

1 **Town of Richmond**
2 **Special Selectboard Meeting**
3 **Minutes of December 11, 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; Dennis Gile,
11 Fire Chief; Gerald Levesque, Assistant Fire Chief; Rebecca Mueller, Librarian
12

13 **Others Present:** Meeting was recorded by MMCTV, Christopher Cole, Ian Bender, Judy
14 Rosovsky, Lou Borie, Robert Lowe
15

16 **MMCTV Video:** https://youtu.be/KZdv_pT5tQc?si=urnuUFWUh_xKgG2M
17

18 **Call to Order:** 7:00 pm
19

20 **Welcome by:** Furr
21

22 **Public Comment:** None
23

24 **Additions or Deletions to Agenda:** None
25

26 **Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present**
27

28 **Review of draft Town Meeting Warning**

29 Timestamp: 0:01

30 [REPORT_2023_WARNING_DRAFT_12-8-24.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3a_TOWN)
31
32

33 People who participated in discussion: Furr, Arneson, Sander, Hill, Forward
34

35 Arneson presented the first draft the Linda Parent helped put together. Arneson stated
36 that there are placeholders for the budget, for the Town Center renovation bond, for the
37 Conservation Reserve Fund with possibly changing the funding calculation amount.
38 Arneson confirmed that there are some special notes for the information meeting which
39 has to be within a 10-day window prior to the Town Meeting. Arneson suggested
40 Monday, February 26 and to do it in the Town Center Conference Room since they have
41 the hybrid capability and don't usually get a lot of in-person but can also look into the
42 Library and Camels Hump. Sander stated that this room should accommodate the
43 massive two or three people that will show up. Hill stated that he has a conflict on the
44 26th until 7 pm. Forward stated that the 26th works but it's school vacation and somebody
45 should talk to the legislature about changing that 10-day window. Arneson stated that
46 they invite the Conservation Commission for a presentation on the request of that ballot
47 item and also give a presentation about the Town Center bond. Forward stated that there
48 was a change in the law that allows Town Meeting discussion on items that are on
49 Australian ballot. Furr stated that they should take special effort to communicate that
50 Town Meeting is back on Tuesday and that the Richmond Senior Center will be doing the

51 food that day. Sander suggested making an announcement at the beginning of every
52 Selectboard meeting as well as putting it in Front Porch Forum. Hill mentioned using the
53 sign out front of the Town Center.

54

55 **Discussion of Conservation Reserve Fund Funding in FY25**

56 Timestamp: 0:09

57

58 People who participated in discussion: Furr, Arneson, Forward, Miller, Hill, Rosovsky

59

60 Furr asked the question about whether the Conservation Reserve Fund can be changed
61 from one cent. Josh confirmed that it can be changed every year to a fixed fee or one
62 cent. Furr explained that with the change in the Grand List Value, the one cent tax that
63 had been raising about \$50,000 would now raise \$78,000. Arneson stated that the
64 Conservation Commission is discussing this tomorrow at their meeting so they might
65 come back with more thoughts. Arneson confirmed that the Selectboard will make a
66 final decision when finalizing the warning which would be in mid-January. Forward
67 stated that the Grand List went up by two-thirds which is reflective of the real estate
68 market so one cent is representative of the proportion to what the Grand List was before
69 reappraisal. Rosovsky stated that there's a policy that governs the Conservation Reserve
70 Funds so any changes that are made in the ballot should be reflected in the policy. Hill
71 stated that it seems imprudent to refer to voting obligations that are governed by statute in
72 a policy, because they risk having outdated policy because it has language from some
73 past reality.

74

75 **Review of draft FY25 Budget**

76 Timestamp: 0:15

77

78 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3c1_FY25_B
79 uddget_Draft_12-11-23.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3c1_FY25_Budget_Draft_12-11-23.pdf)

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81 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3c2_FY25_B
82 uddget_Draft_12-11-23.xls](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3c2_FY25_Budget_Draft_12-11-23.xls)

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84 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3c9_FY25_C
85 apital_Plan_DRAFT_10-6-23.xlsx](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3c9_FY25_Capital_Plan_DRAFT_10-6-23.xlsx)

