

**Minutes of the special meeting of the  
ECONOMIC RECOVERY COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, February 23, 2022, at 7:00 p.m., via GoToMeeting

In attendance: A. Stirna, D. Lefko, K. Emerson, J. Mancini, J. Duffield, D. Bauer, and S. O'Brien; N. Gorski, *ex officio*; Gina Regolo, Eileen Blewett, and Greta Venuti

Mancini called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m., confirmed all persons in attendance, and confirmed there was a quorum of the committee.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Review and Approval of meeting minutes from January 25, 2022.** Stirna moved to approve the meeting minutes from January 25, 2022 as presented. Emerson seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Stirna, Lefko, Emerson, Bauer, and O'Brien approved the motion. Mancini and Duffield abstained. Motion passed.

**Financial Report – Accounting of Funds.** Regolo reported that the interest earned on the first payment received now totals \$464.19. The second payment is expected to be received by the town in June 2022, and will approximate \$941,000.00

**Discussion of conflict of interest/need for recusal.** Mancini addressed the concern of conflicts of interest among the committee based upon some of the requests that we have received from the town, and how we should handle these any such conflicts moving forward. Specifically, we have received requests from the library, which committee member, L. Hogarty sits on the board of and from the volunteer fire company, which Bauer is involved in the leadership of.

Gorski reported that O'Brien had reached out seek advice from town resources regarding how to properly address potential conflicts of interest. Gorski indicated that she had reached out to CCM and while they did not have any written guidance on the issue, their response was that if it feels wrong then it is wrong and members should recuse themselves from the vote. Gorski also reported that she had provided O'Brien with information from the newly elected officers training, which O'Brien recapped for the committee. She highlighted that those materials did not present anything new that the committee has not already discussed, but that they simply reviewed that if something may appear to have a look of impropriety, it would be considered a conflict of interest.

Bauer commented that when we were appointed to and joined this committee, everyone had knowledge of our personal affiliations. He further commented that he will be recusing himself from any vote on the firehouse, but that he intends to remain part of the discussion and to be helpful to the committee in speaking about the requests at hand.

Bauer made a motion that anyone having an affiliation or leadership role within an organization, who also serves on this committee, would recuse themselves from a vote regarding the recommendation to allocate funds to that organization. O'Brien seconded.

Discussion: Stirna inquired about whether this would also require recusals from members of the Board of Finance. It's a board that serves the financial interests of the town and any

expenditures made by this committee would essentially benefit the Board of Finance. Lefko commented that that would not be a conflict at all. Mancini agreed, explaining that the Board of Finance has not made a request for funds that would benefit them as a Board, whereas the library and fire company have made specific requests for funding.

Stirna further inquired whether she would be able to vote on a motion for money to be spent to offset the lost revenue of the town. Mancini reiterated that she could vote, as it was not a specific request for funds. Mancini also stated, as a point of clarification, that the final rule did away with the opportunity to use funds for lost revenue. Regolo confirmed.

Regolo commented that we shouldn't be restricting ourselves as a committee and shouldn't even worry about these conflicts. Just make our recommendations to the Board of Selectmen.

Mancini responded that we do not want anyone coming back to say that there was an apparent conflict of interest. We are not restricting our use of the funds, but making it clear that there are no conflicts or self-serving (personal or organizational) actions being taken by our committee members in their votes.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously by all committee members in attendance.

#### **Review of public input received to date.**

- a) Recap of meeting documents**
- b) Themes**
- c) Prohibited Expenses**
- d) Eligible Uses**

O'Brien provided a summary overview of the meeting documents that were provided in advance of this meeting, which included: (1) Email feedback received thru 2.22.22, as well as three (3) additional attachments that further elaborated on specific requests from Helping Hands Food Pantry and the Killingworth Volunteer Fire Company; and (2) Summary of Proposed Uses for ARPA Funds. Essentially the document of email feedback and attachments is verbatim what was received from the community following our request for public input. The Themes of Suggested Spending was something O'Brien created as a tool to highlight overall themes/interests of the town, categorize the suggestions of eligible uses of ARPA funding, and indicate those requests that do not constitute an eligible use of the ARPA funding.

Mancini opened it up for questions/discussion on the documents provided. There was no input.

