

Chester ARPA Committee

Minutes of Zoom meeting held on February 8, 2022 at 7 PM

Homework prior to meeting:

Read current status presentation prepared by Michael Cressman (attachment)

Read Treasury Final Rule Overview of ARPA funding at the following link:

<https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/SLFRF-Final-Rule-Overview.pdf>

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by chairman Bill Bernhart at 7:08 PM.

The following committee members were in attendance and seated for the meeting:

- Bill Bernhart, Chair (Board of Finance)
- Charlene Janacek (First Selectwoman)
- Steve Cline (Board of Finance)
- Mike Jordan (Board of Finance)
- Andrew Gardner (Board of Finance)
- Michael Cressman
- Kimberley Megrath (Chester Community Partnership)
- Kris Pollack
- Jon Joslow (Economic Development Commission)
- Allison Abramson (Tri-Town Youth Services Bureau, Inc.)
- Susan Wright

2. Committee Operations

Meeting Norms

- This meeting is organizational and structural – we will set up the organization structure, process, and tools to do the job
- Follow the agenda, one conversation please

Committee Meeting Minutes

- **Bill Bernhart** will compile the minutes for this first meeting.
- **Charlene** will work on getting someone to transcribe future minutes.

Target Dates for town meetings?

- We are not in a position to set dates at this time, but recognize that phased implementation will probably be necessary for time-sensitive proposals.

3. Chester ARPA Funding - Current State

Proposals approved at town meeting on 12/15/21 (\$80,000):

- Food pantry refrigerated truck (\$10,000) – the other 7 towns passed funding, we are waiting for

an invoice for payment

- Chester Hose Company Fire Boat (\$70,000) – After \$90,000 budget authorization is spent then they will use ARPA money, James – project has been put out to bid, bid was accepted, we have a signed contract, have paid 1/3 of total (\$42,000), build has started, to be completed NLT 8/1/22.

Proposals tabled (allocation % in \$, \$367,820):

- Town Hall Full Service Generator - \$120,000
- Tri-Town Youth and Family Services Bureau - \$44,820
- **WPCA – Sewer system repair/replacement/upgrades - \$93,000**
- **Technology Upgrades at Chester Town Hall and Meeting House - \$60,000**
- Chester Public Health and Social Services 2 year contracted support person - \$50,000

Prioritization of these will be done at a later date, after we are operational as a committee. Bolded items are Selectmen priorities and will be processed as time-sensitive.

[Michael Cressman's current state document is an attachment to minutes.](#)

4. Work to be Assigned - individuals or subgroups

Obtain documentation of currently approved and tabled proposals

- **Charlene** will supply existing documentation of these proposals
- The process for tabled items to be processed needs to be defined clearly, by rules of order and/or legal opinion.
- Board of Selectmen Priorities: WPCA Sewer, Meeting Technology Upgrade for Meeting House/Town Hall

Create summary of ARPA funding criteria by category using Final Rule Overview, Board of Finance concerns (**Michael Cressman**)

[Michael Cressman's document on Eligible Use Categories is an attachment to the minutes](#)

- Eligible Use category and administrative simplicity
- Board of Finance concerns – be creative, think out of the box, minimize future financial impact, sustainable investments with tangible return, have public hearings, standard allowance for Loss of Revenue provides administrative simplicity, consider audit review risk, government services are services that government has been providing, need to consider other projects that should be done outside of Lost Revenue/Government Services. While this category of eligibility is broad, we can't just invent things that are not provided services, the risk of need to pay back is an important consideration.
- Jon Joslow – How are we going to prioritize categories? Look at the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), a 10 year approved plan for 2019 – 2029.
- We need to find a balance between a Top Down allocation % approach and a Bottom Up proposal-driven allocation.

Identify any COVID-19 related funding provided/disbursed under previous programs

- Education – (Kris Pollack) CES ESSER funds via COVID relief act 10/7/21 joint meeting
CES - \$183,000?, R4 - \$280,000?
- Small Businesses – PPP program
- Library

(Susan to send list of Chester businesses that received funding applied for under PPP)

(Kris and Susan to summarize Education, PPP, and Library funds received under other ARPA programs, outside of SLFRF)

Conduct rough cut needs assessment using Treasury major categories/breakdowns **(on hold)**

Replacing Lost Public Sector Revenue (Government Services)