86

87 Included in the packet:

88

- 89 • Draft FY25 budget (in pdf and excel format)
- 90 • Chart showing Unassigned funds as a percentage of budget
- 91 • Document with options for Fire Department Capital Expenses (excel format)
- 92 • Information related to the cost of line striping
- 93 • Potential versions of the Police Department Budget (in pdf and excel format)
- 94 • A document related to the use of Opioid funds
- 95 • Draft FY25 Capital Plan (excel format)

96

97 **Review of Unassigned and Restricted Funds**

98 Timestamp: 0:15

99 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3c3_Chart_fo
100 r_Unassigned_Funds_as_of_11-9-23.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3c3_Chart_for_Unassigned_Funds_as_of_11-9-23.pdf)

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

Arneson stated that last year they used \$500,000 to offset the tax rate, this year the conversation was to drop that to \$140,000. Arneson presented the audited balance for Restricted funds at the end of FY23 as \$708,712. Arneson stated that projected changes for FY24 are \$500,000 to offset the tax rate. Arneson reviewed the unbudgeted revenue from FEMA reimbursements. Arneson stated that the unbudgeted expenses for the July flood have increased to \$468,266. Arneson reviewed the net effect of a negative \$803,843 in Restricted funds which brings it down to negative \$95,131 at the end of FY24. Arneson illustrated that \$292,132 is currently what the Highway budget should have on hand per the 15% policy, so it is short \$387,000 in Restricted.

Arneson presented the Unassigned funds at the end of FY23 as \$922,673. Arneson stated that 15% of the General Fund budget is \$427,957. Arneson stated that the combined Restricted and Unassigned funds are at \$827,542 at the end of FY24. Arneson reviewed that \$720,089 is 15% of the combined General Fund budget and Highway, which means \$107,453 over the combined Unassigned and Restricted funds over 15%.

Arneson presented portions highlighted in yellow that have a reasonable chance of coming in within the next six months, the State reimbursement for Halloween flooding (\$42,611), the projected interest received over budget (\$136,000), and the vacancy savings in Police budget (\$100,00). Arneson stated that those changes combined would be over 15% by about \$386,064.

Hill asked if there are any circumstances in which FEMA covers not only the cost of the expense but the cost of the interest to borrow money pending FEMA reimbursement. Arneson and Bona did not have an answer. Hill stated that they are using their money to avoid borrowing money. Arneson stated that he will confirm if FEMA reimburses interest on borrowing money.

Arneson confirmed that the \$386,064 represents all of the Unassigned funds that could be spent on anything in the budget. Bona stated that the auditors have said they cannot carry a negative balance in those Restricted funds, it automatically zeroes out and comes out of the assigned funds. Bona stated that these theoretical amounts are not allowing for another FEMA event. Bona stated that the next event will take the Unassigned funds below that 15% in our policy.

Arneson reviewed things that have changed in all departments, the updated insurance lines based on calendar year 2024, the contribution amount for retirement from the Town has increased from 6.75% to 7% for non-Police and 11.1% to 11.35% for Police.

Library Department

Timestamp: 0:30

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

Forward suggested that the Library Technology Public Use Room line be considered for the community room and mezzanine rooms for Town related meeting space. Forward stated that the electrical vehicle charging station is offset by revenue from ChargePoint.

151 Forward asked if put money from the Library budget towards Reserves with the Town
152 Center and Library Reserves. Mueller stated that the Library Reserve fund is for things
153 like interior painting, flooring, replacement of air conditioners/heating systems. Arneson
154 stated that if they want to make a change, it has to go back to the voters.

155

156 **Fire Department**

157 Timestamp: 0:38

158 https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3c4_FY25_Fire_Department_Options_Reserves_VS_Loans.xlsx

159

160
161 People who participated in discussion: Furr, Arneson, Bona, Hill, Levesque, Sander

162

163 Arneson stated that they looked at changing the upcoming expenses from Reserved
164 expenses to going up for a bond vote. Arneson presented the two-column 15-year
165 schedule “Taxes Collected Per Year with Capital Equipment paid for from Reserves” and
166 “Taxes Collected Per Year with Capital Equipment paid for with Loans.” Arneson stated
167 that beyond 15 years, they would end up paying about \$1.5 million in interest. Arneson
168 stated that if they decided to make that change, they cannot go back to the Reserve. Bona
169 stated that those loans are 15-year loans, and they are forecasting interest and costs.

