



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Reading Arpa Advisory Committee

Date: 2022-07-13

Time: 7:00 PM

Building: Reading Town Hall

Location: Community Room

Address: 64 Middlesex Avenue

Session: Open Session

Purpose: General Business

Version: Final

Attendees: **Members - Present:**

Chair Marianne Downing, Vice Chair Mark Dockser, Shawn Brandt, Geoffrey Coram, Chris Haley, Joe McDonagh, Tom Wise

Members - Not Present:

Andrew Grimes

Others Present:

Town Manager Fidel Maltez, Town Accountant Sharon Angstrom, Jackie McCarthy (remote), Lauren Buttiglieri-Communitas Recreation (remote), Cathy Zeek (remote), Christine Parks (remote), Kathy Kelly (remote), Bill Sullivan, Karen Herrick (remote), Bruce Maxwell (remote), Vanessa Alvarado, Simone Payment, John Feudo, Allison Lennon, Michele Sanphy, Melissa Pucci

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Jacquelyn LaVerde

Topics of Discussion:

This meeting was held in-person at the Library Community Room and remotely via Zoom.

Chair Marianne Downing called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

DISCUSSION: Reminder and Clarification on Allowed ARPA Uses:

Town Accountant Sharon Angstrom recapped the four eligible areas for the use of ARPA funds: public sector revenue loss, public health and economic response, premium pay for essential workers, and water, sewer and broadband infrastructure. The final rule, which was activated as of April 1, 2022, allowed a standard allowance of lost revenue up to \$10 million. Public Health and economic response broadened the definition of "impacted" and "disproportionally impacted". Premium pay can only be awarded to workers who were in-person, or who physically handled items that were physically handled by others, such as sanitation. The funds cannot be transferred for pension, debt service, to replenish reserves, to fund legal settlements, and should not be used to counter any CDC guidance.

If the Town awards funds to a non-profit, it is the responsibility of both entities to oversee how the grant money is spent. The Town would award a grant for specific purposes and how it wants the funds spent would need to be laid out in the grant agreement. For funds that are awarded to organizations that are not government services, the grants could be categorized as part of the budget for relief efforts for businesses or non-profit related to COVID, and charged to the ARPA grant.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION/VOTE - Update on time sensitivity of \$11,610 request for Trails Committee; RAAC vote on whether or not to recommend to Select Board as time sensitive request:

Kathy Kelly, Chair of the Trails Committee, explained that the Committee had applied for a grant, but did not receive it. Without the grant or ARPA Funds, the Trails Committee will only be able to build 50 feet of boardwalk. The request is time sensitive in order to finish the work during the drier weather in the summer, and have the trails ready for the Pinevale Open House in the fall.

On a motion by Shawn Brandt, and seconded by Mark Dockser, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 7-0-0 to recommend to the Select Board the allocation of \$11,620 of ARPA funds for the Trails Committee.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION/VOTE - Update on Town forest tree removal and time sensitive request of \$100,000 to fund winter 22/23 tree removal and RAAC vote on whether or not to recommend to Select Board as time sensitive request:

Town Manager Fidel Maltez and Town Forest Committee Chair Bill Sullivan reviewed the Town Forest Committee's initial request for ARPA funding, which was \$175,000-\$200,000 for two phases of dead tree removal in the Town Forest. The time sensitive request of \$100,000 allows the DPW to go out to bid ahead of November Town Meeting on one phase of tree removal in the winter of FY23. The \$100,000 might be more than enough for the tree removal and invasive species management, but with price volatility and inflation, will allow for a buffer if prices come in higher than quotes that were received a year ago.

