

CARES Act, ARPA Funds, and the City of Medford's Proposal

Mayor Breanna Lungo-Koehn

Since March 2020, we have endured many challenges both individually and as a community. Dealing with a rapidly evolving and unforeseen global health crisis and a resulting economic recession required a multi-tiered approach, quick thinking, and creative budgeting to keep our community and our residents safe while also protecting our financial reserves.

Thankfully, we were able to protect our city's financial future and even secured a AA+ bond rating with a "stable outlook" from our bond rating agency, in the midst of a national recession. The great news is that our bond rating was given before we even received the assistance provided through federal funding including both Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Both of these funding sources have since allowed us to address critical health and recovery issues in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the nearly \$50 million we will continue to receive over the next three years in ARPA funding will continue to aid in our recovery and rebuilding efforts across a number of areas until 2026.

While CARES Act funding must be spent by October 29, 2021 (after an extension from December 2020), Medford's allocation from ARPA will continue to be distributed over the next three fiscal years. We are planning a series of public discussions to help us determine how to spend the rest of this funding, but first we, like many surrounding communities, are in the process of hiring a Federal Funds Manager who will be critical in diving deeply into the process, understanding each area of eligible funds and how best to propose spending those dollars in the Medford community. This is your money, and you should know *how* it is being spent, *where* it's being spent and *why* it is being spent, but being guided by a dedicated staff member with the expertise and experience in these matters will be critical in helping us make the best possible decisions, together. (*For a breakdown of eligible spending buckets from the US Treasury, visit www.medfordma.org/arpa_spending-buckets.*) In the meantime, there are critical needs that must be met *now*, so we have already targeted \$8.6 million of our overall allocation for the most pressing needs within our FY22 budget.

Here is a quick overview of how most of our federal funding has been spent to date:

CARES Act

- \$4.5 million invested in public schools, including:
 - 1:1 Chromebooks for students
 - Software and hardware for teachers during remote learning
 - Filtration and air quality upgrades
 - COVID-19 testing and pooled testing protocols
- Vaccination efforts across the city and school district
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) across city and school district
- Sanitization and cleaning products for all city and school buildings

- Launching and expanding multilingual outreach efforts
 - Citywide mailers
 - Multilingual Resource Line
- Staffing needs
 - Hired a dedicated emergency preparedness coordinator, front desk staff, nursing staff, and a social worker
 - Brought on a communication specialist focused on public health and COVID-19

ARPA

- \$8.6 million has already been allocated for our FY22 budget, which took careful planning.
- Currently planning on over \$1 million in sewer and stormwater infrastructure improvement projects.
- Beginning construction on selected City streets. Work includes adjusting grades, drainage upgrades, repaving of road, sidewalk and access points.
- Generating proposals for flood mitigation efforts for vulnerable areas.
- Expanded behavioral health outreach efforts and resources & beginning hiring process for an inhouse epidemiologist to assist with identifying and preventing future disease outbreaks.
- Started work to establish a resiliency hub — a community emergency planning site that will assist and coordinate emergency relief efforts, as well as a substantial investment in testing infrastructure.

I have always said that a vision without a plan is just a hallucination. This is a once in a lifetime influx of funding and will have lasting effects throughout our community for decades. Creating a plan to spend almost \$50 million is not something I will do overnight. It takes thoughtful, measured planning with community input, constant reevaluation and ultimately trust in the vision for a better Medford. We are on our way to making that vision a reality. This is our moment to truly re-envision our City.

Help us do that.