

1 **Town of Richmond**
2 **Special Selectboard Meeting**
3 **Minutes of January 07, 2024**
4

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 Director Suzanne
12 Krohn
13

14 **Others Present:** MMCTV Erin Wagg, MMCTV Angelike Contis, Caitlin Filkins, June
15 Heston, Andrew Bessette, Cara LaBounty, Richmond Racial Equity Patty Brushett,
16 Executive Director - OCCC Susanne Parent, Matt Crabb, Laurie Dana, Amy Wardwell,
17 Pam, Rafael Kennedy, Connie Van Eeghen.
18

19 **MMCTV Video:** Recorded by MMCTV by Erin Wagg
20 https://youtu.be/EXOWomw-wmA?si=w14IZA_oV2I-FmQy
21

22 **Call to Order:** 7:00 pm
23

24 **Welcome by:** Sander
25

26 **Public Comment:** None
27

28 **Additions or Deletions to Agenda:** None
29

30 **Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present**
31

32 **Review of draft FY26 Budget, including all departments and revenue**
33

Timestamp: 0:01
34

35 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2025/01/1_FY26_Bud
36 get_DRAFT_1-7-24.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2025/01/1_FY26_Budget_DRAFT_1-7-24.pdf)
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39 ov%2Ffileadmin%2Ffiles%2FSelectboard%2FMeetings%2F2025%2F01%2F2_FY26_B
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43 ov%2Ffileadmin%2Ffiles%2FSelectboard%2FMeetings%2F2025%2F01%2F3_FY26_C
44 APITAL_PLAN_DRAFT_01-07-24.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.richmondvt.gov%2Ffileadmin%2Ffiles%2FSelectboard%2FMeetings%2F2025%2F01%2F3_FY26_CAPITAL_PLAN_DRAFT_01-07-24.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)
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47 ph_CAT_Z_2023-2024_PayPeriod.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2025/01/4_DEW_Graph_CAT_Z_2023-2024_PayPeriod.pdf)
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49 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2025/01/5_DEW_Gra](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2025/01/5_DEW_Graph_CAT_Z_2023-2024_TOTAL.pdf)
50 [ph_CAT_Z_2023-2024_TOTAL.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2025/01/5_DEW_Graph_CAT_Z_2023-2024_TOTAL.pdf)

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52

53 People who participated in discussion: Sander, Arneson, Bona, Dana, Gile, Hill, Furr,
54 Krohn, Heston, Wood, Filkins, Van Eeghen

55

56 Arneson explained that since the last meeting the Town's Admin positions and Police
57 staffing have been kept flat since the 2025 budget. The Library has a 12-hour per week
58 position that they want to create because they have a tough time getting consistent
59 substitutes and they have expanding programs for the Library, also there is concern about
60 personal safety for someone working alone in the building. Dana explained they do not
61 have another revenue source for this position, but this position is necessary for the safety
62 of staff and patrons. Hill feels that since this position is something the Library Trustees
63 strongly recommend it should be put back into the budget, making sure the voters know
64 it's the Trustees that want this. Furr agrees because of safety concerns, especially when
65 the Library is open at night, being there alone is a safety concern; similarly their one
66 substitute is not performing as needed or able to take on extra duties, so a 12-hour a week
67 position is needed. Krohn concurred that the Library has been having issues with safety
68 recently. Hill reiterated what was said during the Selectboard meeting the night before
69 when a suggestion had been made to split the Library budget out from the Town budget.
70 Bona pointed out that rental fees for renting out the community room in the Library
71 nearly covers the proposed 12-hour a week position, but that income is currently going
72 into the Town Center Fund. Heston thinks the rental fees for renting out the Library
73 should go into the Library Budget, which Dana explained is not happening at this time,
74 because it is going into the Town Center Fund which recently was used to fix the elevator
75 in the Library.

76

77 Arneson continued to explain that some adjustments were made to the Fire Dept budget,
78 such as eliminating an outbuilding expense and reconfiguration of the Capital plan to pay
79 for a portion of the roof replacement. \$25,000 has been penciled in for a needs
80 assessment. Filkins mentioned that her dad, who has a lot of experience, has offered to do
81 some pro bono work regarding a needs assessment for the Fire Dept regarding equipment
82 needs, as well as discussing how to attract more members. Bona reiterated that one reason
83 the Capital Plan can be reduced by \$70,000 is because they removed the need to replace
84 Engine 1, but if that vehicle needs to be replaced in the next fiscal year they'll need to
85 catch up financially. Wood pointed out that he wants to be cautious that the Fire Dept
86 spend money to try to gain ISO ratings, as that can get costly and you will never recoup
87 that money. Filkins' dad is named Doug Patey, Sander recommended that we take him up
88 on his offer to do a needs assessment pro bono of the Richmond Fire Dept. Filkins asked
89 how much have we paid for the future rescue truck and has that already been budgeted?
90 Arneson responded that it would be \$69,000 to cancel the special order of the future
91 rescue truck, over and above the \$121,300 we paid for the chassis. Fire Chief Gile stated
92 that a future truck will be especially useful in responding to accidents on the interstate.
93 Hill said this decision to purchase the new rescue truck was made in Sept 2023 and to go
94 back on that decision would not be advisable. Wood reminded everyone that this should
95 be a learning process based on expenditures for future engines and we don't have years to
96 sit on such decisions, the Fire Dept will make things work with whatever the decision is
97 made regarding Engine 1 for example, but that any decision that is made regarding future
98 purchases needs to be stated clearly. Bona said the Fire Department's Capital Plan was