On a motion by Marianne Downing, and seconded by Tom Wise, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 7-0-0 to recommend to the Select Board allocating \$100,000 of ARPA funds to the DPW in FY23 for Phase 3 tree cutting and invasive species removal in the Town Forest.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION - John Feudo of Burbank Y to present on request of \$96,100 ARPA funding for needs for adaptive and/or specialized recreation programs for individuals/children with disabilities:

John Feudo, Allison Lennon, and Michele Sanphy, of the Burbank YMCA, were present with Melissa Pucci to request ARPA funds to support special needs programs, including adaptive swim programs, at the Y. Membership at the Y is only back to 65% of what it was prior to the pandemic, and the Y has struggled to bring back special needs programs due to funding. The Y is requesting \$96,100 for programming to alleviate two aspects of Public Health in the community: special needs and mental health, with programming including adaptive swim lessons and adaptive water exercise for children and adults with disabilities, weekly or biweekly social group for people with disabilities, and subsidized mental health services such as music therapy, art therapy, and advisory programs with clinical partnerships. The funds are anticipated to help 3,844 people over three years. The activities would be free to participants, and not restricted to just Reading residents. However, Chris Haley asked that if a fee structure has to be implemented to ensure that Reading residents receive priority.

The Y has partnered with Angelfish to assist with adaptive swim classes and Mr. Feudo stated that the Y would gladly partner with Reading Recreation for other adaptive opportunities.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION - Reading Food Pantry - discussion on request for approximately \$124,600 various site needs, renovations, purchases, and supplemental gift cards for needy families:

Vanessa Alvarado and Simone Payment were present on behalf of the Reading Food Pantry. The Food Pantry serves approximately 120 households, and has seen sharp increases in need due to the pandemic and increase in food costs. Expenses for the Food Pantry have grown an additional \$1,500 per month. The current space is in the basement of the Old South Church, and has many challenges with storage and capacity. The request for ARPA funds totals \$124,600, which includes \$6,000 for an industrial size refrigerator, \$3,600 for supplemental gift cards, \$15,000 for a site selection consultant to expand the Food Pantry,

and \$100,000 for a fit-out and renovation for a new space. An estimate to expand the current space is \$650,000, and the Food Pantry is seeking grant funding and donations for the rest of the construction costs.

RAAC members expressed concern about the expenses for the consultant and possible renovation of church space. Ms. Alvarado and Ms. Payment assured the Committee that any space renovated for the Food Pantry would be dedicated to Food Pantry use and not utilized by the church.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION - Reading Community Garden seeking \$25,000 in ARPA funding for Mattera phase 2 projects:

Cathy Zeek presented the request for \$25,000 for the second phase of the Community Garden expansion. The goals for phase two include: increasing accessibility by adding a walkway from the handicapped parking and completing grading for the walkway and ramp, providing 25 additional gardening plots on the second terrace, and collaborating with Town groups to educate, demonstrate, and participate on sustainability, climate, and food insecurity. Materials and labor for increasing accessibility is estimated at \$7,000, and materials to construct the plots is estimated at \$18,000.

RAAC members expressed concern about expanding capacity so soon with seemingly little demand and suggested the possibility of getting more funding from the state. Mr. Maltez stated that he heard from Brad Jones this week who had submitted an earmark request for the Community Garden.

The Reading ARPA Advisory Committee took a brief recess at 9:25 pm, and reconvened at 9:31 pm.

DISCUSSION - RAAC members to review, present, discuss each member's overall first draft ARPA allocation recommendations for remaining ARPA funds in view of allowed ARPA uses:

The Committee reviewed the list of proposed and requested projects for ARPA funds, and each member provided their suggested allocations for each project. [See addendum for spreadsheet of individual allocation recommendations].

Discuss future agenda items:

Members agreed August 3rd should be the deadline for any other requests. At the next meeting on August 3rd, the Committee will revisit the spreadsheet of projects, and dedicate discussion time to topics that do not have consensus among members such as essential pay and water and sewer. They will also define a process to decide how to recommend allocating the remaining ARPA funds.

A subsequent meeting will be scheduled for August 31st to discuss their final recommendations to the Select Board.

Review/Approve minutes from 6/15/2022 meeting:

On a motion by Shawn Brandt, and seconded by Geoffrey Coram, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 7-0 to approve the meeting minutes of June 15, 2022.

On a motion by Mark Dockser, and seconded by Tom Wise, the Reading ARPA Advisory Committee voted 7-0 to adjourn at 11:18 pm.