

**Town of Richmond
Special Selectboard Budget Meeting
Minutes of December 8, 2025**

Members Present: Bard Hill, David Sander, Adam Wood, Caitlin Filkins

Absent: None

Staff Present: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Duncan Wardwell, Deputy Town Manager; Susanne Parent, Town Clerk; Connie Bona, Finance Director; Keith Osborne, Town Planner; Matthew Cohen, Interim Police Chief; Peter Gosselin, Highway Foreman; Gerald Levesque, Fire Chief; Suzanne Krohn, Librarian

Others Present: Recorded by MMCTV Erin Wagg, Chris Granda, David Rugh, Jack Linn, Margaret Cole, Noa, Paige Kaleita, Rebecca Roose, Susan Glennon, Trevor Brooks

MMCTV Video: <https://youtu.be/VgXrHpSdwIo?si=I6yqOVqH2-jGjElJ>

Call to Order: 6:09 p.m.

Welcome by: Wood

Public Comment: None

Additions, Deletions or Modifications to Agenda: None

Notes On Town Budget Process

- The FY27 Budget will be voted on by Australian ballot on Town Meeting Day, March 3, 2026. The budget will not be voted “from the floor” and there will not be any opportunity to amend the budget once it is finalized and on the printed ballot.
- The Selectboard is holding a budget meeting on Monday, December 8, 2025. The goal of this meeting is to create a final draft of the FY27 budget. Public comment on the budget will be taken at this meeting. The Selectboard may make changes to the budget based on public comments if they see fit to do so.
- The Selectboard is holding a budget meeting on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, at 7pm. The final draft of the FY27 budget will be presented for feedback from the public. The Selectboard may make changes to the budget based on public comments if they see fit to do so. This is the last scheduled budget meeting before the budget is placed on the ballot.

Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

Discussion of the Greystone 3-Acre stormwater permit, possible executive session
Timestamp: 0:02

Filkins recused herself from stormwater discussions as she lives in Southview

Sander moved to find that premature public knowledge about confidential attorney-client communications regarding the Greystone 3-Acre permit would cause the Town or person to suffer a substantial disadvantage. Hill seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Hill, Sander, Wood in favor. Motion approved.

Sander moved that we enter into executive session to discuss attorney-client communications regarding the Greystone 3-Acre permit under the provisions of 1 VSA 313(a) (1) (f) of the Vermont Statutes and to invite Town Manager Josh Arneson and Attorney Dave Rugh into the executive session. Hill seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Hill, Sander, Wood in favor. Motion approved.

Hill moved to exit executive session. Sander seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Hill, Sander, Wood in favor. Motion approved.

Review of draft FY27 Budget

Timestamp: 0:30

https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2025/12/3b1_FY27_Capital_Plan_3A_12-08-25_excel.xlsx

https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2025/12/3b2_FY27_Budget_Draft_3A_12-08-25_excel.xlsx

https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2025/12/3b3_FY27_Budget_Draft_3A_12-08-25_pdf.pdf

Arneson summarized the progress from the last meeting using a lot of the Unassigned Funds to go towards Reserve Funds. At the end of last meeting, they were close to a zero percent tax rate increase from FY26 to FY27.

Arneson illustrated FY27 Capital Reserve Tax Contributions from the packet spreadsheet. The total taxes required for Capital Reserves were reduced by \$215,000 from anticipated Unassigned Funds by the end of FY26 from FEMA reimbursements.

Wood confirmed that the excess money that was budgeted for Police is being used to buy down the budget for the next year. Linn observed that Richmond is the only Town in Chittenden East that has a Police force. Hill recalled that ~5 years ago the motion to eliminate the Police Department failed at Town Meeting by a sizable margin.

Arneson illustrated the highlighted sections of the budget from the packet

- estimated 5% increase in rates for Town Property & Casualty Insurance in FY26-27
- estimated \$30,000 for County Tax
- increased Radio Dispatch for Fire to \$9,000
- added \$250 for Pickleball Supplies
- removed \$15,000 for July 4th fireworks
- increased Howard Center Community Outreach funding to \$17,000

Arneson reviewed the projection to use \$1.3 million in Reserve funds to invest in 6-month CDs for ~\$45,000 of interest in 12-months:

