

1 **Town of Richmond**
2 **Meeting of Water and Sewer Commission**
3 **Minutes of August 21, 2023**
4

5 **Members Present:** Bard Hill, David Sander, Erin Farr, Jay Furr, Morgan Wolaver
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7 **Members Absent:** None
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9 **Staff Present:** Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Duncan Wardwell, Assistant to the Town
10 Manager; Steve Cote, Water Resources
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12 **Others Present:** The meeting was recorded for MMCTV, Bob Heiser, Denise Barnard,
13 John Abbott, Jon Ashley
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15 **MMCTV Video:** <https://archive.org/details/richmond-water-sewer-08212023>
16

17 **Call to Order: 6:00 pm**
18

19 **Welcome:** Wolaver
20

21 **Public Comment:** None
22

23 **Additions or Deletions to the Agenda:** None
24

25 **Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders**
26

27 **Purchase Orders:**
28

29 *Furr moved to approve PO# 4660 to Various Chemical Suppliers for polymers and*
30 *biosolid chemicals not to exceed \$98,100.00. Sander seconded.*

31 *Roll Vote: Farr, Furr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Motion approved.*
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33 *Sander moved to approve PO# 4662 to Various Chemical Suppliers for sodium aluminate*
34 *wastewater chemicals not to exceed \$17,000.00. Farr seconded.*

35 *Roll Vote: Farr, Furr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Motion approved.*
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37 **Warrants:**
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39 *Sander moved to approve the 8/21/23 Warrants as presented. Farr seconded.*

40 *Roll Call Vote: Farr, Furr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Motion approved.*
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42 **Minutes:**
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44 *Sander moved to approve the Minutes of 08/07/23 meeting as presented. Furr seconded.*

45 *Roll Call Vote: Furr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Farr abstained. Motion approved.*
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47 **Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present**
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49 **Update on staffing changes**

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Arneson: Lead process operator Allen Carpenter has resigned from his position in Water & Wastewater. I want to thank Allen for his 10 years of service, especially the last 6-8 months as Interim Superintendent, he did a really good job through a very challenging period of time for Water Resources Department. I wish him well in his future endeavors.

Wolaver: Allen really stepped up when he was needed, and I am sorry to see him moving on.

Hill: He has the thanks of the Commission and the customers for stepping up to the plate in trying circumstances.

Update on Jericho Wastewater Feasibility Study and potential connection to Richmond Wastewater Treatment Facility
[Alternatives - Jericho Center Scenario 3 - All of Service Area to Richmond WWTF map 2.pdf](#)

Abbott: My name is John Abbott, the Town Administrator here in the Town of Jericho. I'm joined tonight by John Ashley, the consulting engineer from Dubois & King on this project. We currently do not have any municipal wastewater or wastewater district in the Town of Jericho. We have three designated village centers that we're exploring feasibility. John has helped us explore the potential of wastewater being exported to one of our adjoining neighbors. We haven't even concluded the 60% study, we're still very much in the identification of alternatives phase. This is just an FYI discussion. It might be helpful to share the map of Jericho Center specifically and what that might look like to Richmond.

Ashley: There are three villages we're looking at in the feasibility study. The closest village center to Richmond is the Jericho Center. The Jericho Center is the area around the Jericho Country Store and Mount Mansfield Union High School is up the road. We're looking at several alternatives. Some of them are constructing on-site wastewater treatment and disposal systems in and around this village center. We really wanted to just get feedback on the feasibility and possibility of whether this area could be connected to the Richmond Wastewater system.

The map shows green lines which would be gravity sewer collection pipes. The yellow dots are where there would be pump stations. The purple lines are sewer forced mains to get the wastewater from the pump stations to the next point in the system. There'd be a pump station and a long delivery line out to Richmond. We have some high points and low points we need to deal with. We have some water crossings that would need directional boring. We have valves needed at the high and low points. Ultimately, we show a connection near the corner of Jericho Road and Burnett Court. We have to plan this over a 20–30-year period with 20-year growth assumed on top of the existing wastewater flows if everybody was connected. It comes out to about 32,000 gallons a day of wastewater. The Town also had some discussion with the firing range about a wastewater solution and they might be interested in some capacity too. Their needs could be easily more than the 32,000 gallons a day from Jericho Center.