170 Bona stated that for the overall financial health of the Town, don't do loans if you don't
171 have to but those are two very different public philosophies. Bona asked why we should
172 pay now for something in the future or why should somebody in the future have to pay
173 for something that was decided five years ago. Furr stated that he would prefer to not do
174 loans.

175

176 Arneson asked if there is anything in the \$35,000 for Equipment purchase that could use
177 impact fee revenue. Bona stated that one year the impact fees were used for the down
178 deposit on the firetruck, but it is tricky as there are legal restrictions related to the growth
179 of the Town.

180

181 Hill asked about the 47% increase in the Fire Capital reserve line. Arneson stated that is
182 what they need to raise right now in order to avoid having loans in the future. Forward
183 stated that if you reduce the Equipment purchase line from \$35,000 to \$10,000 that drops
184 the Fire Department increase from 8% to 2.5%. Bona stated that the purpose of impact
185 fees would be when they put the addition on the expansion of the Fire Department and
186 the growth of the Town.

187

188 **Highway and Recreation & Trails**

189 Timestamp: 0:51

190 https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3c5_Line_Stripping_Quote_and_Cost_Per_Road.pdf

191

192
193 People who participated in discussion: Furr, Arneson, Forward, Hill, Bona, Cole, Miller,
194 Sander, Osborne

195

196 Arneson stated that there were a few small changes by adding a line for Gardening and
197 Landscaping for \$1,000 in FY25. Arneson reviewed that the charitable appropriations
198 were redistributed throughout the budget, so the following lines were added: Lake
199 Iroquois Association, Richmond Community Band, Richmond Farmers Market, Camel's
200 Hump Little League and Halloween on the Green. Forward stated that they could get

201 some advice from the Recreation Committee on how to spend \$3,000 in Park
202 maintenance and \$3,000 in Recreation equipment. Arneson stated that the Recreation
203 salaries go for work in cleaning the restrooms in the summertime. Arneson asked if they
204 wanted to move the landscaper/gardener salary for this building to Recreation and Trails.
205 Bona stated that everything for the landscape/gardener is done at the Town Center. Furr
206 stated that there is a special revenue fund for tree replacement that the Gardening
207 committee could look into.

208
209 Arneson discussed the Highway Reserve – New Transportation Infrastructure for where
210 Bridge St intersects with Huntington and Cochran and Thompson Rds. Arneson stated
211 that there's a Transportation Planning line that's for looking into it and once they say
212 construct it, then it will move to this Infrastructure line. Arneson stated that the
213 Selectboard could make a motion to close the New Sidewalks Reserve fund and transfer
214 that money into the New Transportation Infrastructure fund. Cole stated that everything
215 that is planning or scoping would be in the operating Transportation Planning line. Cole
216 stated that anything after that including up to and completion of construction would come
217 out of this New Transportation Infrastructure line.

218
219 Arneson stated that they talked about adding fog lines and they do have the Centerline
220 paint and shoulder line which is used to purchase paint for when Highway restripes.
221 Arneson listed the parking lot at the Town Center, the parking stalls on Bridge Street, the
222 crosswalks, and the paved portion of West White Hill and East Hill Road. Arneson
223 confirmed that other center lines in Town are drawn by the State because those are State
224 funded. Arneson stated that a mile of two fog lines costs about \$1,584 to \$2,112 and
225 presented the totals for different Road Name and Road Mileage. Arneson stated that it
226 has to be striped once a year. Forward stated that he hates to do all of the roads in one
227 shot, and they don't know if they like it or not. Forward stated that he likes it for
228 Hinesburg and Cochran Rds because of the complaints about speeding on those. Furr
229 suggested adding Huntington Rd to be continuous. Hill summarized that those 3 roads
230 would be about \$20,000 a year. Cole stated that the Transportation Committee does get
231 comments from East Hill Rd residents that they are not included.

232
233 Furr asked if the Selectboard wanted to overspend the 2023-2024 budget to go ahead and
234 start this cycle this May. Cole stated that if they want value from the investment, get
235 them on the road as soon as possible. Hill stated that if they put it in the budget, they can
236 revisit it later and front load it in some fashion this year. Arneson confirmed they wanted
237 to try for four roads at \$28,400. Bona stated that it depends on a discussion with
238 Highway and when they can get line up their schedules.

