423,000. The projected Unassigned funds at the end of FY24 is
103 \$922,000. Arneson reviewed we should finish about 18% combined. Forward stated that
104 it is hard to count or \$440,000 from FEMA, that's money we don't have in the bank.
105 Bona stated that we're going out on a limb projecting when we're getting the money and
106 projecting that another FEMA event isn't going to happen, it could blow up in our faces if
107 we have another weather event. Hill stated that we have the ability to borrow money and
108 then repay it.

109

110 **Library Department**

111 Timestamp: 0:49

112

113 People who participated in discussion: Furr, Arneson, Mueller, Forward, Hill

114

115 Arneson reviewed that the yellow lines on the budget are the things that have changed
116 since the last review of the Selectboard. Mueller stated that all of the increases reflect the
117 actual price increases experienced in the last two years. Mueller suggested renaming the
118 Library Reserve to something like Public Tech Services for customer copies and
119 computer use, there is a policy for the copier fund. Bona suggested having it be part of
120 the operational budget. Mueller stated that \$3,000 has been the working balance for the
121 last couple of years, we've been taking in enough money to buy what we need. Bona
122 stated that she will ask the auditors how we go about closing that Reserve.

123

124 **Fire Department**

125 Timestamp: 1:05

126

127 People who participated in discussion: Furr, Arneson, Giles, Levesque, Hill, Cote,
128 Sander, Bona, Gosselin, Forward

129

130 Arneson stated that Fire did not have any changes since last time. Cote reviewed that
131 there's a four-inch main line that valve nipples down to a three-quarter inch line which
132 services Fire. Cote asked why the firehouse doesn't have a line big enough to fill trucks.
133 Levesque stated the estimated cost is around \$30,000 but there are other contractors that
134 might be less. Sander stated that when we put in the new line, there was some reason we
135 didn't run it right into the firehouse but this is the time to do it. Bona stated that the
136 Maintenance-General line of \$10,000 is where Dennis had me put the water line.
137 Gosselin stated that we can make it a project for Highway to do small budget, the
138 equipment and labor will be covered under Town departments.

139

140 Arneson, Giles and Levesque reviewed the specifics of the line items Equipment
141 purchase and Safety equipment and gear reserve. Forward stated that a way to reduce the
142 budget is to use the Reserve money that we have set aside. Levesque stated that he did
143 some estimates on a heat pump. Forward stated that they are doing an energy audit of
144 that building so they'll give a recommendation on what size.

145

146 **Police Department**

147 Timestamp: 1:27

148

149 People who participated in discussion: Furr, Arneson, Hill, Cambridge, Forward, Bona,
150 Sander

151

152 Furr stated that a decent sized chunk of money of Unassigned is leftover at the end of
153 each year from salary savings. Furr reviewed that the packet is comparing FY24 to four
154 different scenarios for FY25. Arneson reviewed that we're getting closer to hiring a
155 candidate and Chief Cambridge has a couple of other candidates who have more police
156 experience. Hill asked if we've double counted in Version 3 if the chief was budgeted in
157 regular salaries. Bona stated that we adopted Williston's wage scale for the police
158 officers, plus we are budgeting for some corporals, not officers. Cambridge confirmed
159 that there's going to be a lot of equipment that's needed, including bulletproof vests, duty
160 belts, things that go on the duty belt, things that go on the vest. Cambridge stated that he
161 typically purchases two vests per year, \$3,000. Arneson stated that in FY24, the police
162 chief's salary was \$79,280. Bona stated that we budgeted more for moving positions
163 from officer to corporal and not starting at step one. Hill stated that his natural
164 inclination is to lead towards Version 3, but he thought it would be less expensive than
165 FY24. Arneson suggested looking at a benefit projection worksheet to break it all out.
166 Hill stated that he thinks Version 1 is off the table and 2 is implausible. Hill asked if we
167 wanted to hire four officers in the next 12 to 18 months, how plausible is that goal.
168 Cambridge stated that the biggest issue is not hiring but getting people on the road with
169 equipment. Furr asked if we could use the car Chief Cambridge is currently driving for
170 one of our officers and pay you to use a Hinesburg car. Cambridge stated he was not
171 sure. Hill stated that we don't know what next year's contract will say about cruisers,
172 subject to collective bargaining. Cambridge stated that we should be budgeting for a fifth
173 car. Cambridge confirmed that you can order a car when you need to, it all depends on
174 the model and year, he just ordered a Charger that took three months to come in.
175 Forward stated that we pay \$6-\$8,000 in gasoline for gasoline cars and it's more like
176 \$1000 for the Tesla. Arneson stated that for budget purposes, we need four cars for four
177 officers and figure the Chief out.

178

179 **Highway and Recreation & Trails**

180 Timestamp: 2:01

181

182 People who participated in discussion: Furr, Arneson, Forward, Hill, Miller, Gosselin,
183 Bona, Osborne, Sander

184

185 Arneson confirmed he added a line regarding Gardening and Landscaping but other than
186 that, no other changes, or updates. Forward stated that he receives a lot of comments
187 about doing better with park maintenance, but the challenge is who comes up with the
188 projects. Forward stated that the Recreation Committee would be a good one to do that.
189 Furr stated that they're coming to talk to the Selectboard next week. Forward stated that
190 the Little League appropriation might be more appropriate under the Recreation line item.
191 Miller stated that they are advising the Recreation and Volunteers Green/Browns Court
192 Project Committees that if they plan on pursuing capital improvements, they should count
193 the maintenance factor.

194

195 Arneson stated that with Highway, we added in the bonus for people at the very end of
196 the pay range and added in \$10,000 for traffic calming measures. Furr stated that he is a
197 big fan of getting speed bumps in as many as we think we can justify. Gosselin stated
198 that his advice is to create a reserve line for traffic calming measures because we may or
199 may not spend \$10,000 every year on some kind of devices. Gosselin confirmed that the
200 temporary speed bumps are about \$2,000 per crossing with the signs about \$150 apiece.

