

1 **Town of Richmond**
2 **Special Selectboard Meeting**
3 **Minutes of January 13, 2025**
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5 **Members Present:** Bard Hill, David Sander, Jay Furr, Lisa Miller
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7 **Absent:** Adam Wood
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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.

12 **Others Present:** MMCTV Erin Wagg, Stephanie, Velma, Chris Granda, Executive
13 Director OCCC Susanne Parent, Tony Vargo, Joanna, Martha Nye, Meg Freebern, Darren
14 Kennedy, CMHC Jared Katz, Lisa Kory, Trevor Brooks, Jean Haskins, Ian Bender,
15 Morgan Wolaver, Melissa Wolaver, Paige Kaleita, John Rankin, Laurie Dana, Connie Van
16 Eeghen, Jack Linn.
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18 **MMCTV Video:** Recorded by MMCTV by Erin Wagg
19 https://youtu.be/4P0SS2-UYKw?si=mb_OIplZ-7AT6ulV
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21 **Call to Order:** 7:00 pm
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23 **Welcome by:** Sander
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25 **Public Comment:** None
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27 **Additions or Deletions to Agenda:** None
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29 **Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present**
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31 **Consideration of approving the FY26 Budget to be considered for approval by the**
32 **voters**

33 Timestamp: 0:01
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35 https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2025/01/3a1_FY26_Budget_DRAFT_1-13-25.pdf
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39 https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.richmondvt.gov%2Ffileadmin%2Ffiles%2FSelectboard%2FMeetings%2F2025%2F01%2F3a2_FY26_Budget_DRAFT_1-13-25.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK
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44 https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.richmondvt.gov%2Ffileadmin%2Ffiles%2FSelectboard%2FMeetings%2F2025%2F01%2F3a3_FY26_CAPITAL_PLAN_DRAFT_01-07-24.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK
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48 People who participated in discussion: Sander, Arneson, Bona, Hill, Furr, Granda, Linn,
49 Bender

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Arneson explained that this is the last meeting regarding the FY26 budget. During the previous meeting after increasing the Deputy Town Manager’s hours to 40 hours per week and keeping the Police Dept hirings the same, the tax increase was at 6.76%. This past week it was discovered that \$800 of the Deputy Town Manager’s increase in salary was omitted and the reduction in taxes that 50% or more disabled veterans are allowed to take, brings the municipal tax increase to 6.83%. Hill mentioned to those present that the Town expenditure is decreasing by about 1%, but the tax increase is still slated for 6.83% at this point. Arneson described that the July 2024 flood cost nearly \$2 million in damages, which was paid for by Unassigned funds. Hill and Furr explained to Jack Linn (who was present in person) that we are still expecting repayment from FEMA for flood repairs. Granda wondered if moving forward we should create a Reserve fund for natural disasters. Arneson said that the auditors said you cannot have such a fund, so that was taken away a few years ago. Short term loans are options to use for natural disaster expenses. Hill thinks we should increase the Highway Reserve in the next five years. Arneson explained to Linn that Highway, Fire, Police, and the Library all have Reserve funds for future expenses. Hill reminded everyone that some of these are Restricted funds, restricted by voters, so voters can vote to reassign those funds. Arneson continued that other funds are more akin to scholarships and not restricted by the voters. He reiterated that the FEMA reimbursements for the 2023 and 2024 floods should be mostly reimbursed by FY27 budget discussions. Hill mentioned that tax income from buyout properties will change the budget in the next few years. Sander reminded everyone that this is the municipal tax rate increase and that we still do not know about the education tax rate, and that Richmond’s tax increase is lower than some neighboring Towns. Bender wanted to know what that increase in taxes would be for someone who owns a \$400,000 home, to which Arneson replied it’s \$530.83 per \$100,000, meaning that the increase from FY25 to FY 26 is \$33.93 per \$100,000 in property value. Hill said we compare favorably to Hinesburg’s tax increase which is slated for 7.91%. Granda wanted to know how much health insurance for Town employees is increasing. Furr reminded Granda that several people opt out of health insurance. A family plan with 2 children increased about \$250 per month. Dye asked why the Town has three Admin employees, to which Arneson explained that the Assistant to the Town Manager will be changed to Deputy Town Manager and go up to 40 hours per week. The Admin Assistant position will go away for FY26. Bona mentioned that cost of living increase for Social Security has gone up 2.5%.

Furr moved to approve the fiscal year 26 budget as presented to be sent to the voters for consideration of their approval. Hill seconded.