99

100 Hill: I know there was a water issue associated with a gas tank leak going back a number
101 of years.

102

103 Abbott: I know nothing about that. If there was a leak that was intruding on people's
104 water supply, my guess is it's been rectified. I've been in my position at the Town of
105 Jericho since September of 2021. There is no municipal water in Jericho Center. We are
106 alternately looking at potential of both municipal water, natural gas and trying to bring
107 other utilities to the village centers. Wastewater is sort of our primary priority.

108

109 Hill: We've talked for a number of years about a much shorter line into the Gateway.
110 Would you picture this as a Water/Sewer District unto itself with contracted services
111 from Richmond, or an extension of the Richmond Water/Sewer District? It's either you
112 have a system, and you pay us a fee to connect or it's part of our system and it's
113 controlled by the Commission.

114

115 Abbott: I don't have any specific opinion around models. Josh and Steve looked at the
116 excess capacity that could be offered, if any. Based on their reporting, there are
117 constituencies within your Town that currently do not have wastewater access. If there
118 was potential of expanding capacity and it made sense to pursue this alternative, then
119 we'd have to have some deeper discussion about models.

120

121 Hill: My perception is if this whole line was part of our system, we would extend the
122 district including the line and Jericho and everybody else along the line would be
123 obligated to connect.

124

125 Cote: If Jericho controls everything and we're just taking a flow and charging them at
126 contract, what's in the writing to stop that purple line from expanding their district and
127 sprawl down through into Richmond? If services come by, you have to hook up. That
128 would expand our district of Jericho Road significantly.

129

130 Sander: Is there a distinction between expanding the district and having the line go
131 through it versus having a commercial account contracted services and the line
132 connecting?

133

134 Cote: I haven't looked that closely. I know that if services go by, you're obligated to hook
135 on. If Jericho controls the line, what is there to stop their district from connecting all of
136 those houses along the line or development along the line going further?

137

138 Wolaver: The numbers I saw was 32,000 gallons just for Jericho Center.

139

140 Ashley: If you wanted more flow, the Ethan Allen firing range did contribute quite a bit
141 more.

142

143 Hill: Regardless of who owns that line, what obligation is there for people to connect to
144 it? Furthermore, if we didn't want them to connect to it, what is our authority to tell
145 them they can't? Right. The latter is more challenging as well.

146

147 Ashley: On the Jericho side, they need to form a sewage ordinance, you already have
148 one. All of these considerations would need to be built into their sewage ordinance.
149 From the funding agencies perspective, they want to fund wastewater to serve the village
150 centers, but they're not interested in having people connect along the way. The Clean
151 Water State Revolving Fund would expect us to put bylaws into place that restrict the
152 connections to the areas shown here. The way I am thinking about it is that Jericho
153 would be building this line and they would be responsible for this line. That would be
154 formalized in an inter-local agreement between the towns. There are other ways it could
155 be approached. An inter-local agreement would spell out all the details of who's
156 responsible for operation and maintenance, who can connect, and what allocation there is
157 to the town of Jericho, and what they would pay for that. The 30% report was the needs
158 analysis, we did a lot of evaluation of what the wastewater needs are of this area shown.
159 Now we're working on submitting the 60% report, which is the alternatives analysis,
160 comparing this to the onsite treatment and disposal facilities. We compare them in terms
161 of the lifecycle costs and non-economic factors, like the ones we're talking about tonight.
162 Then the Town would be having public meetings with each village on the 60% reports.
163 After getting public input, we will be working towards the preferred alternative that the
164 Town selects.

165
166 Farr: I have some follow up questions, but I do think we're getting tight on time.

167
168 Wolaver: We should table this to the next meeting.

169
170 Farr: I was wondering about what the residents currently have and what the timeline
171 would be for them to hook on.

172
173 Abbott: We just wanted to let you know our thoughts and some of what's going on up in
174 our neck of the woods. We'll circle back when this becomes of higher interest and
175 priority.

176
177 Hill: We might set up separate meetings with one or two commission members so you
178 can spend two hours talking about just this and get through more content. Then it comes
179 back to this group.