99 warned in the years 2022, 2023, 2024. Hill said it is possible to go to a Bond vote for
100 large Capital purchases. He feels the needs assessment is important. Arneson suggested
101 that the next step would be to invite Patey to come and talk about a needs assessment.
102

103 Arneson explained that he would like to increase Wardwell's hours to 40-hours per week,
104 he listed some of Wardwell's duties and how an increase in hours for the Assistant to the
105 Town manager position is vital, also considering how some of those hours will be
106 reimbursed by FEMA. This would add \$27,267 to the Admin budget. Furr concurred that
107 there are always more projects needing to be done. Hill asked how would this affect the
108 increase in tax rate? Arneson said that brings the tax rate increase to 6.76%, before this
109 and the extra Library person, we were at 5.58% tax increase. The total budget is 1% less
110 than the FY25 budget. Bona continued that the July 2024 flood has handcuffed us,
111 especially the Highway Capital reserves will need to be replenished first. Hill added that
112 there may be some extra FEMA funds that could help us. Bona cautioned that there are
113 some Highway Dept bills that have not come in from the July 2024 flood that may bring
114 the tax rate increase up to 8.73%. Hill and Furr mentioned that other Towns are
115 eliminating positions. Bona stated that Bolton is looking at a double digit tax increase due
116 to the July 2024 flood. Gosselin wondered if anyone knew what the increase in education
117 taxes would be, which no one knew. Hill said Hinesburg's draft budget states their
118 general fund taxes will be increasing by 7.96%, which includes a decrease in the police
119 force.
120

121 Hill cautioned that taxes are increasing yet the FY26 total budget has gone down and he
122 is worried voters will react adversely to this. Furr reminded everyone that health
123 insurance costs for the Town employees has gone up, and the Town has had to tighten its
124 belt in other areas. Arneson said the budget needs to be presented several times to the
125 voters, like the end of January and February, especially within 10 days of the vote.
126

127 Brushett asked about the Police budget, to which Arneson replied they had decided to flat
128 staff it, meaning keep it the same as FY25 with four police officers and a 20-hour per
129 week Admin position, while sharing the Chief with Hinesburg. This 20-hour position was
130 in the budget for FY25 and this person could be hired between January and June 2025,
131 and then continue working 20-hours per week for FY26. Furr asked for the construction
132 of a police blotter. Arneson concurred that a police blotter or statistical information about
133 increases in crime should be posted. Brushett asked about The Howard Center budget,
134 which is presently \$6,500 for Hinesburg, why is Richmond's budget for this higher? To
135 which Arneson responded that the Howard Center budget was slated to be \$25,000 to be
136 divided with Hinesburg, which would be \$12,500.
137

138 Van Eeghen wanted to know how charitable organizations are handled in FY26 budget.
139 Arneson and Hill responded that with the budget going to Australian ballot, there will be
140 many things to vote on as the current warning and articles read. Charitable organizations
141 starts with article five and goes down through to the end. Those are all the individual
142 requests that were received and forwarded to the voters for their consideration.
143

144 Arneson suggested one last FY26 Budget meeting for the Selectboard on Monday
145 January 13, 2026, to finalize the Budget. What's our finalized date for the Town Meeting,
146 Hill asked? To which Arneson stated at the absolute latest January 24th, 2026, but that he
147 would be away 23 and 24, so he would like to get it done before the 24th. They could in
148 fact finalize the warning next Monday. Furr suggested that a simple definition of

149 Unassigned funds vs. Reserves needed to be laid out to the voters and be put into the
150 Town Report. Arneson replied that he would work on something.

151

152 **Adjourn**

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154 *Hill moved to adjourn. Furr seconded.*

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

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158 **Meeting adjourned at: 9:03 pm**

159

160 **Chat file from Zoom:**

161 00:32:36 Andrew Bessette: Is there a budget item to fix up the town center?

162 Andy Bessette

163 00:47:27 Patty Brushett:That sounds great!!!

164 00:49:07 Patty Brushett:I agree!!

165 00:49:30 Caitlin Filkins: I would like to comment on the ISO ratings as well

166 - I do have my hand up again

167 00:50:21 Patty Brushett:A first free look by a professional would be very helpful

168 00:54:39 Caitlin Filkins: Doug Patey

169 01:00:19 Patty Brushett:After Doug gives us his assessment, we will have a much

170 better idea what our questions are.

171 01:00:25 Caitlin Filkins: Reacted to "After Doug gives us ..." with 👍

172 01:00:35 Patty Brushett:Reacted to "After Doug gives us ..." with 👍

173 01:14:37 Patty Brushett:Great point Josh's

174 02:01:06 Patty Brushett:Thank you

175 02:13:58 Caitlin Filkins: Thanks all!

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