

Chester ARPA Committee Meeting

Minutes for Monday, May 9, 2022, 7pm, ZOOM

Call to Order - The meeting was called to order at 7:07 PM by Bill Bernhart

Seating of Committee Members

Committee members present were Bill Bernhart, Allison Abramson, Michael Cressman, Steve Cline, Jon Joslow, Kris Pollock. Not attending – Susan Wright, Kim Megrath, Charlene Janacek, Andrew Gardner, Mike Jordan.

Others – Rick Nygard (BoF), Bill Myers (Chester Land Trust)

Approval of Meeting Minutes from 4/11/2022

Motion to approve by Jon Joslow, seconded by Kris Pollock, Approved

Proposal status summary

Kris Pollock reviewed the proposal tracking spreadsheet tool.

The American Legion proposal was placed in the Economic and Cultural Development category.

The town permitting automation proposal was placed in Technology.

The Chester Land Trust proposal was placed in Infrastructure.

The Town Hall Generator proposal is on hold with Board of Finance pending further specification and quotation data.

A 5/9/22 summary version has been added to the town website. Thanks Kris!

Sub-Committee Reports

- **Social Services Sub-Committee**
 - Proposals known to be in the works include an Affordable Housing Trust Fund and Child Care Access for the 2022-2023 school year. These are in the early research and development stage.

- **Proposal Process Sub-Committee**
 - Further development of proposal assessment tools such as a scoring matrix were discussed and put on hold pending receipt of a broader spectrum of proposals. We are currently operating on a

- rolling evaluation basis but there is concern with this approach.
- Bill Bernhart, as a focal point, should be made aware of any proposal initiatives as we become aware of them.
 - It is important that the community be aware of the need to formulate and submit proposals or at least alert the Committee that proposals may be submitted so we can manage allocations across categories.
 - Bill Bernhart recommends that the committee continue thinking about an evaluation process and tool so we are ready to use them if needed.

Discussion and Committee disposition of ARPA Proposal Submissions

- **American Legion Post 97 – War Memorial Correction and Upgrade**
 - **Final Rule includes Veteran organizations (501 C (19)) as eligible non-profits.**
 - **Final Rule also provides more simplicity for funds accepted as Lost Revenue, which the Town of Chester has done.**
 - **Jon Joslow stated his support. Kris Pollock agreed.**
 - **Michael Cressman asked if this could be categorized as Government Service. Concern about risk of repayment if outside of Government Services.**
 - **Steve Cline supports at this time as a first come, first served proposal, but also concerned about audit risk of repayment.**
 - **Bill to check with Peter Evankow, town accountant, on eligibility question in the context of accepting allocation as Lost Revenue.**
 - **Kris raised question of perception of favoritism if we treat proposals inconsistently.**
 - **Steve Cline suggested we should put this one aside pending further information, receipt of future proposals that may be more COVID impactful. Jon agreed.**
 - **Concerns expressed that proposal did not provide linkage to COVID.**
 - **Allison continues to advocate for an objective evaluation process to resolve our current concern that we do not have a comparative method of processing future proposals.**
 - **Kris asked if this is what the Veterans population of Chester wants.**
 - **Bill to ask submitter Art Christianson to research what other American Legion posts are doing regarding seeking ARPA funding, provide current quotation, linkage to COVID impact.**

- Also need to clarify eligibility/reimbursement risk.
 - Bill to also ask Meredith Devanney (town Veterans advocate) about COVID impact to veterans, use of ARPA funds.
 - Bill Bernhart made the motion to put this proposal aside pending answers to questions raised. Seconded by Kris. Approved by all.
- **ARPA Chester Land Trust Fund**
 - Increased traffic in open spaces, particularly Carini and Motley preserves. Access to the Carini Preserve will be compromised by Japanese Knotweed.
 - Funding to work on knotweed problem and unsafe trees at Carini. Volunteer efforts have been ineffective, need professional help. Also improvements to Motley preserve garden area.
 - Michael stated he did not expect recurrent costs after professional project, that the problem would be managed by volunteers after the ARPA funded effort, a 3-4 year project.
 - Bill Meyers stated that the CLT is currently funded by about 125 membership dues. They have not been receiving additional donations.
 - Knotweed has a subterranean rhizome root system, flowers in August/September producing many seeds, and can reroot by simply being in contact with ground.
 - The commercial system of eradication has not been specified.
 - There will be a continuing need to fund invasives control beyond ARPA funding - heads up to the Board of Finance for continued support and funding.
 - Bill Bernhart stated that some towns are using ARPA funds to do pilot projects to demonstrate success and support future funding approaches.
 - Jon Joslow asked about adding to town budget, but Bill Meyers stated that they are a 501c(3) and own 16 properties.
 - Bill Bernhart asked if other Land Trusts are pursuing ARPA funding. Bill Meyers offered to research. Connecticut Land Conservation Council (135 trusts) communicated that land trusts are eligible for ARPA funding. Amy Patterson is Director. Bill Meyers will research precedent being set by other towns' land trusts. Bill Meyers will research/develop a position paper on justification/eligibility for ARPA funding. To provide to Michael and Bill.
 - Bill Bernhart and Kris moved to defer action pending further

information. Jon Joslow seconded, approved by vote, Michael being a nay vote.

- **Online Permitting**
 - **Michael questioned recurring cost structure for startup, maintenance.**
 - **Kris asked about Deep River contingent funding, buy-in and participation over time.**
 - **Jon Joslow suggested this should be funded through town operations. Board of Finance will have concerns about recurring costs. We need to collect this information and pass on to Board of Finance.**
 - **Discussion was deferred until the next meeting.**
 - **Bill to contact submitter.**
 - **Motion to defer made by Steve, seconded by Kris. No action was planned on this item due to being received same day.**

- **Informational Meeting Planning**
 - **Michael has drafted an update on the Chester ARPA Committee for presentation at informational meeting or distribution.**
 - **This informational meeting is general in nature.**
 - **Informational meetings or Q&A sessions on ARPA proposals will be held on same date, prior to Town Meeting. Our last ZOOM informational meeting on ARPA proposals was sparsely attended by the Community, so a separate meeting is of questionable value for the effort.**

Audience of Citizens - There were no comments.

Adjournment - Motion made by Jon Joslow, seconded by Steve Cline, Approved. Meeting was adjourned at about 9 PM.

Submitted by Bill Bernhart, Chester ARPA Committee