180
181 **Consideration of creating an Assistant Water and Wastewater Superintendent**
182 **position**

183 [WS 2023 Assistant Water and Wastewater Superintendent DRAFT 8-17-23.pdf](#)
184 [WS FY24 Pay Grid.pdf](#)

185
186 Arneson: We're looking for a Superintendent since last fall. We moved forward with an
187 internal promotion of Steve Cote to Superintendent position. We could use an assistant
188 superintendent position to try to attract some talent and some people that can really help
189 add to the team. We do have a candidate from the most recent round that might be
190 interested in that position. We have come to the board to ask about creating that position,
191 which would essentially be there to serve to assist Steve as the Superintendent. Looking
192 at pay scale, the Superintendent is at grade eight, and the Lead Process Lead Mechanic
193 Operators are at grade six. This would fit nicely at a grade seven right in between those
194 two positions. As far as budget goes, we're projected to spend about \$220,000 in total
195 compensation, that includes compensation already paid to date, as well as projected

196 compensation going forward for the rest of the budget year. Total compensation FY24
197 for Water & Wastewater is \$398,000, which leaves about \$178,000 in the budget that
198 could be used for new employees. I project that an Assistant Water Wastewater
199 Superintendent would be \$120,000 annually in total compensation. Putting \$100,000
200 over the next 10 months, we'd leave about \$70,000-\$80,000 for a fourth employee, which
201 would be enough to hire a lead process or lead operator or an apprentice operator in
202 training.

203

204 Farr: If the assistant water and wastewater person was another ambitious soul, like Steve,
205 would we need the fourth employee?

206

207 Arneson: I think we need at least four people just to cover weekends and holidays and
208 vacations and staffing time. I think four is our minimum.

209

210 Cote: I think myself, an Assistant Superintendent, Brad, and one more is the minimum
211 we need.

212

213 Arneson: We'll sort of see who we get for applications, what licenses they have, and see
214 who's really interested in operator-in-training up to the lead process operator. The market
215 is fairly tight for people with the proper licenses.

216

217 Cote: I would like to see if this candidate comes on board that we reach out to high
218 schools to bring on an apprentice and let them learn the system here. That's how you get
219 somebody to step up through the ranks.

220

221 Furr: I think we really can't afford to not do that. The number of staff we have leaves us
222 very vulnerable to somebody going on vacation and somebody else getting sick. The
223 next thing you know, we've got one person running the plant. I've met and interviewed
224 him the person and think he's a very qualified candidate. Then getting somebody from
225 Essex Technical Center to work their way up would give us a good mix of staff. I'm in
226 favor of doing this.

227

228 Wolaver: When I look at the list of repairs and replacements, they don't seem to be
229 shrinking.

230

231 Cote: I want to start doing the preventative stuff.

232

233 Hill: I think there is a lot of evidence to illustrate that the current staffing limitations
234 have helped to create some of the problems that we now face.

235

236 *Hill moved to create the position of Assistant Water and Wastewater Superintendent and*
237 *to place the position at Grade 7 on the Water and Wastewater Pay Grid. Farr seconded.*
238 *Roll Call Vote: Farr, Furr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Motion approved.*

239

240 **Consideration of approving vendor for purchase of water tank mixer**

241 Liquid Engineering Bid.pdf

242 Underwater Solutions Bid.pdf

243

244 Arneson: We received two bids. Underwater Solutions bid a single-phase mixer at

245 \$14,725. Liquid Engineering bid a three-phase mixer at \$24,223.

246

247 Cote: Underwater Solutions do not offer a three-phase mixer, the current mixer that we
248 have that's operational is a three-phase mixer. Their costs for installing it and doing the
249 cleaning were really, really high compared to the other bid that we got. The lower bid for
250 the cleaning and installation of the mixer will install the mixer from the other bid, saving
251 us about \$4,000. This is a mixer in the big tank up on Jericho Road. The reason it costs
252 us so much is we have to have a diver to go in to change these mixers. There should have
253 been a rail system where you could pull them out via hatch and that wasn't done.

254

255 Hill: This is another design flaw to have done it at the time would have been virtually
256 nothing. Now it's an ongoing cost because of the engineering design oversight.

257

258 Cote: Three-phase is you when you have three live legs coming in. Single-phase you
259 have two legs, and the motors tend to not work so hard. They're much more efficient and
260 they tend to last a lot longer than single-phase. All manufacturing places run on three-
261 phase.

262

263 Barnard: Has the Commission or Selectboard decided to go into litigation to collect
264 things that were not done properly on the water tank?

