



RECEIVED

By Darlene Brady at 10:25 am, Jun 06, 2022

TOWN OF KENT

ARPA Needs Assessment Committee

Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 20, 2022 @ 4:30 pm

Members in attendance:

Connie Manes

Joe Agli

Patricia Oris

Glenn Sanchez

Barbara Herbst

Ruth Epstein

Absent:

Craig Bibb

No members of the public were in attendance:

-
1. The meeting was called to order at 4:34 pm
 2. Joe Agli asked for an amendment to the agenda to include a discussion of the ARPA Survey results. The agenda for the meeting was approved with the addition of Joe Aglie's suggestion on a motion made by Barbara Herbst and seconded by Joe Agli.
 3. The minutes from the April 13 meeting were approved on a motion made by Barbara Herbst and seconded by Joe Agli. Connie Manes voted against approval of the minutes because she felt they did not accurately portray how close we came to agreement on category amounts in the March 30th meeting, and because not all opinions expressed by all committee members were included in the minutes.
 4. Connie Manes reported that the BoS did respond to her email requesting a special meeting for the presentation of ARPA findings and recommendations. They offered 2 possible dates for the meeting, May 4th or May 11th. The committee chose May 11th as the date for our presentation.
 5. Craig Bibb's written recommendations for the disbursement of ARPA funds were read into the minutes of the meeting by Connie Manes and they are included here:

Unfortunately, I will again be traveling on Wednesday 4/20, but I will be able to attend our committee meeting on 4/27 and throughout May. I viewed the 4/13 zoom recording and will do the same for tomorrow's meeting.

I have attached my revised allocations in a spreadsheet and summarized it below.
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1_FtNwLGzipehuuUT3fu_QSdIEER9rrVC/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109691586622429488845&rtpof=true&sd=true. Please read this in to the minutes as required by state transparency rules.

Assist residents	\$40,000	5%
Assist businesses	\$40,000	5%

Non-profits \$83,000 10%

Assist residents – The almost \$2 trillion of federal assistance for individuals who lost income due to Covid was so large that median household net worth and household savings both rose during the pandemic even with the spring/summer 2020 spike in unemployment. This included an additional \$2400 per month in unemployment benefits , the waiver of some taxes on these benefits, a direct cash payment of \$1200 per person plus \$500 per child, waiver of early withdrawal penalties from retirement accounts, mortgage and rent forbearance etc... Overall, individuals have already received an extraordinary amount of assistance from the federal government. Our survey asked residents if they suffered an income or job loss but did not ask about offsetting benefits from the CARES Act and other programs. **Our committee has essentially no information on the number of residents who are suffering hardship.** That said, there must be some individuals whose need exceeds the benefits they have already received. Thus, my \$40,000 allocation to assist residents. Per our survey results, Kent residents want to help individuals in need (the second most popular response). Given the Town of Kent's lack of experience in providing direct relief to individuals, I believe that non-profits are a better option for finding and evaluating Kent residents still in need. Several survey comments noted the importance of reserving funds for low-income individuals who are truly in need.

Assist businesses – Covid had a terrible impact on some businesses such as those in the hospitality business while it proved to be a surprising boon to others such construction. Here again, the federal government has already provided extraordinary assistance to businesses including \$500 billion in government loans and \$851 billion in loans and grants to small businesses primarily via the Paycheck Protection Program. Patricia Orr's interview with a nail salon owner made it clear that at least some small business owners were bypassed by these programs because they were either newly opened or did not have a solid bank relationship. Small businesses that can demonstrate losses not already offset by other government assistance should be able to apply for Kent's ARPA funds and thus my \$40,000 allocation for small business assistance. **Again, our committee has no data on the number of Kent businesses that suffered hardship nor on the amount of their need and the Town of Kent has no demonstrated skill at evaluating the financial condition of businesses.** Direct assistance to small businesses should be contingent on demonstrating need and disclosure of benefits already received. Our survey indicated that Kent residents want to use ARPA funds to assist small businesses in need.

