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AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA)

August 7, 2023 – Special Joint Meeting with the Board of Selectman  
Via Hybrid

**Members Present:** Chair Dave Koji, Vice Chair Greg Barden, Stan Soby, Jenn Cox, Marjorie Mlodzinski, Jack Faski, Denise Mizla

**Others Present:** First Selectman Andreas Bisbikos, Jason LaChapelle, Rosemary Coyle, Debbie Bates, Denise Turner, Stacy Farber (UHY), Claire Collins (UHY)

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

First Selectman Bisbikos called the Board of Selectman meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

**2. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Dave Koji called the ARPA Committee Ad-Hoc committee to order at 6:02 pm.

**3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**4. CITIZENS' COMMENTS**

Gerrie Transue commented that she believes all projects are worthy. She reminded people that \$575,000 was donated to the food bank. She also commented about individuals getting payments – this would have confidentiality issues.

Mike Egan commented that he has some concerns about balancing needs of the town with balancing individual needs.

Katherine Paquet commented about the parameters of the Social Services Grant. She thinks that spending money on town projects would help her and the entire community.

Bernie Dennler asked if Social Services is able to administer the expanded program and have it cast a wider net.

Ron Silberman commented that the elephant in the room is that the money was wasted on other town projects that should have been taken care of years ago. We need more preventative maintenance.

Michelle Millington loves the idea of this, but you has concerns. She is an eligibility officer and has to follow state social services guidelines. Giving people money may impact their ability to get other social services.

Michael Dubreuil stated that he would like to see a vote by ARPA to give direct cash assistance. He cited Cambridge MA as a town that gave direct cash assistance.

Deanna Bouchard stated concerns about the language ARPA has used and she supports Jason's program.

Mary Bylone asked what the status was of the motion put forth by Rosemary Coyle.

**5. DISCUSSION OF THE COLCHESTER GRANT PROGRAM**

- a. Review and discuss other community's programs

C. Collins spoke about the Trumbull Emergency Assistance Program and the town of Groton

Question for Val: Can she administer a program that has different parameters than what she currently uses for Social Services. How can this expanded program be administered? Would more people be assisted if UHY worked in conjunction with Social Services?

D Turner asked if they received cash through Social Services, would that be taxable? C Collins answered Yes.

S Farber chimed in to say that facilitating the business program was time consuming. The magnitude for this individual program could likely be more time consuming and have more administration costs, potentially.

M. Mlodzinski asked about the timing of when citizens could receive assistance.

D Bates asked about the income requirements. C Collins responded that it was up to the town to determine the cap. A household making \$250,000 is not allowed to get assistance. Andreas and Dave asked about the middle class and a number that could be used. 300% of poverty level was discussed, approximately \$90,000.

Jason is in favor of giving people direct cash back to anyone who received a stimulus check.

S Farber mentioned that if we give direct money to people it will be taxed.

R Coyle liked in the Trumbull application that there was a way to put down a certain amount. She reiterated that we need to go through Social Services. She thinks we can broaden the support by using Social Services to be creative. She also said that the projects that Mike cited were for low income people.

A Bisbikos wants to make sure that there is no discrimination between town versus business. Jason asked the same question. C Collins said that no, the town can create any class. The town can say how they will treat the individual.

D Koji suggested that C Collins come back with a written statement about different applications for town versus individual citizens.

G Barden asked if direct payments to vendors would be something Jason would consider.

D Mizla said that perhaps Val could have another pie and the second pie would be ARPA and divided up.

## **B. Discussion of UHY correspondence**

No discussion

## **C. Discuss and identify the parameters of the program**

It was discussed that Val will need to part of the discussion

Stan would like to do more research to give guidance  
Areas to expand services  
Median Income Threshold

**D. Timeline**

Program Deadline: Vote by end of September 2023, Implement by October 2023

Meeting Schedule: Every Monday if needed, starting next Monday, to discuss the administration. Val from Social Services and the Finance Director will be invited.

Offsite expectations: A Bisbikos strongly encouraged ARPA and the BoS to give C Collins questions, i.e., the discrimination question.

**6. Citizens Comments**

Katherine Paquet hopes that the funds go toward helping those that really need it.

M Millington does not want anyone to think this is not being done in a fair manner. She wanted to state that an income cap needs to be relative and be clear. She supports a voucher program.

Mike Egan said that the bridges in town have not been inspected in 30 years.

Krista Kardys stated that she would like to see the town help the most vulnerable.

Gerrie Transue stated that this is not a stimulus program, not a needs based. Does the cost of having UHY cost the town or the project?

Andrea DePaola thanked Jason and Andreas bringing this initiative forward.

Deanna Bouchard would like direct cash payment and to have a simple application.

John Farrell commented that we should fund those in most need.

Jason LaChapelle commented that he was misinterpreted about his ice cream comment.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN BY:** R. Coyle

**SECOND BY:** D. Bates

**MOTION TO ADJOURN BY:** G. Barden

**SECOND BY:** M. Mlodzinski

Meeting adjourned at 8:27 pm.