

1 **Town of Richmond**
2 **Special Budget Informational Selectboard Meeting**
3 **Minutes of February 7, 2026**
4

5 **Members Present:** Caitlin Filkins, Bard Hill, Greg Rabideau, David Sander,
6

7 **Absent:** Adam Wood
8

9 **Staff Present:** Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Duncan Wardwell, Deputy Town
10 Manager; Susanne Parent, Town Clerk; Gerald Levesque, Fire Chief
11

12 **Others Present:** Recorded by MMCTV, Jean Haskin, Martha Nye, Mary Houle, Sam
13 Pratt, Tom Aistle, Virginia Clarke
14

15 **MMCTV Video:**

16 <https://www.youtube.com/live/8olpewRfyAA?si=J0egW3SIYhBsWCpl&t=941>
17

18 **Call to Order:** 10:00 AM
19

20 **Welcome by:** Filkins
21

22 **Public Comment:** None
23

24 **Additions, Deletions or Modifications to Agenda:** None
25
26

27 **Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present**
28
29

30 **Australian Ballot Information Hearing**

31 Timestamp: 0:01

32 2 TOWN REPORT 2026 WARNING FINAL
33

34 Arneson reviewed that this is the first of two public informational hearings for Australian
35 ballot items prior to Town Meeting on Tuesday, March 3. The second informational
36 meeting will be on Monday, February 23 at 7 PM. He will go over the budget, discuss
37 the Town Plan, the Conservation Reserve Fund, the Town Center Reserve Fund, and
38 Charitable Appropriations. These are all Australian Ballot items for Town Meeting.
39 There are no chances to amend the budget as the Warning is already printed and ready for
40 Town Meeting. Arneson illustrated that information on Town Meeting and the budget
41 can be found at:

42 <https://www.richmondvt.gov/news/post/annual-town-meeting-march-3-2026>
43
44

45 **Review and discuss Article 6: Shall the voters of the Town of Richmond approve a**
46 **budget of \$5,955,969.00 to meet the expenses and liabilities of the Town of**

47 **Richmond in Fiscal Year 2027?**

48 Timestamp: 4:30

49 2a1 FY27 FINAL Budget for Town Report

50 2a2 FY27 FINAL Budget for Town Report

51 2a3 Budget Notes

52 2a4 Reserve Funds

53 2a5 Town Center Fund

54 2a6 FY27 Capital Plan 3A 12-15-25

55 2a7 FY2027 Budget Presentation - 2-3-26

56

57 Arneson presented the slideshow for the two Informational Meetings and Town Meeting
58 Day:

59 https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2026/02/2a7_FY2027_Budget_Presentation_-_2-3-26.pdf

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61
62 Parent reviewed that the Records Restoration Reserve Fund has to do with making sure
63 that the land records can be digitized and to help pay for things like if the vault door fails.

64

65 Houle suggested sweeping what is left in the Conservation Reserve Fund into the Town
66 Center Reserve Fund. Arneson reviewed that they could submit a specific Town Center
67 project for the Town Center to the Conservation Reserve Fund to consider. Rabideau
68 suggested that flood resilient improvements might serve a necessary Conservation
69 function.

70

71 Haskins reviewed that if a house is valued at \$500,000 then they are going to have a total
72 tax bill of \$9,739 or just shy of \$10,000. Haskins wondered how she would be able to
73 continue to live in this Town. Rabideau stated that double-digit inflation of the school
74 budgets drive this. Sander illustrated that the Selectboard only has control over the
75 Municipal Tax Rate.

76

77

78 **Review and discuss Article 7: Shall the voters of the Town of Richmond, as required**
79 **under 24 VSA § 4385, adopt the 2026 Richmond Town Plan?**

80 Timestamp: 0:52

81 2b 4.0 - TOWN PLAN 2026 FOURTH DRAFT EDITS CLEAN 1.21.26 - SB Changes

82

83

84 Clarke, the Chair of the Planning Commission, illustrated that every 8 years, the Town
85 has to publish a Municipal Town Plan that has to abide by the requirements of the
86 Regional Planning Commission and any new statutes approved over the course of the
87 year. The Town Plan is an aspirational document as it does not have any direct
88 regulatory force. It provides some guidelines for what they can do in the future. Clarke
89 presented the 11 categories that have to be covered. They formed a Steering Committee
90 to reformulate the sections based on public input, new State laws, and new regional

91 initiatives. There is an Implementation Table which lists all the Action items with goals,
92 owners, and primary parties. All of these Actions depend on people who are passionate
93 about it and whether the Selectboard thinks it is a good idea. About half of the Actions in
94 the 2018 Town Plan were completed. Some of them show up again and some of them
95 have retired. Clarke illustrated that the Appendix has historically valuable information
96 like Richmond history, resources for public health, and geology. Clarke stated that the
97 Town Plan includes new statutes on requirements for housing, conservation, energy, and
98 climate change. They had to take into consideration the new State-wide goals and visions
99 as well as their own. Clark read the vision for the 2026 Town Plan:

100 “We will preserve Richmond's working and natural landscapes, village character, and community
101 spirit while expanding opportunities, improving access and strengthening resilience for all
102 residents.”

