

1 **Town of Richmond**  
2 **Special Selectboard Meeting**  
3 **Minutes of November 25, 2024**  
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5 **Members Present:** Bard Hill, Adam Wood, David Sander, Jay Furr, Lisa Miller  
6

7 **Absent:** None  
8

9 **Staff Present:** Town Manager Josh Arneson; Assistant to the Town Manager Duncan  
10 Wardwell; Town Clerk Linda Parent; Finance Director Connie Bona, Fire Department  
11 Chief Dennis Gile, Highway Department Chief Pete Gosselin, Library Laurie Dana,  
12 Library Suzanne Krohn.  
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15 **Others Present:** MMCTV Erin Wagg, MMCTV Angelike Contis, June Heston, Jim  
16 Feinson, Cara LaBounty, Richmond racial equity Patty Brushett, Ian Bender  
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19 **MMCTV Video:** Recorded by MMCTV by Erin Wagg  
20 <https://youtu.be/U-10OYMzse4?si=KT4LS37xSdEgyiUH>  
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23 **Call to Order:** 7:01 pm  
24

25 **Welcome by:** Sander  
26

27 **Public Comment:**  
28

29 Brushite stated she would like Richmond Racial Equity to be on the Selectboard's radar  
30 and she posed the question what could her organization do to support the police?  
31 Richmond Racial Equity would like to see the website maintained and more things  
32 included there. She requests that a full-time admin for the Police be hired.

33 **Additions or Deletions to Agenda:**

34 Timestamp: 0:04  
35

36 **Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present**  
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38 **Review options for loans to fund expenses from the July 2024 flood**

39 Timestamp: 0:05  
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41 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/11/3a1\\_Loan\\_feedback\\_from\\_attorney\\_and\\_FEMA.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/11/3a1_Loan_feedback_from_attorney_and_FEMA.pdf)  
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44 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/11/3a2\\_Loan\\_Rates.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/11/3a2_Loan_Rates.pdf)  
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47 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/11/3a3\\_FEMA\\_information\\_on\\_covering\\_interest.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/11/3a3_FEMA_information_on_covering_interest.pdf)  
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50 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/11/3a4\\_Restricted\\_and\\_Unassigned\\_Funds\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/11/3a4_Restricted_and_Unassigned_Funds_Policy.pdf)

53 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/11/3a5\\_FY26\\_Budget\\_DRAFT\\_11-21-24.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/11/3a5_FY26_Budget_DRAFT_11-21-24.pdf)

56 [https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.richmondvt.gov%2Ffileadmin%2Ffiles%2FSelectboard%2FMeetings%2F2024%2F11%2F3a6\\_FY26\\_Budget\\_DRAFT\\_11-21-24.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.richmondvt.gov%2Ffileadmin%2Ffiles%2FSelectboard%2FMeetings%2F2024%2F11%2F3a6_FY26_Budget_DRAFT_11-21-24.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

61 People who participated in discussion: Sander, Arneson, Bona, Hill, Furr, LaBounty,  
62 Heston, Wood

64 Arneson reported that Bona has contacted several banks regarding short term loans for  
65 \$750,000, \$1 million, and \$1.5 million, He read a letter from one of the Town attorney's  
66 that stated: "the fact that the Town has paid flood expenses and its cash flow is adequate  
67 for the FY 25 budget indicates that the Town does not presently need a current expense  
68 note." Arneson added because we didn't need to borrow immediately to pay for this  
69 [Flood 2024], we can't really borrow now, but we could borrow later in the year if our  
70 cash flow becomes tight. Hill wanted to know is there some sort of middle ground where  
71 we would have authority to utilize a line of credit? He continued, one possibility is to use  
72 some unspent dollars from last year, vacancy savings, use them to offset taxes, with a  
73 recognition that it is going to push us into a point where at some time in the next years,  
74 we will need to borrow money. Bona explained right now Unassigned funds are non-  
75 existent, so we can't put that towards the fiscal year 26 budget, unless we borrow more  
76 than the point where we hit 15% for our policies; to create Unassigned funds, we'd have  
77 to borrow more than 1.5 million. Furr and Hill iterated that they do not like to raise taxes  
78 and presently it looks like taxes need to be raised 20%, which will be voted down and the  
79 budget will have to be cut.

