

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN COMMISSION**

MARCH 22, 2022

5:00 P.M.

**Town Hall Meeting Room, 83 Mountain Road, Suffield CT
Hybrid Meeting**

Present: First Selectman Colin Moll, Michael Stevens, Brian Kost, Mel Chafetz and Tom Frenaye

First Selectman Moll called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

Public Comment

None

Approval of the minutes from the February 15, 2022 Special Meeting of the American Rescue Plan Commission

M. Stevens motioned and **T. Frenaye** seconded to approve the minutes from the February 15, 2022 Special meeting of the American Rescue Plan Commission. **Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.**

Discussion of ARPA Funds

First Selectman Moll opened the discussion and provided a recap of the prior meeting on February 15th and asked the commission if they had been able to narrow down their ideas since then.

M. Stevens reported that after reviewing the capital items list his top 3 choices would be to move forward with the pumper truck and police cruisers, which are number one priorities, and the Beneski turf field which is identified as a number two priority. The turf field has only one season left and if replacement is put off any longer than that it will become a safety hazard and there would be potential to shut it down.

T. Frenaye agreed with **Mr. Steven's** suggestions and also brought up a plan that Somer's has put together to assist their small businesses. He feels it might be worth considering.

M. Chafetz stated that he would like to see some of the money spent on possible projects at Sunrise Park and investment in open spaces.

B. Kost shared with the group a spreadsheet that he had created and provided detail on his thought process. He provided an overview of the rules as he understands them, the formulas for estimations of revenue losses historically and compared it against revenue losses due to COVID and explained how this will direct the way the commission moves forward with the reporting and spending of the funds. Based on this information, **Mr. Kost** feels that all the group will have to do in order to ensure the town will not need to return the money is to tag the use of the money, over two years in the budget, to items that add up to \$4.6 million dollars which should satisfy all the reporting requirements associated with the funds.

On the spreadsheet **Mr. Kost** prepared, he assumed half of the funds would be spent in the current year budget and half in the following year's budget. He explained his rationale for calculations and proposed the following big ticket items for the 1st year: COVID Health Costs, Pumper Truck and Pavement Management. For the second budget year he proposed Beneski Field Replacement, Pavement Management and some type of action on the Bridge Street Park. He explained that on the Capital sheet in the budget it will be noted that these items were funded with COVID monies which will satisfy the reporting obligation and leave a clear trail for the usage of the \$4.6 million. He went on to explain that by taking this "large ticket item" approach it will require almost no administrative burden and would most likely eliminate the risk/likelihood of being audited and noted that these tagged projects would have been done regardless of whether or not the town received the additional funds

Discussion continued amongst the members with regard to **Mr. Kost's** suggestions and other ideas that the members had been entertaining. Social service needs, mental health services, town garage area renovations, broadband installation to foster economic development, facilities improvements at Babb's Beach or Sunrise Park, assistance to schools and possible bonuses for town employees who were instrumental in keeping the town open during the worst of the pandemic were discussed. Each member gave their opinion on the options being suggested.

First Selectman Moll approved of all proposed amounts with the exception of the \$750K allocated to Pavement Management in the second year. **M. Chafetz** liked the idea of funds being allocated to "parks and recreation capital" which will allow for improvements to a number of areas and also clarifies that it is NOT being allocated to the Parks and Recreation Department. **T. Frenaye** is in agreement with the allocations, however, he is still stuck on the community aid aspect and the vulnerable population here in Suffield. He would like to see more money going towards this group. The members discussed reaching out to Suffield Community Aid Director Janet Frechette to discuss the possibility of allocating funds to her organization for programming that could assist residents struggling with COVID related issues. It was suggested that Suffield Community Aid would need to present a plan on how the funds would be spent. All were in agreement.

First Selectman Moll noted that the group seemed to be in agreement on the majority of the funding allocations at this point and he feels that leaving an amount undetermined designation for capital projects at this point would be fine.

Revised allocation proposed for 1st year (\$2.1 M):

- \$500K COVID Health Costs reimbursement
- \$750K Beneski Field
- \$100K Pumper Truck (down payment)
- \$650K Pavement Management
- \$100K Suffield Community Aid

Revised allocation proposed for 2nd year (\$2.5M):

- \$750K Pumper Truck
- \$1M Parks and Recreation Enhancements
- \$100K Community Aid
- \$650 To Be Determined Capital Projects

It was decided that the proposed amounts were agreeable to all and that a meeting should be scheduled in the near future. **First Selectman Moll** offered to speak with Ms. Frechette, check the calendar for meeting availability and set up a meeting for next week.

M. Chafetz motioned and B. Kost seconded to adjourn at 5:55 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen O. Lambert
Recording Secretary