Mancini elaborated that essentially, we have received proposals that fit into 3 tranches of potential spending. He recommended that we identify and allocate funds to these tranches, and that we can then work on the individual line items at a future meeting. The items identified under the categories of public health, broadband/sewer/water, and negative economic impact, amount to approximately \$100,000 in funding based upon the various requests received. Since we have about \$1.8 million in ARPA funds, if there is approximately \$100,000 in specific requests, then we could use the remaining \$1.7 million for negative economic impact/capital budget expenditures, which would reduce the overall tax base. The true benefit to the town and all its residents would be to use these funds to cover expenses like this, which would benefit everyone's tax base. Broadly speaking, this would be a way to move forward with our recommendation process for allocation of these funds, which will be further funneled and delineated with line-item suggestions.

O'Brien moved to have approximately \$1.7 million of the ARPA funding be spent on negative economic impact/capital expenditures, and the remaining approximate \$100,000 to be spent on public health and other specific requests that have been submitted by the town. Bauer seconded.

Discussion: Emerson indicated that she would like to reach out to the ambulance specifically to see what needs they may have since they did not submit a specific request to the committee. Mancini responded that he sees no issue with that but pointed out that we did receive anything from them within the allotted timeframe to submit requests, and that we have satisfied our due diligence for community outreach and communication on the availability of these funds.

Stirna also indicated that she did not have any problem with reaching out to the ambulance. She further stated that a charge of this committee was to determine the needs of the community, and that she does not feel that we have reached the entire community. The ambulance would fall under the parameters of how we can spend this money, and that we need to do more to reach out to the community. Also, we have not looked at and explored the requests that have dollar amounts to determine whether the dollar amounts are adequate or whether there is a true need. She does not want to be bound by a motion that is made by this committee at this time.

Mancini responded that in terms of community outreach, he is not sure what more we could do. We received 20 requests over a two-month period, we held a town meeting, and made publications in the Krier, as well as spread the news by word of mouth. We have satisfied the need to make the public aware of the use of these funds. If there are changes to this present configuration/breakdown of spending, we could always make an additional motion to adjust as needed. This is not to restrict but rather to organize our efforts to complete the task at hand.

O'Brien agreed that we have completed our due diligence. She indicated that we must be able to draw the line somewhere on what constitutes enough community outreach and opportunity. We cannot start handpicking organizations to engage in outreach to, simply because they chose not to submit a proposal during the open comment period. We cannot be expected to engage in outreach to every elector of the town to inquire the same.

Stirna responded that as a committee we were charged to look for needs in the town. We as a committee have not identified the needs of the town. It's nice that we have received requests, but that she would like to see the committee members spend some time identifying the needs of the town.

Bauer inquired what would have prevented us from doing that up until today. We have been transparent with our outreach. We were open with how we intended to solicit information from the community. We have done everything we agreed to as a committee to solicit proposals. The time to discuss further outreach efforts was two months ago.

Stirna expressed concern that the library's meeting room had been excluded as a potential use of these funds and needed to be revisited.

O'Brien clarified that a meeting room at the library had not been excluded as a potential use of funding. However, as it was requested the \$250,000 request they submitted was sent as a request for matching funds for another grant, which is prohibited under the rule. As such, the

specific request was placed under prohibited uses. That said, still identified under the overall themes from town input, is that there is community interest in having a meeting place, the location is simply not determined.

Lefko further commented that we also are not just going off of the requests that we have received from public input. That is only a part of what we are suggesting the funding be used for.

Mancini reiterated that Emerson can certainly engage in further outreach if she chooses, but that should not hold up the progress of this committee. If there is an additional need identified in the future, we can always make a motion to adjust later.

Bauer moved to amend the motion to have approximately \$1.7 million of the ARPA funding be spent on negative economic impact/capital expenditures, and the remaining approximate \$100,000 to be spent on public health and other specific requests that have been submitted by town organizations and/or individuals. O'Brien seconded. Motion passed unanimously by all committee members in attendance.

Vote on motion as amended: Motion passed unanimously by all committee members in attendance.

Mancini requested that we keep these meeting documents on the agenda for next month as well. As a committee we can discuss and move to adjust allocation of funds as needed based upon requests, including new information that comes our way.

Gorski announced that Mancini has been invited to attend the upcoming Board of Selectmen meeting to provide an update on the committee's work. It is still open ended as to whether any of these dollars will be applied against the upcoming budget. The Board of Selectmen meeting is scheduled for March 14, 2022.

**Adjournment.** Bauer moved to adjourn the meeting. Lefko seconded. Motion passed unanimously by all committee members in attendance.

Meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m.