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

Consideration of approving the Warning for Town Meeting

Timestamp: 0:37

https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2025/01/3b_TOWN_REPORT_2024_WARNING_DRAFT_1-8-24.pdf

People who participated in discussion: Sander, Arneson, Furr, Hill, Granda, Linn

99 Arneson explained that he did receive feedback from the attorney today and there are
100 more items on Australian ballot this time, so the notes need to be cleaned up. The
101 Attorney suggested putting all items that are a floor vote at the top, and then everything
102 that is voted by Australian ballot further down. There was a discussion about moving the
103 vote for Richmond Rescue to be given a 5-year tax break, and that this should be a floor
104 vote. Granda wondered if Richmond Rescue was on the ballot before when they were in
105 financial difficulties. No one could remember. But he also asked if Richmond Rescue
106 could be tax exempt indefinitely. Arneson stated that this is related to Charitable and
107 Fraternal organizations, no one knows the history of this. Hill wondered if other
108 organizations would also deserve this tax break but that hasn't asked for it. Linn asked
109 about Article 3 which suggests that Highway budget or Police budget or Library budget
110 should be voted on separately, he thinks this will open a can of worms. The Budget is
111 voted on using Australian Ballot. Arneson continued that several Articles are related to
112 raising taxes (or not) for donations to charitable organizations. On Australian Ballot the
113 answers are only Yes or No. Arneson showed how all items to be voted on are on the
114 Town Website under "appropriations," so people are able to study this before they vote.
115 He continued that the Town is required to have one informational meeting prior to the
116 vote, but Arneson believes 2 meetings is a better idea, so he proposed Tuesday Feb. 11 at
117 7:00pm, which is before early voting begins, and then the second meeting, which will be
118 held at the Richmond Town Center on Monday February 24, 2025 at 7:00pm. Both
119 meetings will also be held on Zoom. Furr suggested having one of the meetings on a
120 Saturday morning, which Hill agreed with. Parent interjected that the early ballots go out
121 on Feb 12th and if Arneson wanted one meeting prior to the ballots going out she
122 suggested Feb 8, Saturday at 10:00a. Arneson stated it would be better at the Town
123 Center for recording reasons for MMCTV. Final decisions on future meetings will be
124 made at the Selectboard meeting on January 21, 2025.

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127 **Review of budget notes to be included in Town Report**

128 Timestamp: 1:11

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130 [https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2025/01/3c__Budget](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2025/01/3c__Budget_Notes_DRAFT_1-9-25.pdf)
131 [Notes_DRAFT_1-9-25.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2025/01/3c__Budget_Notes_DRAFT_1-9-25.pdf)

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133 People who participated in discussion: Sander, Arneson, Hill, Furr, Miller

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135 Arneson has created some general budget notes that will go in the Town Report. Hill
136 emphasized that the Board of Trustees approves the Library budget. Similarly, the Water
137 and Sewer Commission approves the Water and Sewer budget, so those are not governed
138 by the Selectboard. He also pointed out that the water and sewer rates are paid by the
139 customers of the water and sewer department. And the Town pays a fire protection fee for
140 the water system, for the purpose of providing water in case of a fire. Arneson explained
141 the difference between Reserve funds and Unassigned and Restricted funds and how
142 these funds relate to each department. He also explained Charitable Appropriations and
143 Conservation Reserve Funds. Furr suggested that totals for those two funds be presented
144 and how much is used from those funds each year. Arneson described how the tax rate
145 increases and what those amounts will be per \$100,000. Hill suggested presenting a total
146 tax rate increase if everything is approved. Miller thinks this an excellent job and will be
147 especially useful for the voters.

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149 **Consideration of selecting a person to dedicate the Town Report to**

150 Timestamp: 1:28

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152 People who participated in discussion: Sander, Furr, Hill, Miller

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154 Furr thinks this should be dedicated to the retiring Town Clerk, Linda Parent. Sander
155 agrees. Miller thinks it's a good idea and can't think of anyone who is more deserving.
156 Hill concurred and mentioned that Linda Parent is also Vermont's Town Clerk of the
157 Year.

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159 *Furr moved to dedicate the town report to our town clerk, Linda, Parent. Hill seconded.*

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

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163 **Adjourn**

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165 *Furr moved to adjourn. Hill seconded.*

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

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169 **Meeting adjourned at: 8:32 pm**

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172 **Chat file from Zoom:**

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174 00:34:03 Connie: It is important to note that the increase in the budget rate
175 does not include other articles being voted on such as appropriations and conservation
176 commission.

177 00:37:49 Jean Haskin: The cost of living increase for social security is 2% so
178 those of us on fixed incomes will have to cut our budgets to pay for the town's increase

179 01:07:18 Richmond Town Host: link to appropriation requests:

180 01:07:35 Richmond Town Host: FY26 Budget Materials - Town of

181 Richmond, VT

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