201 Gosselin stated we might want to look at a whole different type of system, which may
202 cost a lot more money but if you have it in a reserve account, you're choosing when and
203 where to use it. Furr asked about putting in speed tables. Gosselin stated that commits to
204 that speed table in place, that's a permanent obstruction in the road. Arneson confirmed a
205 Cochran Rd study being worked on right now that considers several different types of
206 traffic calming devices. Osborne confirmed that a speed table will be permanent addition
207 with a lifespan of about 10 years. Osborne confirmed this is a scoping study and not even
208 in design a year out. Forward stated they knew it was a temporary solution and that
209 people on the east end of Cochran Rd would like the same attention. Forward asked if
210 \$10,000 would be enough if putting them in on the east and west end of Cochran Rd
211 alone. Furr confirmed he thought the \$10,000 was worth putting them up even if
212 temporary. Bona recommended creating the reserve with a cap, so we don't just keep
213 putting in \$10,000 and it doesn't get used. Gosselin confirmed that a full asphalt speed
214 table is about the same amount of money if done in-house as a 6-foot wide table with a
215 slower ramp on either side.

216

217 Gosselin confirmed that 24-inch diameter and smaller culverts are on a regular
218 maintenance list and larger 36-inch and bigger typically fall into the grant programs.
219 Gosselin stated that this flood took out a fair amount of them which you'll see in the
220 FEMA claims so we're going to get reimbursed. Gosselin confirmed most of them were
221 upsized with major erosion issues, we're allowed to go one size.

222

223 **Planning and Zoning**

224 Timestamp: 2:32

225

226 People who participated in discussion: Arneson, Osborne, Hill, Bona, Miller

227

228 Arneson stated no changes since last time. Osborne stated that the Transportation Planning
229 line was set up last year to cover matches that haven't landed yet. Osborne reviewed that
230 the Transportation Committees is proposing a reserve fund for issues such as paying for
231 20% matches to grants that have yet to land. Osborne anticipated pursuing one grant for
232 the Thompson Rd, Bridge St, Cochran Rd, and Huntington Rd intersection. Osborne
233 reviewed other line items with Planning and Zoning projections. Bona stated that
234 Transportation could have a reserve line in it for Planning and Construction but still
235 restrict those reserves to something being used within 5 years. Hill stated that when you
236 get to major construction, you go to bond for it, not saving millions of dollars for a
237 construction project. Hill stated that it's somewhat disingenuous to build construction
238 budgets out of current taxpayers for something that nobody will benefit from for 10
239 years.

240

241 Miller asked about legal services being enough for development issues in the future.
242 Osborne confirmed that it was increased two-fold because we didn't cover the limit.

243

244 **Town Administration and Assessors**

245 Timestamp: 2:43

246

247 People who participated in discussion: Arneson, Furr, Osborne, Hill, Forward

248

249

250 Arneson stated that the only change was adding VLCT membership dues. Furr asked
251 about hiring interns. Arneson stated that it does take a decent amount of time/work, but
252 projects might come up. Osborne stated that he has not researched how the intern line in
253 Planning was used in the past but plans to resurrect it.

254

255 Hill suggested listing GBIC dues as a line item. Furr stated that MMCTV hosts public
256 archives of our meetings that fit very well under Administration.

257

258 **Charitable Appropriations**

259 Timestamp: 2:48

260

261 People who participated in discussion: Furr, Forward, Hill, Sander, Wagg, Bona

262

263 Forward asked about appropriations that might be an Administrative task or a social
264 service category. Arneson, Hill, Forward and Furr discussed different appropriation line
265 items and categories. Hill asked about our obligation to ask the voters to say do you want
266 to fund this. Hill stated that Richmond Rescue is a donation for a health service. Arneson
267 stated that SSTA is part of the Town's statutorily mandated obligation to provide
268 transportation for the elderly community and disabled. Hill summarized it might be
269 contracted social services. Forward asked about Howard Mental Health and Arneson
270 stated that it was in Police budget. Forward suggested that CUSI be part of Police
271 budget. Furr suggested that Richmond Farmers Market be part of the Recreation budget.
272 Hill stated that both the Boy Scouts of America and Green Mountain Council he did not
273 see that they are funded by government, local, state, or federal. Furr suggested that
274 Halloween be part of the Recreation budget. Hill summarized removing the Boy Scout
275 request and questioned the Halloween event. Sander stated that the Halloween event
276 provided a safe social gathering with the townspeople and it's extremely popular.
277 Forward stated that there's no doubt it's a worthy service but whether or not it is worthy to
278 raise taxpayers' money for it. Furr confirmed it might not be something the State says
279 the Town can fund based on the governmental service it is covering. Hill reviewed that
280 donations to charitable organizations require individual voter approval. Arneson stated
281 that there are some line items to move around and to get some further legal advice.

282

283 **Revenue**

284 Timestamp: 3:15

285

286 People who participated in discussion: Furr, Bona, Hill, Sander, Arneson, Miller,
287 Forward

288

289 Arneson summarized the budget needs to be finalized by the third week in January at the
290 latest. Arneson suggested Tuesday, December 19th for another budget meeting. Arneson
291 reviewed that every \$100,000 brings down the tax rate roughly 3%.

292

293 **Adjourn**

294

295 *Miller moved to adjourn. Sander seconded.*

296 *Roll Call Vote: Forward, Furr, Hill, Miller, Sander in favor. Motion approved.*

297

298 **Meeting adjourned at: 10:24 pm**

299

300 **Chat file from Zoom:** None
301