80 Bona stated that 75% of interest incurred on a loan would be reimbursable by FEMA.  
81 Arneson suggested looking at money that could be saved by looking at, for example,  
82 Police funds where the Town has already realized some money there. Bona added that an  
83 expense note does not need to be voted on, so she and Feinson would be able to get a note  
84 if suddenly cash is needed. Presently it's unclear if we would even qualify for a Bond  
85 Bank loan. We will know more by next meeting how much was saved by the Police.  
86 LaBounty asked when the last time a loan was needed for cashflow expenses. To which  
87 Hill stated that Water and Sewer needed a loan for their tank in recent years. Arneson  
88 reiterated that FEMA reimbursement is only 75%, so the Town still has to pay 25% of the  
89 Flood repairs.

90 Hill reminded people that this is what happens with Unassigned funds being used to  
91 lower the tax rate. Bona replied that this was the perfect example of how we accrue  
92 Unassigned funds through fewer expenses, vacancy savings, but when all this FEMA  
93 money rolls in, we're going to have a lot of Unassigned funds and she would recommend  
94 at that point to put it towards your Reserves and help keep the taxes down for a longer  
95 period of time. LaBounty claimed the tax rate has never gone down, to which Furr  
96 vehemently disagreed and stated that the tax rate for the Town did go down the last two  
97 years. Heston said she disagreed with putting Unreserved funds into Reserve funds. She  
98 feels that you want to have money available when you need it, because once you put it  
99 into Reserve funds, you don't have it accessible. Wood added that the 15% policy may

100 have been a bit misguided, knowing the unpredictable events that may happen. Furr  
101 added that he disagrees with taxing the Town more just to create a “rainy day” fund. Hill  
102 used the water tank as an example, where current Town’s people are paying off that tank,  
103 but future generations will have a free water tank. Bona said that the 15% policy was put  
104 in place last year and many people thought it should be more than 15%. Arneson said that  
105 we were above 15% at the time of last year’s flood. Bona reiterated that each Reserve has  
106 a specific use, when LaBounty suggested using Highway Reserves. Furr agreed that  
107 having just one large Reserve would be too confusing.

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## 110 **Review of draft FY26 Budget, with reductions in expenditures since last review**

111 Timestamp: 0:41

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113 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/11/FY26\\_Budg](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/11/FY26_Budget_DRAFT_11-25-24_-_Proposed_Budget_Reduction.pdf)  
114 [et\\_DRAFT\\_11-25-24\\_-\\_Proposed\\_Budget\\_Reduction.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/11/FY26_Budget_DRAFT_11-25-24_-_Proposed_Budget_Reduction.pdf)

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117 [https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.richmondvt.g](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.richmondvt.gov%2Ffileadmin%2Ffiles%2FSelectboard%2FMeetings%2F2024%2F11%2FFY26_Budget_DRAFT_11-25-24_-_Proposed_Budget_Reduction.xls&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)  
118 [ov%2Ffileadmin%2Ffiles%2FSelectboard%2FMeetings%2F2024%2F11%2FFY26\\_Bud](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.richmondvt.gov%2Ffileadmin%2Ffiles%2FSelectboard%2FMeetings%2F2024%2F11%2FFY26_Budget_DRAFT_11-25-24_-_Proposed_Budget_Reduction.xls&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)  
119 [get\\_DRAFT\\_11-25-24\\_-\\_Proposed\\_Budget\\_Reduction.xls&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.richmondvt.gov%2Ffileadmin%2Ffiles%2FSelectboard%2FMeetings%2F2024%2F11%2FFY26_Budget_DRAFT_11-25-24_-_Proposed_Budget_Reduction.xls&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