Non-profits – The committee's non-profit focus groups and one on one meetings made it evident that there are residents suffering from mental health and other issues stemming from Covid and that the pandemic had a negative impact on their fundraising efforts. Thus, I allocated \$83,000 or 10% of the funds to non-profits to both assist their ongoing efforts and to help them get caught up. Our needs assessment survey demonstrated that helping non-profits was important to town residents.

Kent Volunteer Fire Department - The single most important use of ARPA funds per the respondents to our survey. KVFD is clearly Covid relevant and it also had to curtail some fundraising efforts. Fully funding their \$166,000 request for ARPA funds is consistent with the needs recognized by our community. Funds allocated to the fire department benefit all Kent residents.

Infrastructure – Using ARPA funds to improve Kent's Infrastructure also benefits all residents. Infrastructure is a specifically eligible use of ARPA funds and there is no requirement that infrastructure spending be Covid related. The town of Kent has significant infrastructure needs for building improvements, recreation facilities, sewage, drainage etc... which exceed the total amount of funds available. This being the largest

demonstrated need and most equitable use of the funds I allocated \$300,000 to infrastructure. Survey respondents were supportive of spending to improve town infrastructure. Improved recreational facilities will clearly help the town cope with future pandemics. Improving recreation was also a common theme in survey comments. Our survey of other towns uses of ARPA funds showed that a significant, and often the largest percentage, was allocated to infrastructure projects.

Municipal – This broad category is also perfectly equitable in that it benefits all residents. KCS did an good job of managing through the pandemic but the time away from in-person classes resulted in many children lagging academically and socially. Multiple sources told the committee of students struggling to readjust socially including a spike in disruptive behavior. Improved after school programs both at KCs and the recreation department would address these needs. Our survey and focus groups also highlighted the difficult isolation of many seniors. Using ARPA funds for community programs that were targeted at or simply inclusive of seniors would help address this important need. For these reasons, I allocated the remainder of the ARPA funds, \$192,855, to municipal purposes. As with infrastructure, a large percentage of ARPA funds was allocated to municipal uses by surrounding towns.

After the discussions at the last two meetings, I think it is important to re-emphasize that the ARPA Assessment Committee's recommendations be based first and foremost on the input that we have received from the community and that those recommendations should be consistent with the data/input that we've collected.

As shown in my spreadsheet, there is not a huge difference in the mean and median allocations. Thus, I am indifferent to using either. I agree with Glenn that we should attempt to close the wide disparity in allocations to infrastructure and individuals.

6. Connie Manes made a motion to approve the following category amounts for ARPA disbursement recommendations:

\$160,000 for individuals

\$150,000 for businesses

\$190,000 for non-profits

Barbara seconded the motion. Discussion ensued and the motion was voted down by committee members.

7. Joe Agli made a motion to reduce the amount of money allocated for individuals to \$70,000. There was no second, so the motion failed.

8. Ruth Epstein made a motion and Barbara Herbst seconded it to approve the following category amounts for ARPA disbursement allocations:

\$100,000 for individuals

\$100,000 for businesses

\$200,000 for non-profits

\$150,000 for municipal projects

\$150,000 for infrastructure projects

\$75,000 (approximate) to the KVFD

Discussion ensued, the motion carried, all voted in favor except Joe Agli.

9. Joe Agli expressed the view that it was unfair that Craig Bibb did not get to vote on the motion described above. Connie Manes stated that all committee members know that votes can be taken in any meeting of the ARPA Needs Assessment Committee, and we cannot delay voting to accommodate absent members if we have a quorum

10. The Committee decided to add a link to the ARPA Survey Results to the Kent town website and to the Kent Community page.
11. Barbara Herbst will produce a chart of all ARPA fund proposals received thus far. The chart can be used by committee members to register their support or rejection of specific proposals for discussion purposes.

These are draft minutes. Corrections may be made by the Committee at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to subsequent meeting minutes for possible corrections and approval of these minutes.

ARPA Assessment Committee charge: to conduct a needs assessment to make recommendations to the BoS on potential uses for the ARPA funds.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer
41 Kent Green Boulevard, P.O. Box 678, Kent, CT 06757-0678
Phone: (860) 927-4627 ☐ Fax: (860) 927-www.townofkentct.org