

Town of Richmond
Meeting of Water and Sewer Commission
Minutes of August 21, 2023

Members Present: Bard Hill, David Sander, Erin Farr, Jay Furr, Morgan Wolaver

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Duncan Wardwell, Assistant to the Town Manager; Steve Cote, Water Resources

Others Present: The meeting was recorded for MMCTV, Bob Heiser, Denise Barnard, John Abbott, Jon Ashley

MMCTV Video: <https://archive.org/details/richmond-water-sewer-08212023>

Call to Order: 6:00 pm

Welcome: Wolaver

Public Comment: None

Additions or Deletions to the Agenda: None

Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders

Purchase Orders:

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

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

Sander moved to approve PO# 4662 to Various Chemical Suppliers for sodium aluminate wastewater chemicals not to exceed \$17,000.00. Farr seconded.

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

Warrants:

Sander moved to approve the 8/21/23 Warrants as presented. Farr seconded.

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

Minutes:

Sander moved to approve the Minutes of 08/07/23 meeting as presented. Furr seconded.

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

Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

Update on staffing changes

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.

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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

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

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

Wolaver: We should table this to the next meeting.

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

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

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

Consideration of creating an Assistant Water and Wastewater Superintendent position

WS 2023 Assistant Water and Wastewater Superintendent DRAFT 8-17-23.pdf
WS FY24 Pay Grid.pdf

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cote: I want to start doing the preventative stuff.

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

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

Consideration of approving vendor for purchase of water tank mixer

Liquid Engineering Bid.pdf

Underwater Solutions Bid.pdf

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.

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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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tabled until next meeting.

343 **Update on gateway sewer expansion**

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345 Tabled until next meeting.

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347 **Discuss Items for Next Agenda:**

348 *Tabled agenda items from this meeting

349 *Staffing

350 *Water meters

351 *Jericho Rd water tank

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353 **Adjournment**

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355 *Sander moved to adjourn. Farr seconded.*

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

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358 Meeting adjourned at: 6:55 pm

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360 **Chat file from Zoom:**

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