265

266 Wolaver: We have an engineer that's going to come look and give us a report.

267

268 Arneson: That's tied to the cleaning, we'll get more inspection with an engineer. The
269 engineer will be able to give us a little bit more detail on what they think is going wrong.

270

271 Cote: They're going to take a video of the areas where the seepages is to see what the
272 tank looks on the inside.

273

274 *Farr moved to approve the purchase only of a water tank mixer from Liquid Engineering*
275 *in the amount of \$24,323 with installation to be contracted for separately. Hill seconded.*
276 *Roll Call Vote: Farr, Furr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Motion approved.*

277

278 **Discussion of billing for water used for flood cleanup**

279 [WS-Octboer-3-2011 1 .pdf](#)

280

281 Arneson: In 2021, we investigated the authority of the Water and Sewer Commission to
282 reduce a customer bill due to a water leak. The guidance from our attorney was that the
283 Board of Civil Authority would be the one that would be able to abate. The Commission
284 doesn't have power to really reduce the bill per our policies or ordinance. The Board of
285 Civil Authority has about nine criteria by which they're allowed to abate a tax bill or a
286 water/sewer bill. In 2011, the Commission made a motion to freeze the accounts and
287 some of the folks that were affected by the flood. I asked attorney to update if there is any
288 way that the Commission could pass a policy to reduce the overall bill.

289

290 Sander: These criteria here are sort of vague. Section Five "taxes or charges upon real
291 estate property lost or destroyed during the tax year", I'm thinking the argument could be
292 made the property was lost or destroyed and the water usage could be tied to that.

293

294 Arneson: I want to check with Linda or somebody who's a little bit better versed in this
295 and maybe even a BCA.
296

297 Barnard: I would like to see the Vermont Statutes annotated title, because it's very clear
298 and I think it strictly is just property.
299

300 Hill: I'm noting Item 3 in 24 VSA "taxes or charges of persons who are unable to pay
301 their taxes or charges, interest and collection fees" and "taxes or charges on real or
302 personal property lost or destroyed." The term charges appear to admit something other
303 than taxes.
304

305 Farr: As someone who had a costly water leak. What kind of charges are we looking at?
306 Are we looking at like \$2,000 worth of water leak?
307

308 Cote: I took the last quarter up until July 1 and averaged their daily usage. The only two
309 significant increases in water use were two houses that had broken pipes in their
310 basement. They went from like 69 gallons a day usage for the previous quarter, up to 578
311 and 665 gallons a usage a day.
312

313 Hill: In theory, real or personal property lost/destroyed and water lines destroyed/leaks
314 the BCA could then say the difference between baseline and we could abate those
315 charges.
316

317 Sander: If we adopt a policy to allow this can we retroactively apply it to this flooding?
318

319 Hill: My experience is it is rare in government. It would take a while to frame that
320 because would it be leaks or inability to pay. Also draw our attention to the last comment
321 in that Josh shared with us that FEMA provides \$300 per household to help clean and
322 sanitize assistance.
323

324 Arneson: I don't know how you parse between a leak and between power washing your
325 basement.
326

327 Hill: We are the Commission that operates under the guidance of a statute and an
328 ordinance. What legal authority do we have to abate people's rates. What we've found so
329 far is the BCA because it's not our money. If use x gallons to keep the pipes from
330 freezing to illustrate the scope of who might be disadvantaged.
331

332 Cote: The two homes at the end of the service line on Cochran Rd leave their water
333 running so that our town pipes don't freeze. I don't know what the compensation for that
334 is.
335

336 **Review of list of water and wastewater items to be repaired or replaced**
337 Water and Wastewater Items to be Repaired or Replaced 8-17-23.pdf
338

339 Tabled until next meeting.
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343 **Update on gateway sewer expansion**

344

345 Tabled until next meeting.

346

347 **Discuss Items for Next Agenda:**

348 *Tabled agenda items from this meeting

349 *Staffing

350 *Water meters

351 *Jericho Rd water tank

352

353 **Adjournment**

354

355 *Sander moved to adjourn. Farr seconded.*

356 *Roll Call Vote: Farr, Furr, Hill, Sander, Wolaver in favor. Motion approved.*

357

358 Meeting adjourned at: 6:55 pm

359

360 **Chat file from Zoom:**

361 01:09:50 Jay Furr (Remote: Erie, Pennsylvania): We have 4 minutes left