

**Town Center and Library Committee
Minutes January 11, 2024
7-8:30 p.m.**

Present: Josh Arneson, Laurie Dana, Jeff Forward, Dave Healy, Jake Marin, Amy Wardwell

Community Members: Suzanne Parent

I. Welcome and Public Comment - None

II. Additions or Deletions to Agenda - Grants

III. Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

a) Outcome of Selectboard discussion of Bond/Note issue and devoting some rent

Jeff provided information on differences between Bond and Note funding for the project and said that the Selectboard may want to defer that decision until after the vote in March. Josh stated that the voting article is worded so that it does not specify which method will be used. Laurie feels it is important that the voters understand an estimated impact on their taxes before they vote—regardless of which funding method is chosen. According to charts, the first few years seem like an estimate of \$92 to \$96/\$100,000 of property value is appropriate. The Committee recognizes that the interest on the bond or note could go up or down and that will affect the tax rate. **Dave will draft a 1-2 sentence statement that defines the estimated tax impact and that standardized wording can be used on the Cost FAQ and Text FAQ as well as in presentations.** The committee did not discuss devoting some rent towards project costs.

b) Review of initial community outreach efforts (Food Affair, FPF post, FD)

Jeff & Laurie reported that the response to the table at the Friday Food Affair was good. They handed out about 20-25 information packets and spoke with many people. Community members understand that the building needs to be renovated and both positive feedback and the vote and concern about tax rate were voiced. Jeff has had some emails regarding his front porch forum post.

The Community Senior Center, Richmond Historical Society and Radiate Art Space have provided these dates to their members via Enewsletters and via emails to members & stakeholders.

Laurie & Jeff reported that the Fire Department did not want to give up a training night on 1/22 to learn more about the town center project. Laurie expressed concern that the Chief and Assistant Chief were vocal at the meeting about their lack of support and also shared some incorrect information with the group. **Jeff will reach out to them again.**

Laurie reported that the flyer with all presentation dates was posted at the Library, the Fire Station and on the Town Center bulletin board. Jeff also left one in the Richmond Post Office and will try to get one to the **Jonesville Post Office as well.**

c) Review planned outreach dates and who can attend what events

The committee has tried to provide several opportunities for information to be distributed before the start of early and absentee voting on February 5.

Sunday, Jan 14 – 2-3 p.m. — **Jeff will present, Jake will try to attend**

Friday, Jan. 19 – 5-7:30 p.m. — Friday Food Affair, **Jeff, Amy & Dave will attend**

Monday, Jan 22 – 7-8:30 p.m. — **Jeff, Josh & Laurie will attend**

Thursday, Feb 1 – 7-8:30 p.m. — **Jeff, Josh and Laurie will attend**

Further dates will be discussed at the 1/25 Committee meeting

d) Brainstorm other ideas for outreach

- **Cochran's ski area** – The Committee supported attending one of the Friday night race sessions and **Jeff will reach out to ask about 1/9 or 1/16** – this would be a tabling event similar to the Friday Food Affair.

- **Town Committees and other email lists** -- Josh will send out an email to Town Committees with all of the presentation dates and a special invite to the 2/1 evening presentation. Laurie asked if they could also send out to the business owner's list—Josh said they have several lists and can send out to all.
- **Times Ink articles** -- Jeff reached out to Heidi Racht, editor of the Times Ink, regarding articles in the next 2 issues (1/26 & 2/23 which is the "voter" issue). He will send out information for the article. (**Subsequent to the meeting, Laurie wrote an article and sent it to Heidi & Jeff).
- **Front Porch Forum posting schedule** – The committee supported varying the Front Porch Forum post content and who does the posts and developed a schedule for the next 3 weeks. Posts will always include the intro paragraph, cost paragraph, and information link but the central focus will change:
 - Week of 1/15 – Laurie will post on Why renovation is needed now.
 - Week of 1/22 – Jake will post and address energy efficiency
 - Week of 1/29 – Amy will post the "highlights of the plan"
 Future posts will be determined at the Jan. 25 meeting – look at what questions seem to be top of mind for voters.
- **Library Display** – Laurie will work with Wendy to find a location for a display in the Library

e) Review Library Projects information.

The library construction projects to be funded from Richmond's ARPA funding are scheduled for summer of 2024. The wood siding and trim repair will begin in May and the painter is scheduled for September. Laurie is waiting for Jay's contract addendum to act as the town's Owners' Representative for the project—his cost was part of the ARPA funding request. The painter has made several requests involving their access to paint the parking lot side of the building -- closing the front entrance while they have a lift truck here and trimming back the trees. Laurie will schedule a planning meeting in mid-February with Alex from Hunger Valley Construction, Josh, Rebecca, Jay and herself to go over schedule and these details.

f) Approval of 12/14/23 minutes

Josh moved to approve 12/14/23 meeting minutes, Amy seconded. Approved unanimously.

g) Other business – Grants

Two potential grant opportunities that apply to the Town Center project were discussed.

- Vermont Public Service Department **Sustainable Energy for Schools and Municipalities Program** grant proposals are due on March 1. Grant amounts are between \$25,000 and up to \$250,000. Jeff feels that we should request \$250,000 to cover the Town Center HVAC system. Installation of cold-climate heat pumps qualify for the grants. A 20% cost-share is required. We still have some of our grant researcher's time available, Jeff will ask if she can work on the narrative portion of the grant—Jeff & Jake can provide the HVAC system & cost specifics. This language could then be used for additional energy-related grants.
- **Public Spaces grant** which might be perfect to fund the covered Pavillion that was removed from the bond. This encourages a public crowd-funded process which would allow the public to participate in the project. The grant provides a 2/3 match (so fund raising \$20,000 would result in a \$40,000 grant). Laurie will talk with Martha Nye about working with her on this, should the bond pass.

h) Items for next agenda – January 25, 7 p.m.

- Review of public outreach efforts and additional questions
- Planning of additional Front Porch Forum posts
- Planning and scheduling of February presentations, including the Town Budget meeting on 2/26 and tabling on March 5.

Meeting adjourned at 8 p.m.