- \$100,000 from Police Capital

100 -\$180,000 from Fire Equipment
 101 -\$500,000 from Highway Capital
 102 -\$500,000 from Bridge & Culvert
 103 -\$25,000 from Guardrail
 104 That money & interest would go directly back into the Reserve Funds to reduce the
 105 payment for future years. Bona reviewed that the banks are allowing it month to month
 106 so there are no penalties so if they need the cash they keep what it has already earned.
 107
 108 Arneson stated that the Lister projected the Grand List Value at \$8,034,000.
 109
 110 Those adjustments end up with a 0.44% increase in the budget from the prior year.
 111
 112 Bona reviewed that by contributing more from Unassigned Funds, they are leveling off
 113 for the next five years. The next five years are the most painful as contributing to
 114 Reserves and paying off loans. In FY31, the projected Reserves will be \$877,000 and
 115 then drop down to \$700,000 for the next 10 years.
 116
 117 Wood & Hill reviewed the discussions about funding the \$22,000 fireworks from last
 118 meeting:
 119 -fully fund fireworks in budget
 120 -fully fund fireworks on the ballot
 121 -partially fund fireworks in the budget or on the ballot
 122 -fund \$15,000 with the remaining \$7,000 coming from the July 4th Reserve Fund,
 123 donations, and coin drop
 124
 125 Hill stated that if they partially fund it then the expectation is for the July 4th Committee
 126 to fundraise the balance. Arneson confirmed that currently the Committee has \$8,687 in
 127 their account. They figure they can raise about \$3,000 which would give them \$4,687 for
 128 event expenses after using \$7,000 to go toward fireworks. The expenses last year were
 129 ~\$2,800. Arneson stated that the FY26 fireworks were \$15,000. Roose confirmed that
 130 the Committee is comfortable raising money to get through the proceeds for the prizes
 131 and free events. Roose stated that they are look for more sponsors. Bona stated that the
 132 treasurer, auditors, and herself are not fans of coin drops, due to the gaps in accounting
 133 controls. Bona illustrated the challenges with authenticating and confirming GoFundMe
 134 funds. She suggested just doing the GoFundMe on the day of July 4th. Hill suggested
 135 that the Committee have a conversation with Bona about how the fundraising works as it
 136 is a margin of error of ~\$6,000. Wood stated that the consensus seems to be the \$15,000
 137 belongs in the budget. Hill suggested a non-binding Town Meeting discussion on fully or
 138 partially or not funding the fireworks.
 139
 140 Bona reviewed the total loan interest paid to date on Equipment Purchases from the
 141 packet. Arneson presented taking \$82,844 from Highway Restricted funds and adding it
 142 to the Reserve. That would create a 2.72% tax increase from previous year that also
 143 includes \$15,000 for fireworks. Wood stated that overfunding the Reserves might make
 144 up for lost time, but it makes the tax rate accurately reflect actual expenses. Bona stated
 145 it is earning interest and not paying interest. Filkins stated that she wants to keep the tax
 146 rate low but does not want to create a problem for next year. Bona stated that the Fire
 147 Department Reserve is the biggest purchase in the next five years and that could be used
 148 to earn quite a bit of CD interest. Hill stated that he was not shocked by a 2-3% increase
 149 to maintain some of the Reserve account's planned expenses. Filkins stated that a 2%

increase is not anything terrible. Filkins suggested that next year they look at the Reserve for the expansion of the Fire Department building or at least specific building maintenance. Gosselin highlighted some large future projects for upcoming years like the mitigation projects from the last two floods and a replacement bridge in Southview. Gosselin stated he believes in funding Reserves as it makes extra money with the CDs and it was the cushion that saved us during last year's flood. Wood also mentioned some stormwater problems around the railroad tracks. Sander mentioned the concrete bridge by Fay's Corner. Bona illustrated the current Town Center & Library Reserves includes regular annual expenses, utilities, insurance and building maintenance. Wood stated that it does not seem like they would be able to adequately fund a Reserve to deal with the Town Center building. Wood confirmed that they contribute to Richmond Rescue as they are a non-profit separate from the Town.

Arneson adjusted the amounts for Highway and Fire Reserves for a 3.99% increase in the tax rate from last year. Wood stated that the Vermont December 2025 prior 12-month CPI inflation is at 6.5% and Core CPI is 5.7%. Wood illustrated that putting money into the Highway Reserve makes sense as it could save the Town for unpredictable events. Arneson suggested splitting it between the regular Highway Capital Reserve and the Highway Bridge and Culvert Reserve. Gosselin explained how the Capital Reserve is a lot more accurate and on target. Bona stated she would meet with Gosselin to look at projects that could be pushed out into the future. Arneson mentioned setting up a Reserve for Pickleball court resurfacing. Hill observed there are probably a cluster of similar expenses like backstops. Gosselin illustrated how the Volunteers Green playground is in horrible shape and suggested a general Recreation Reserve. Arneson confirmed that he would check with the auditors to see if the Selectboard can make a Recreation Reserve. Arneson summarized that he will look into putting \$10,000 into Recreation Reserves and the rest of the Reserves going to Bridge and Culverts.

Adjourn

Sander moved to adjourn. Hill seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Filkins, Hill, Sander, Wood in favor. Motion approved.

Meeting adjourned at: 9:42 PM

Chat file from Zoom:

01:45:32	Rebecca Roose (she/her):	biz donations plus coin drop
01:46:10	Rebecca Roose (she/her):	sponsorships
01:54:28	Rebecca Roose (she/her):	We welcome Connie and have invited her to our meetings