

Chester ARPA Committee
Minutes from March 8th, 2022 Zoom Meeting

1. Chairman Bill Bernhart called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.
2. Present and seated for the meeting were Committee members Bill Bernhart, Charlene Janacek, Steve Cline, Andrew Gardner, Michael Cressman, Kim Megrath, Kris Pollock, Jon Joslow, Allison Abramson, and Susan Wright. Mike Jordan was not able to attend. Others in the audience included but were not limited to Rick Nygard, Virginia Carmany, Deborah Vilchek, Ed Meehan, Eddie Ricard, Cindy Lignar, Meredith Devanney.
3. Approval of minutes from 2/8/22: Motion to approve by Charlene Janacek, seconded by Susan Wright. Kris's last name is spelled Pollock. Approved by unanimous vote.
4. Audience of citizens: none at this time.
5. Old Business – Action Items from 2/8/22 meeting: Action items were completed and results provided to the committee, except the following:
 - A) There is no current budget for website modification. An ARPA Committee link was established on the town website homepage for posting communications. It is basic but adequate.
 - B) Bill Bernhart will send Kris Pollock a link to the Meriden CT website containing a simple ARPA proposal status summary. Kris will consider incorporating into our communication plan.
 - C) The specific process to deal with previously tabled proposals at the next town meeting needs to be established with the moderator of the next town meeting. A number of the tabled proposals have been revised or amended and will be voted upon at the next town meeting.
 - D) No one has been identified to transcribe Committee meeting minutes. This needs to be done to relieve the Chair and other members from this time-consuming task. This should be funded by ARPA funds.
 - E) The Chester ARPA Committee should prepare an ARPA proposal for administrative costs. This should cover Committee costs associated with our process, including transcribing minutes and communications such as printing and mailing.
 - F) Jon Joslow presented his findings as to how other area EDC's and towns approach use of ARPA funding. His summary and detailed findings are attached. Of note from his conversation with RiverCOG was the requested 15% of the county portion of our ARPA fund allocation for regional projects. Specific RiverCOG plans for this “set aside” have not been communicated, so we will need to create a proposal for this as a placeholder and keep a reserve of **\$\$122,748** to cover this should regional project plans be developed. This reserve would not need to go to town meeting vote until it is actionable. At this time we do not know if there are plans or if other towns are considering participating. Jon also suggested that EDC could create an ARPA proposal as a placeholder for business-related funding.
6. New Business
 - A) The following ARPA-SLFRF proposals were acted upon by the Committee and are forwarded to the Boards of Finance and Selectmen for approval to go to Town Meeting.
 - Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) Proposal to Repair Aging Sanitary Sewer (not to exceed \$98,480). Motion to approve by Kris Pollock, Seconded by Susan Wright and Michael Cressman, approved by unanimous vote, Charlene Janacek abstaining.
 - Information Technology updates to Town Hall and Meeting House to support hybrid (in-person and remote-access) meetings (not to exceed \$60,000). Motion to approve by Jon

- Joslow, seconded by Steve Cline,. Kris Pollock suggested that an explanation of the rationale for sourcing be provided prior to or as part of the information session. Approved by unanimous vote, Charlene Janacek abstaining.
- Jon Joslow raised the question about how we manage allocation of funds in a serial manner vs allocating percentages within the overall context, and comprehensive need assessment. These initial projects are considered urgent in nature.
 - Andrew Gardner questioned if the Food Pantry Refrigerated Truck (\$10,000) was part of the 15% regional allocation.
- B) The following new or re-submitted ARPA-SLFRF proposals have been received:
- Chester ARPA Social Services Fund (\$100,000) (Rosie Bininger)
 - Tri-Town Youth Services Bureau, Inc. (\$44,820) (Allison Abramson)
- C) ARPA-SLFRF funding is being considered for police body & car cameras, and associated IT infrastructure to meet the legislative mandate related to the Police Accountability Act. Due to lead time, demand, and supply constraints, emergency procurement is likely. ARPA Proposals will be prepared to allocate funding to reimburse the town for procurement. These proposals will require approval at a town meeting to be effective. Several CT towns are using ARPA funds for this purpose.
- D) The Chester Social Services landscape was discussed. A subcommittee has been formed to develop a unified approach to using ARPA funds to help meet the spectrum of social services needs in Chester. Committee members are Kim Megrath, Allison Abramson, Michael Cressman, and Susan Wright. It was noted by Charlene Janacek that only less than a majority of Chester ARPA Committee members can be on the subcommittee, and others may only participate as resources. Cindy Lignar volunteered to be a resource to the committee, and it is expected that the subcommittee will pull in other community members/employees as resources in developing their recommendations. The subcommittee will meet independently and report their status at the April 12 meeting. The subcommittee does not have to post meeting notices or take minutes.
- Need to assess the full spectrum of needs, urgency, sustainability, long term benefit to residents of Chester.
 - Kim mentioned six categories of need and potential services: Health & Mental Health, Technology, Transportation, Child Care, Food, Housing & Utilities. Also need to look at other sources of funds and grants.
 - This is an excellent opportunity to take a strategic, broad view of needs and solutions, with sustainability planning. How do we reach out to those that are traditionally silent on their needs, elderly, veterans, etc.
 - The Circuit Breaker program for tax relief is administered by the Assessors office by application. Can the Assessors office be used as a focal point for such outreach? Should a proposal be created to temporarily enhance the Circuit Breaker program, keeping in mind that we are seeking to do things with non-recurring costs.
 - Chester Events article submission deadline is March 18. Susan Wright will look into creating a communication.
- E) A postcard will be created and sent to residents to notify of town meeting, process, etc. Town would fund initial mailing.
- F) An ARPA Committee budget proposal should be created to fund the Committee's administrative/communication needs.

7. Audience of Citizens

- A) Virginia – Cost of mailing – postage \$500 should be able to be supported with available funds,

Susan will do graphics.

B) Chester Events article due March 18 – Susan will draft

C) Charlene/Ed Meehan will have Rosie or Assessor do an article on the Circuit Breaker. Program
Deadline for filing is April 15. Filing requires federal tax return information. Information is
available on the CT OPM website or through local tax accounting folks.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM

The next Chester ARPA Committee meeting will be April 12 at 7 PM.