Responding to Public Health and Economic Impacts of COVID-19

Providing Premium Pay for Essential Workers

Water/Sewer/Broadband Infrastructure

- **Jon Joslow** – Chester EDC to reach out to other area EDC's on impact to small businesses, for example Old Lyme, Clinton

Create form for funding request/proposal submission with criteria **(Steve and Michael)**

- **Bill Bernhart to send examples to Steve and Michael**

Create spreadsheet for logging submissions, status, ARPA funding approved, remaining **(Kris P)**

- Integrate proposal form and logging spreadsheet
- **Bill Bernhart to send example to Kris Pollack**

Create committee home base - Google Email address, Drive folders, Forms, etc., OR Town equivalent

- **Charlene will look into this with the town's IT contractor, CT-COMP**
- Ideally we would want to be able to log in to an account, send/receive email, file storage, communications, proposal receipt
- We should ask about Sharepoint licensing (for Microsoft-based work group software)

Create communications plan - Town website page, town-wide email, social media **(Susan Wright)**

- Is there a budget for postcard mailing for getting information? – not everyone is subscribed to town-wide email, need to get everyone on same starting point to avoid downstream back steps.
- There is no allocation in current town budget, but ARPA funding can be used for administration/consulting. Needs to be approved at town meeting as a project.
- Steve to Susan – create budget proposal to accomplish goals, get ahead of it.
- Chester Chat – Look beyond Social Media to get everybody, include people without computer technology, postcards were used by the Chester Community Partnership effectively to get info out, responses.
- Chester Events deadline is March 18.
- **Susan work with John Joslow on method to communicate to businesses.**

Create process and methods for soliciting, reviewing, and approving proposals for vote at town meeting. (on Hold)

- **Bill will draft a process flow, work with others**

Identify and develop proposals for consideration (Future)

5. Next Steps

- **Bill to send out link to POCD Section 6 Action Items and Initiatives (2019 – 2029).**
- **Please work assignments/action items to report at second Tuesday, March 8 meeting.**
- **If you can't make a meeting send a committee member info to represent you.**

6. Audience of Citizens

Julie Anne Divis

- Discussed the ARPA umbrella for COVID funding vs the SLFRF (State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds) context. The 2 tranches of SLFRF funding are the context/scope of this committee. Other funding that may be available is applied for separately, not thru this committee. This needs to be communicated, but most towns are calling their committees ARPA committees for simplicity.
- Administrative use of SLFRF funds need to be approved at town meeting as a project.
- Town call – subject matter or actual motions on town call (e.g., WPCA is a subject, follow Robert's Rules of Order, motion to amend, not really a legal issue? **Charlene to get a ruling on the required procedure. The meeting moderator will need to facilitate processing to achieve Committee goals.**

Virginia Carmany-Ruiz

- \$15000 in funding was provided to the Library, outside of SLFRF funding.
- Please attach referenced documents to meeting minutes, agendas

Meredith Devanney

- Thank you to the Committee

John Ivey

- Use the POCD document approved by the town to see what would qualify vs reaching out for just ideas
- Tie qualifications to ideas as soon as possible

Paula Fernald

- Need to publicize other sources of funds to use in lieu of ARPA SLFRF tranches
- **Susan and Kris** to provide some clarification regarding SLFRF and other ARPA funding sources

Ed Meehan

- Endorses use of the POCD. The SLFRF offers ARPA funds that we don't have to apply for. This committee should focus on SLSRF.
- Must WPCA proposal wait for the full committee process or can it be moved forward using current documentation, beta test process of amending tabled items.
- This is a complicated implementation, with impact by DEEP, Inland Wetlands Commission.

- We need to document and understand the financials of the WPCA entity.
- **Charlene will look into clarification of the actual process required. Is this a legal issue or a point of order? Can we use WPCA as example to test the required process?**
- Within the initial 15% allocation of the \$620,000 first tranche, there are now 5 projects comprising the \$93,000. They needed the allocation to form project, get bids. Allocation top down or bottom up? Balance process detail, simplicity.
- **Charlene to provide the 2 page summary provided by Ed. Is there time-phasing? Work it as a beta procedurally.**

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:56 PM.

Attachments:

[Michael Cressman's current state document](#)

[Michael Cressman's summary of ARPA-SLFRF eligible uses](#)

[Chester Plan of Conservation and Development: Consider what potential ARPA expenditures are addressed in this document which was approved by the town at a town meeting. \(Section 6\)](#)

<http://chesterct.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/POCD-2019-2029-for-distribution.pdf>