239
240 Furr stated that the Traffic Calming measures line for \$10,000 would be for speed tables
241 or speed dips. Furr reviewed that the results from the CCRPC study should be back soon.
242 Forward stated that the Electricity – Street lights line should be down to \$14,000-
243 \$15,000. Bona stated that she looked at the last three bills and came up with almost
244 \$16,000 for the year. Forward confirmed that they do not pay for power but per pole
245 because there is not a meter on every pole.

246
247 **Planning and Zoning**

248 Timestamp: 1:28

249
250 People who participated in discussion: Arneson, Hill, Forward, Osborne
251
252 Arneson stated that they put in money for cell phones at \$500 per phone, they just pay for
253 the service as they do not pay for the phone with a municipal rate. Arneson stated they
254 added a CCRPC Dues line name change. Arneson stated that they reduced the
255 Transportation Planning line to \$10,000.
256
257 Osborne confirmed that he is formulating a plan to use the Internship Stipend line that will
258 be a transportation focus.
259
260 Forward suggested going to per diem for Travel instead of giving receipts. Osborne stated
261 that would be a policy change.
262
263 Osborne stated that the Legal Reserve line was bumped up due to a couple of projects that
264 appear to be litigious, and they have a lot of amendments coming up for the attorney to
265 review.
266
267 **Police Department**
268 Timestamp: 1:35
269 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3c6_PD_Bud
270 get_options_Comparison_12-06-23_4 .pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3c6_PD_Budget_options_Comparison_12-06-23_4.pdf)
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272 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3c7_PD_Bud
273 get_options_Comparison_12-06-23_4 .xlsx](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3c7_PD_Budget_options_Comparison_12-06-23_4.xlsx)
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275 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3c8 Exhibit-
276 E-List-of-Opioid-Remediation-Uses.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/12/3c8_Exhibit-E-List-of-Opioid-Remediation-Uses.pdf)
277
278 People who participated in discussion: Furr, Arneson, Hill, Sander, Forward, Bona,
279 Miller
280
281 Furr stated that they are trying to avoid massive amounts of Police salary savings every
282 year. Arneson confirmed that most things were kept flatlined except for Williston
283 Community Justice Center, Community outreach, and Chittenden Unit for Special
284 Investigations. The Williston Community Justice Center and Chittenden Unit for Special
285 Investigations were charitable appropriations. The Community outreach was moved to
286 the Contracted services line.
287
288 Arneson presented the different budget options, 1 is mostly flat to FY24, 2 is a fully
289 staffed department with one Chief, two Corporals, two Officers and one Administrative
290 Assistant, 3 is two Corporals, two Officers, one Administrative Assistant and a Chief
291 contract with Hinesburg, 4 is one Corporal, two Officers and one Admin contracted
292 policing from Hinesburg, and a contract Police Chief. Arneson stated that they included
293 salary and benefit backup as well as salary projections from FY22 to FY25. Arneson
294 stated that last year it was ~\$710,000 and if Option 1 then ~\$725,000, if Option 2 then
295 ~\$836,000, if Option 3 then ~\$752,000 and if Option 4 then ~\$747,000. Hill stated that
296 the collective bargaining agreement does not talk about in perpetuity shared coverage
297 with another town. Hill stated that Option 3 says that they are trying to hire Officers.
298

299 Forward stated that he prefers the Community Justice Center option for \$15,000 instead
300 of \$22,000 because this is the first year working it into a permanent line item in our
301 budget. Forward also stated that Bolton, Huntington, and St. George receive services but
302 pay nothing. Hill suggested that CJC provide a fee structure that includes all the towns
303 that are served to determine a fair share or per capita. Arneson stated that the Essex CJC
304 might be a model based on the towns they serve. Forward stated that he is not sure that it
305 should be under the Police budget as they work closely but not exclusively with police.
306 Forward stated that he would like the CJC to be able to speak freely about how they're
307 working with the Police but if they're beholden to the police chief for further
308 appropriation, they might have a harder time speaking freely. Forward suggested that
309 CJC be in the Community Outreach contracted services section. Arneson suggested
310 putting it under Donations – Social Services. Bona suggested that because it's tied to
311 Police, it should remain in the Police budget and that does not dictate who handles as
312 they can still have discussions with Arneson. Arneson stated that he wasn't sure where
313 Hinesburg was putting it. Bona stated that Hinesburg has a very different budget
314 structure. Bona reviewed that it's easier to track in the future if you do not change the
315 line item. Arneson summarized reducing the line number to \$15,840, going with Option
316 #3 gets the budget to \$746,837.

