

1 **Town of Richmond**
2 **Special Selectboard Meeting**
3 **Minutes of December 9, 2024**
4

5 **Members Present:** Bard Hill, Adam Wood, David Sander, Jay Furr, Lisa Miller (remote)

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, Chief of Police
11 Anthony Cambridge, Highway Department Chief Pete Gosselin, Fire Department Chief
12 Dennis Gile, Library Director Kathy Templin and Suzanne Krohn, Planning Director
13 Keith Osborne.
14

15 **Others Present:** MMCTV Erin Wagg, John Linn (AIA), Becky Vigneault, Marcy
16 Harding, Patty Brushett, Trevor Brooks, Howard Center Matt Thompson, Jennifer
17 Poehlmann, Bonny Steuer, Patty Kaleita, Amy Wardwell, Alexis Lathem, June Heston,
18 Andrew Bessette, Cara LaBounty, Brendan Filkins.
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20

21 **MMCTV Video:** Recorded by MMCTV by Erin Wagg
22 <https://youtu.be/AwoJxAYobc4?si=DVUhcI6lLXK3eNiI>
23

24 **Call to Order:** 7:00 pm
25

26 **Welcome by:** Sander
27

28 **Public Comment:** None
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30 **Additions or Deletions to Agenda:** None
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32 **Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present**
33

34 **Discussion of recent increase in break-ins**

35 Timestamp: 0:03
36

37 https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/12/3a_Statement
38 [from Police Chief on Recent Breakins.pdf](#)
39

40 People who participated in discussion: Sander, Arneson, Cambridge, Miller, Hill, Furr,
41 Heston, Poehlmann
42

43 Chief Cambridge wrote a letter to Town residents about the escalating crime numbers in
44 Richmond. He emphasized that people should lock their cars and homes. Hill asked about
45 a comparison between vehicle thefts in previous years and this year. Chief Cambridge
46 explained that in 2023 there were 5 motor vehicle thefts in Hinesburg (2) and Richmond
47 (3), in 2024 that number has risen to 28 for both Towns. Sander asked if this was a trend
48 in other communities, to which Cambridge replied yes, Monkton, Starksboro, Huntington
49 and Shelburne. One of his officers discovered two brand new Kias at a house in Monkton

50 that based off VIN numbers had not yet been reported stolen from a dealership in
51 Montpelier. He advised not to leave keys in a vehicle or leave a vehicle unlocked. Heston
52 reported that a backpack was found with needles and a license plate in the Southview
53 neighborhood, and she wondered if she was safe to walk around in Richmond. Chief
54 Cambridge said that no person has been assaulted or accosted, and that most of these
55 crimes are crimes of opportunity. Furr asked if anyone in the Town was trained in
56 neighborhood watch, to which Arneson replied that these programs need to be teamed
57 with a law enforcement agency. Miller concurred as she lived in an area in Pennsylvania
58 where there was a neighborhood watch that worked well and she would like to see that
59 here. Hill asked for follow-up regarding individuals who continue to get arrested for the
60 same crime. Poehlmann added that her son's car was stolen from her driveway on
61 Thanksgiving morning and the officers were "amazing," she continued that she is the
62 director of the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services and has a good deal of
63 experience and she said because of her son's car being broken into her family doesn't feel
64 safe. Cambridge emphasized that no one should confront anyone who is committing a
65 crime, because most of the arrests that have been made involve firearms. He said all his
66 officers are being proactive and he sympathizes with people who are victimized.

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68

69 **Review of Employee Benefits Survey**

70 Timestamp: 0:28

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72 https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/12/3b_Richmond_VT_Benefits_Study_Draft_Report_11.26.24.pdf

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75 People who participated in discussion: Sander, Arneson, Bona

76

77 Arneson explained that employee benefits were audited in 2022 to see if the employee
78 benefits that the Town of Richmond is offering is competitive. He feels the Town offers
79 competitive wages as well as number of days off. Furr was concerned about our Highway
80 Dept losing 3 employees to Hinesburg this year, to which Arneson replied he thought that
81 was mostly due to promotions offered, bonuses they pay and more leave time. Hill
82 pointed out that there are generational differences in what people want related to work-
83 life benefits, so it depends on who the Town of Richmond is trying to recruit, because
84 someone who is 25 is looking for different benefits than someone who is 45.