103

104 Clarke stated that they identified sources of controversy in each Section to illustrate the
105 challenges. Clarke clarified that strengthening infrastructure might be improving
106 culverts, sidewalks/crosswalks, treatment plants, roads, and buildings. Clarke confirmed
107 that the Act 250 review was present the whole time they were working on the Town Plan.
108 In some cases, they have reduced the oversight of Act 250 in downtown areas where
109 there is already housing. It does not matter what the Municipal Map shows, if the Act
110 250 Map shows something in Tier 3 then their new greater emphasized rules will be in
111 place. The current exception/controversy is the Road Rule which says that if you make a
112 road that's 800-feet or longer or combined driveways and other paved surfaces of 2000-
113 feet then Tier 3 regulations apply. That is nothing that they can do anything about it, but
114 the Act 250 Board will have to decide if the Road Rule goes into place. Clarke stated
115 that the Planning Commissions point of view is to be consistent with the State goal of
116 having 85% of the new growth occur in already developed areas where there is existing
117 infrastructure.

118

119 Nye stated that we all should be concerned about the wasted gas and fumes produced by
120 the traffic on Jericho Road. The school and the Town should work together to encourage
121 families to use the busses. Filkins stated that the Superintendent and Schoolboard are
122 focused on trying to get ridership up on the buses. Sander observed that there are a lot of
123 residences in Richmond that are not served by the bus route. Clarke illustrated a goal in
124 the Town Plan to understand the transportation system. Clarke observed that a bus ride
125 for a child in Huntington takes about 1.5 hours. The Planning Commission had an idea of
126 having a shuttle from outside the Village, but it is difficult to implement with a lot of
127 standing objections.

128

129 Clarke summarized that the only change the Selectboard made at their approval of the
130 Town Plan was to remove the Future Land Use Map that the Steering Committee and
131 Planning Commission had presented and returned to the basic Regional Planning
132 Commission's new map. Clarke stated that people can find the Town Plan on the Town
133 website:

134 https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Planning_Commission/4.0_-

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Review and discuss Article 8: Shall the voters of the Town of Richmond approve funding the Conservation Reserve Fund by adding one cent to the municipal tax rate in Fiscal Year 2027?

2c1 CRF Info Sheet 02-06-26

2c2 CRF Renewal 02-06-26

Timestamp: 1:26

Pratt presented the CRF Renewal presentation and the CRF Info Sheet from the packet. The Conservation Reserve Fund is financed by 1 cent on the tax rate so that it costs a taxpayer \$10 for every \$100,000 of assessed value. Houle observed that the map that shows the conserved areas should include the floodplain.

Review and discuss Article 9: Shall the voters of the Town of Richmond approve funding the Town Center Reserve Fund by adding one cent to the municipal tax rate in Fiscal Year 2027?

Timestamp: 1:59

Arneson reviewed the income and expenses associated with the Town Center Reserve Fund from 7/1/2024 (balance of \$266,180) to 6/30/2050 (balance of \$336,629). The proposal on the ballot would add about \$80,000. Arneson illustrated that this is to help fund some of the larger projects looming for the Town Center building. Rabideau listed the big projects as replacing exterior windows, providing flood resilience for building systems, and general upkeep/repair that has been deferred for a long time.

Review and discuss Articles 10 - 18: Charitable Appropriations voted by Australian ballot

Timestamp: 2:06

2e1 Vermont Family Network Appropriations FY27

2e2 Age Well Appropriations FY27

2e3 VT Center for Independent Living Appropriations FY27

2e4 COTS Appropriations FY27

2e5 OCCC Appropriations FY27

2e6 Steps to End Domestic Violence Appropriations FY27

2e7 Turning Point Appropriations FY27

2e8 Hope Works Appropriations FY27

2e9 Howard Center Appropriations FY27

Arneson illustrated the different Charitable Appropriations requests provided in the packet links.

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180 Filkins stated that the Vermont Family Network is doing powerful work making sure that
181 folks have resources in times of emergency.

182

183 Rabideau stated that as a member of the Richmond Congregational Church which
184 routinely serves at the COTS day-station downtown and the demographics are very broad
185 with many women and elderly people. Filkins stated that COTS also serves teens and
186 younger folks without housing.

187

188 Parent illustrated that MMUSD has cut bussing this summer, so it is even more important
189 to have OCCC. Rabideau stated that it is noteworthy that 30% of the OCCC campers and
190 50% of the OCCC staff are local. Filkins stated that OCCC also helps our economy of
191 the parents who can be more effective working rather than childcare in the house.

192

193 Hill stated that Age Well is one of five area agencies on aging in Vermont. With an
194 aging population, there is more demand for some of the things that they do.

195

196 Filkins stated that a lot of Town members work at Howard Center and they are up against
197 the federal funding issues.

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200 **Adjourn**

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202 *Sander moved to adjourn. Hill seconded.*

203 *Roll Call Vote: Filkins, Hill, Rabideau in favor. Wood absent. Motion approved.*

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205 **Meeting adjourned at: 12:29 PM**

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207 **Chat file from Zoom:**

208 00:53:28 Caitlin Filkins: Combined tax view: Page 44

209 01:09:00 Jean Haskin: Heat?.. I'm freezing

210 01:15:31 Martha Nye: As we try to mitigate climate change

211 01:20:51 Caitlin Filkins: I see your hand, Martha - I'll call on you
212 momentarily!

213 02:02:33 Jean Haskin: I have a chestnut tree

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