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121 People who participated in discussion: Sander, Arneson, Bona, Furr, Miller, LaBounty,  
122 Dana, Heston, Gosselin

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124 Arneson stated that he and Bona have looked at ways they could reduce the budget, such  
125 as only having 3 Police Officers thus reducing the need by one police car, adding only a  
126 part-time admin for police, and keeping one Town admin assistant at 25 hours. He  
127 continued that there's nothing imminent in the Library reserve right now that is due so we  
128 could not fund that for a year and save that money. Similarly with the Fire equipment  
129 purchases where we are ahead and we can reduce that line item for the next year, and  
130 there is income from the sale of the brush truck. Hill agreed that we could dig deeper into  
131 the Reserve budget and pay ourselves back once the FEMA funds come back in. Furr and  
132 Miller agreed. Bona said that for the Highway department there are no big purchases  
133 coming along that would need to be ordered and purchased in the next year. Furr, Sander  
134 and Miller concurred.

135 Hill said that cutting funding may also result in cutting people and positions which is  
136 hard to swallow. LaBounty wanted to know the reason for a Library Reserve Fund, which  
137 Dana explained is for interior repairs, new flooring, and scheduled maintenance, such as  
138 cleaning carpets and fixing the elevator. Hill feels that reducing positions in the Police  
139 department should be discussed with Chief Cambridge. LaBounty wanted to know what  
140 Admin positions are being added to the Town. Arneson replied that he wasn't asking to  
141 add any positions, just to rename Duncan's position to Deputy Town Manager to better  
142 describe what he does, and to keep Linn as an Admin Assistant part-time but to reduce  
143 the proposed Admin Assistant time for the police to 20%.

144 Heston pondered if the Town employees' amount they pay for health insurance could be  
145 raised, since employees that are fulltime pay 10% for health insurance. Bona explained  
146 that was higher than other towns who pay 100% of their employee's health insurance  
147 premiums. Heston asked to see a breakdown of insurance premiums for the Town  
148 employees. Miller added when you had that benefit survey showing our positions against

149 other competitors, where do we stand, what are the comparables. Arneson will get more  
150 information for the next meeting regarding employee benefits and health insurance.  
151 Hill said if the voters vote down the budget we need a finer tooth comb. Furr said the  
152 target is to get the budget reduced so that the tax rate increase is below double digits.  
153 Gosselin lost 3 employees due to salary and benefits, other towns are paying higher  
154 wages and have better benefits packages as well as bonuses. He thinks there are some  
155 bridges and culverts that could wait and we could take money out of the Highway Bridge  
156 and Culvert Reserve fund. Bona wasn't sure that was a helpful solution. LaBounty  
157 wanted to know how long it took to get fully staffed in the Highway Dept, to which he  
158 replied he is fully staffed now, and it took 6 weeks to hire three more people, one of  
159 which does not have a CDL. Miller pointed out that we have essentially the same number  
160 of residents as 20 years ago, so we need to attract people to Richmond to get the Town to  
161 grow, reducing taxes is one way.

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164 **Consideration of approval of warrants that were not voted on in the November 18,**  
165 **2024 meeting**

166 Timestamp: 1: 39

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168 People who participated in discussion: Sander, Arneson,

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170 *Furr moved to approve the warrants that were originally presented at the November 18,*  
171 *2024 Selectboard meeting. Hill seconded.*

172 *Roll Call Vote: Hill, Furr, Miller, Sander, Wood in favor. Motion approved.*

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174 Hill proposed to schedule another budget special Selectboard meeting for Dec. 17, 2024,  
175 as well as adding a meeting on January 7, 2025.

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177 **Adjourn**

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179 *Furr moved to adjourn. Wood seconded.*

180 *Roll Call Vote: Hill, Furr, Miller, Sander, Wood in favor. Motion approved.*

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183 **Meeting adjourned at: 8:45 pm**

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185 **Chat file from Zoom: None**

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