85

86

87 **Review of draft FY26 Budget, including all departments and revenue**

88 Timestamp: 0:35

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90 https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/12/3c1_FY26_Budget_DRAFT_12-09-24.pdf

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93 https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.richmondvt.gov%2Ffileadmin%2Ffiles%2FSelectboard%2FMeetings%2F2024%2F12%2F3c2_FY26_Budget_DRAFT_12-09-24.xls&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

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97 https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.richmondvt.gov%2Ffileadmin%2Ffiles%2FSelectboard%2FMeetings%2F2024%2F12%2F3c3_FY26_CAPITAL_PLAN_DRAFT_12-09-24.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

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101 https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/12/3c4_VLCT_Health_Insurance_Benefit_Study.pdf

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104 https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2024/12/3c5_Employee_Count.pdf

105

106
107 People who participated in discussion: Sander, Arneson, Bona, Furr, LaBounty, Wood,
108 Cambridge, Giles, Linn, Miller, Krohn, Osborne, Filkins

109

110 Arneson presented an overview explaining that this budget is the version that was
111 presented at the last meeting, which includes budget cuts and expense reduction. This
112 includes a request for increased Administrative staffing, a reduction in contribution to
113 Reserve funds by recalculating future contributions, reducing Police staffing from four
114 officers to three officers, reducing the request for a 40 hour Police Administrative
115 Assistant to the 20 hour police admin, delaying the purchase of a Police cruiser, and
116 reduction in equipment purchases for the Fire Department. This took us from about a
117 21% tax increase down to just under 10%. The last iteration of the budget removed
118 \$5,000 from the contribution to the Fire Department Safety Equipment and Gear reserve.
119 This iteration removes a total of \$20,000, followed by removing \$35,000 from the
120 contribution to the Fire Capital reserve, which was originally budgeted at \$250,000,
121 which leaves a contribution of \$205,000. Community Outreach Programs will increase by
122 \$1,000. Lastly, we reduced the contribution to the Highway Capital reserve, so if we take
123 \$85,000 out, that still leaves a contribution of \$175,000 for FY26, 27, 28. We are still
124 proposing to reduce Police hiring by one, hiring only two more officers. Furr added that
125 we have some candidates interviewing for those jobs. Arneson continued that all these
126 changes would bring the tax rate increase to 7.12%. Wood wanted to know what the total
127 reduction in Fire Dept contributions would come to, which was \$300,000.

128

129 Arneson described how the various funds would get paid back as FEMA money gets
130 repaid from last year's flooding, Bridge and Culvert Reserve and Special Projects
131 Reserve would be reimbursed first, followed by Highway Capital Reserve. Furr asked if
132 FEMA reimbursement schedules would change with the new administration, to which
133 Arneson replied he assumed the repayment schedule from FEMA would follow the same
134 timeline as from the 2023 flood. Arneson reiterated that if another flood happens a short-
135 term loan may be required to cover all flood repair expenses. Hill emphasized that a loan
136 could not happen currently until all resources were used. Hill wanted to know what
137 coverage would "look like" if all three officers were hired in the Richmond Police
138 Department, to which Chief Cambridge replied that even fully staffed coverage typically
139 runs from 07:00a to 11:00p. He explained further that in Hinesburg alone they are getting
140 1000 more calls than 5 years ago. Brushett asked if an Admin for the Police was included
141 in the budget, which Arneson stated that yes, this person is proposed as working 20 hours
142 per week. Brushett emphasized that the Chief has been covering both Towns for the past
143 two years, and his officers are doing media releases on Front Porch Forum, despite this
144 she would like to see more information posted on the Town's website, which she also
145 mentioned at the last meeting. Bona countered that even when the Police department was
146 fully staffed the Admin position only required 12-15 hours of work, similarly Richmond
147 is not saving very much money by working with Hinesburg for police coverage. Hill
148 asked if Chief Cambridge had to choose between a full-time officer or full-time Admin
149 what would he choose, to which he replied: "he would hate to lose an officer, because an

150 Admin cannot be put out on the street.” Cambridge added that an Admin would be able to
151 write reports, tickets, and other duties, but an officer can also do Admin duties while
152 being able to go out on patrol. Wood wanted to know what the difference in salary would
153 be for an officer versus an Admin position. Furr added that even though the previous
154 Admin was not given more than 13 hours per week worth of work, there should be more
155 than enough work that can be done by an Admin, upwards of 30 hours per week.

156
157 LaBounty wondered when the due date for the FY26 budget was, to which Arneson
158 stated the second week of January. She wanted to know if FEMA buyouts would affect
159 the FY26 budget, to which he said no, not until the FY27 budget would we have to worry
160 about buyouts. Miller wondered how Chief Cambridge was able to have a 40-hour per
161 week volunteer in the Hinesburg Police Dept doing Admin work, to which he stated it
162 was before his time as the Chief there, but yes, the person did work a 40-hour week as a
163 volunteer. Bona replied to Wood’s query: “\$51.72 per hour with benefits for an officer at
164 the bottom of the grid with a two-person healthcare plan, and \$26.08 per hour, for a 20-
165 hour admin position, the admin person at 40 hours goes up to \$39.78 per hour with
166 benefits.” Harding wanted to know if a bonus for the Highway Department road crew for
167 their work during the 2024 flooding was included in the budget, which Sander explained
168 had not been determined yet. Cambridge added that with the present increases in thefts
169 and crime going backward in terms of how many people to add to the Police department
170 is not a good idea.