317

318 Forward asked about the Police supplies in FY23 budget of \$24,000 for guns, badges,
319 vests, bullets, radios, or cameras. Arneson stated it might be body cams and tasers.
320 Arneson stated the thought they would overspend FY25 \$5,000 just based on the security
321 upgrades alone as well as additional equipment. Miller asked about contracting with
322 Hinesburg for supplies and equipment. Arneson confirmed that Chief Cambridge was
323 going through to get new gun optics and building security items.

324

325 **Town Administration and Assessors**

326 Timestamp: 1:59

327

328 People who participated in discussion: Furr, Arneson, Hill, Forward

329

330 Arneson stated that a cell phone was added for the Assistant to the Town Manager, which
331 is a \$500 increase. Furr confirmed moving MMCTV & GBIC in from charitable
332 appropriations.

333

334 **Charitable Appropriations**

335 Timestamp: 2:03

336

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

338

339 Furr confirmed that Forward and Hill went through these line by line. Arneson
340 summarized the historical budget and the different Charitable Appropriation lines.
341 Forward stated he would still lobby to put the CJC under Contracted - Social Services.
342 Forward stated that UVM Home Health Hospice is much more like Richmond Rescue or
343 contracted social services than a donation. Hill stated that other towns assign another
344 committee to distribute x amount of dollars. Bona asked that if these all have to voted on
345 the ballot does that mean they are all blank like the Conservation Commission. Arneson
346 confirmed following up with the attorney and that it is in addition to the budget being
347 voted on. Hill suggested coming back to this to determine if one ballot item, individual
348 ballot items or from the floor.

349

350 **Revenue**

351 Timestamp: 2:14

352

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

354

355 Arneson reviewed that \$3,000 was added for Technology Public Use Fees rather than go
356 to a Reserve fund and the \$5,000 to offset the Community Wellbeing line on the other
357 side of the budget from the opioid settlement. Arneson reviewed the 12.59% increase
358 over the prior year on the tax rate. Furr stated that without massive storm and flooding,
359 the vacancy savings could keep the tax rate lower. Miller stated that the other part of the
360 story is when they get reimbursed. Hill stated they are trying to keep this level with the
361 Capital Plan into reserves, which is a responsible choice. Arneson stated that it would be
362 a 6.45% tax rate increase being optimistic about \$42,000 from the State, the \$136,00 in
363 interest and the \$100,000 in vacancy savings all reasonable numbers for the next 6
364 months. Bona stated it is optimistic to think there will not be another FEMA event.
365 Arneson summarized that the Selectboard could make a decision that the Town Center
366 fund could go towards the renovations and maybe a portion of the Conservation funds
367 towards preservation of this building. Arneson stated that if there is another disaster
368 tomorrow then they need to borrow money but another disaster next summer, it depends.
369 Hill summarized that the 15% isn't to sit on the money or make payroll next week, it is
370 also modest unexpected expenditures, like FEMA or climate events.

371

372 **General Budget Discussion**

373 Timestamp: 2:41

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

375

376 Furr discussed scenarios for the projected Police savings and hirings. Bona confirmed
377 that they will be way over for FY24 however, in FY25 they raise \$500,000 less than taxes
378 that cover the Highway budget. Bona reviewed that the two Bridge St sidewalk projects
379 are reimbursable ARPA and grants, so they are paying out of pocket and waiting for 80%
380 to come back. Forward observed that the expenses were at about a 5% increase. Arneson
381 reviewed potential vacancy savings from the FY24 Police budget and Hill suggested
382 changing it to \$150,000. Arneson illustrated the changes on the spreadsheet for a 5% tax
383 rate increase over the prior year. Arneson stated that the estimated tax rate for 2024 was
384 3.67% increase over prior year.

385

386 **Adjourn**

387

388 *Sander moved to adjourn. Hill seconded.*

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

390

391 **Meeting adjourned at:** pm

392

393 **Chat file from Zoom:**

394 01:29:54 Chris Cole: Gotta run, need food.

395 01:45:01 Keith Oh: Good night all!

396