

Articles for Special Town Meeting Explained

10/22/24

This document provides explanations for the four Articles being voted on at the Special Town Meeting being held on Saturday, November 9, 2024. This meeting will be an in-person meeting held at the Camels Hump Middle School starting at 9am. All Articles will be voted on by voice vote of the Richmond voters in attendance.

Article 1. Shall the voters of Richmond adopt all Budget Articles by Australian ballot (pre-printed secret paper ballot)?

- Currently the municipal budget is voted on each year at Town Meeting in March by voice vote of registered voters in attendance a Town Meeting.
- If Article 1 passes the municipal budget would be voted on by Australian ballot. Australian ballot is a pre-printed secret paper ballot. This would be similar to other elections where there would be a period of early voting, and the polls would be open on Town Meeting Day for people to vote in person at any time the polls are open.
- Features of both voting methods:
 - In Person at Town Meeting:
 - Typically, about 150 - 200 registered votes participate.
 - Ability to amend the budget prior to the final vote by the voters who are present.
 - The budget has never failed when voted on by voice vote. It may be amended prior to the vote, but a budget has always been passed on Town Meeting Day.
 - By Australian ballot:
 - Typically, about 1200 voters cast ballots for items that are on the Australian ballot on Town Meeting Day.
 - Inability to amend the budget in person. Amendments would have to be presented to and accepted by the Selectboard in the months prior to finalizing the budget which is presented to the voters.
 - There is a chance that the budget will not pass on Town Meeting Day. In this scenario the Selectboard would need to revise the budget and hold a special election to vote on the revised budget.

Article 2. Shall the voters of Richmond vote on Charitable Appropriation Articles by Australian ballot pre-printed (secret paper ballot)?

- Currently, Charitable Appropriations are voted on each year at Town Meeting in March by voice vote of registered voters in attendance a Town Meeting.
- If Article 2 passes Charitable Appropriations would be voted on by Australian ballot. Australian ballot is a pre-printed secret paper ballot. This would be similar to other elections where there would be a period of early voting, and the polls would be open on Town Meeting Day for people to vote in person at any time the polls are open.
- Features of both voting methods:
 - In Person at Town Meeting:
 - Typically, about 150 - 200 registered votes participate.
 - Ability to amend the appropriation amounts prior to the final vote by the voters who are present.
 - By Australian ballot:
 - Typically, about 1200 voters cast ballots for items that are on the Australian ballot on Town Meeting Day.
 - Inability to amend the amount of the appropriation in person.

Article 3. Shall the voters of Richmond establish a reserve fund to be called the Special Projects Reserve Fund for the purpose of funding projects that improve Town aesthetics, enhance use and enjoyment of public land or buildings, improve public safety, improve public wellness, address negative impacts of COVID-19, or invest in necessary improvements to water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2804

- The Town received \$1,231,718.08 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. These funds were distributed to municipal governments by the Federal government in response to the COVID pandemic. The funds came with rules from the Federal Treasury which stipulated the type of expenses and projects the funds could and could not be used for.
- The ARPA funds have to be spent or under contract by December 31, 2024. The Town was not going to meet that deadline for all of the ARPA funds that were granted to the Town. Any funds that are not under contract or spent by December 31, 2024 will have to be returned to the Federal government.

- Treasury allowed for a municipality to spend up to \$10,000,000 of ARPA funds to fund government services. Use of funds in this manner satisfies the Federal rule for use of the funds and allows the Town to meet the December 31, 2024 deadline. The Selectboard acted on this option in August of 2024. For more details see the [resolution passed by the Selectboard](#). Transferring unused ARPA funds to the General Fund essentially created a surplus in the General Fund.
- In order to continue to be able to use funds for projects that meet the original intended use of use of ARPA funds, including projects approved by the Selectboard (but not under contract) for the use of these funds such as improvements to Town parks, the Town could opt to set up a reserve fund which has the same intended uses as the ARPA funds. If Article 3 passes it would establish such a reserve fund.
- If Article 3 fails, the funds will remain in the General Fund and will contribute to a surplus of funds which can be used for any governmental expense.

Article 4. If Article 3 is approved, shall the voters of Richmond authorize the Selectboard to deposit up to \$993,021.00 from the general fund surplus (unassigned funds), which was created because of one-time unanticipated revenue, to the Special Projects Reserve Fund?

- If Article 3 passes, then Article 4 would allow for the Selectboard to transfer funds from the General Fund to the Special Projects Reserve Fund. The amount proposed in this Article is equal to the amount of ARPA funds that were transferred to the General Fund in August. The Article is phrased as “up to” because the Town has had some expenses related to ARPA funds since the transfer in August and these would be reduced from the amount of money transferred to the Special Projects Reserve Fund.
- The voters could also amend Article 4 to allocate less than \$993,021.00 to the Special Projects Reserve Fund. Any funds not allocated to the Special Projects Reserve Fund would contribute to a surplus of funds in the General Fund which can be used for any governmental expense.