171
172 Bona suggested taking a loan for the Southview bridge when the time comes to construct
173 it; alternately she suggested taking a lower amount for Conservation funds, which is
174 budgeted to be \$80,000 which may not need to be that high. Wood replied that the
175 Conservation Fund doesn't affect this budget, it’s just voted on for a penny and should
176 not be taken out of the budget. LaBounty feels that some charitable donations need to be
177 taken out of the budget, to which Arneson and Hill explained what each different line-
178 items is for, to which she countered that some titles should be changed to describe what
179 each line contributes to. Heston went back to the conversation where they had suggested
180 taking money out of the Admin side and moving it under charitable: Is that something
181 you're still considering doing? To which Furr stated he was not in agreement with that.
182 Arneson mentioned that the Town’s opioid funding has thus far been used for
183 preventative measures primarily. LaBounty wanted an explanation on certain Planning
184 and Zoning line items, which Osborne explained are all planned and accounted for, but he
185 conceded that the contract services line could be halved. The electric vehicle charging
186 station is going from \$1,000 to \$5,000 which Krohn explained was because the Library
187 was the only place that they could install the charging station, but the charging station
188 generates revenue as well.

189
190 Linn asked if the cost of Police vehicle maintenance was included in the hourly wage,
191 which the answer was no. Arneson stated that currently Richmond has 4 police vehicles,
192 it had 6 but sold 2. Bona injected that keeping a fourth vehicle would be important if we
193 were going to budget for 3 ½ officers, as was discussed. Cambridge added that the
194 Richmond cars have been driven regularly and oil changes and maintenance has been
195 kept up to date, a fourth officer would warrant a fourth car, so he voted for keeping the
196 fourth car. Hill wondered if the Police cruisers had winter tires all year, to which
197 Cambridge said that all Police cruisers had studded snows put on every fall. LaBounty
198 wanted to know if maintenance line items are taken care of on a yearly basis, particularly
199 the Fire Dept, where Fire Chief Gile replied that the roof was recently repaired and there

200 is a need for a new water line, which explains why that line item is \$10,000. Hill wanted
201 to know what the line item was for Town Center Building Maintenance, to which
202 Arneson and Bona said that usually for that building, and maintenance is offset by
203 revenue.

204

205 Wood reiterated that Chief Cambridge wanted another officer rather than an Admin
206 person, so should another half of an officer be added back into the budget. When Arneson
207 did that, the tax rate increase went up to 8.58%. Cambridge emphasized that having
208 another officer allowed him more leeway in how to use that officer either for Admin
209 work or out in the field. LaBounty argued that for two years now we have not had a fully
210 staffed Police department. Wood wondered if we were still thinking about adding a full-
211 time Admin that we shared with Hinesburg for Police. Filkins wondered if an Admin was
212 even needed. Cambridge stated he is afraid of losing more officers in Hinesburg in the
213 coming year because of budget cuts. Hill mentioned individual taxpayers who are on a
214 fixed budget may be paying for things that they will not benefit from, like a new Fire
215 truck. Bona said that Fire Dept expenses are large expenses and there is a new truck on
216 order for FY27.

217

218 Gosselin explained that every wheeled machine that we've owned has three quarters of
219 the payback on it, and that has been generated on Flood Repairs alone, "these machines
220 pay for themselves." Wood wanted to know why the Highway Department trades in
221 machines after only six or seven years. Gosselin stated "we are not a profit business, so
222 we can't roll profits back into repairs like SD Ireland and all the big contractors. We
223 replace this equipment on a curve when it's going to give us the highest return on our
224 investment. So we're getting about 60% back on these machines and trucks. Our trucks
225 have a seven-year cycle because our warranties cover only seven years, which have found
226 is best for the Town and this follows the budgeted line and is an aggressive replacement
227 cycle to keep things working well for the taxpayers." Hill wants contributions to Reserves
228 to be looked at more closely. Arneson added that if we cut the Highway reserve now, it
229 will be important to repay that in FY27. Bona said there is still the possibility of a loan
230 for the purchase of equipment. LaBounty suggested that the Admin Assistant position for
231 the Town be looked at and possibly taken away, because "do other Towns the size of
232 Richmond have a Town Manager, an Assistant to the Town Manager and an Admin?"

233

234 **Adjourn**

235

236 *Wood moved to adjourn. Hill seconded.*

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

238

239 **Meeting adjourned at: 9:43 pm**

240

241 **Chat file from Zoom:**

242

243 00:13:09 Patty Brushett:Do you have Richmond vehicle theft data?

244 00:52:07 Andrew Bessette: did you budget for fixing the town center. .Andy

245 01:20:15 Patty Brushett:Are you done talking about the police admin? I heard Jay
246 make a proposal to have an admin for 30 hours.

247 01:28:58 Bonny Steuer (she/her): I stand in strong support of at least a 30 hr
248 person for police admin. Too much on the police officers plate and also, as Jay said, past
249 use of admin is not an indication of future effective use. We now have an effective Chief.

