

TOWN OF WINDSOR, CONNECTICUT

Special Meeting Notice



Zoom Instructions

Dialing in by Phone Only:

Please call: **312 626 6799 or 646 558 8656**

1. When prompted for participant or meeting ID enter: **865 7371 3730**
2. You will then enter the meeting muted. During Public Comment if you wish to speak press *9 to raise your hand.

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Please go to the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86573713730>

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2. Only if your computer has a microphone for two way communication, then during Public Comment if you wish to speak press **Raise Hand** in the webinar control. If you do not have a microphone you will need to call in on a phone in order to speak.
3. During Public Comment if you do not wish to speak you may type your comments into the Q&A feature.

AGENCY: Town Council

DATE: January 31, 2022

PLACE: Hybrid meeting - via Zoom and In-person at Town Hall in Council Chambers

TIME: 6:30 PM

AGENDA


1. Call to Order
2. Public Comment
3. *Discussion regarding potential allocation of American Rescue Plan Act funding
4. Public Comment
5. Adjournment

*Attachment

Agenda Item Summary

Date: January 31, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the Town Council

Prepared By: Peter Souza, Town Manager 

Subject: American Rescue Plan Act Funding

Background

The town will be directly receiving federal funds over the course of the next two years through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). This is a unique opportunity for our community to work together to meet a variety of needs created by the far reaching pandemic.

An overview of the American Rescue Plan Act was provided to the Town Council in July and a Council Workshop was held in August to further discuss the overall program guidelines and eligible use categories.

On January 12th staff presented an overall framework and potential allocation plan for the community and Town Council to begin reviewing and considering. Attached is a brief description of each element of the proposed allocation plan for Town Council discussion and consideration. The desire is for the Town Council in the month or so to endorse the overall allocation plan framework, including the proportion of funds towards capital, and provide staff with direction on which elements to prioritize and initiate further planning on. Specific funding authorization requests will be brought to the Town Council for consideration as the program planning continues and firmer cost estimates are determined.

Discussion/Analysis

The draft allocation plan is cognizant of the reality that the funding is not recurring in nature and funds need to be obligated by December 31, 2024 and fully expended by December 31, 2026. Therefore staff is suggesting that at least approximately 60% of the \$8.5M be considered for capital or infrastructure projects. The remaining resources are suggested to be used to shore up our small business sector, stimulate workforce training and development efforts, enhance our neighborhoods and help address the emotional, mental and physical health needs of our residents

The draft allocation plan follows a general framework consisting of four Areas of Focus:

- Competitive & Sustainable Economy
 - Small Business & Nonprofit Grants
 - Workforce Development and Training
 - Small Business Incubator & Technical Assistance
- Safe, Strong, Diverse Neighborhoods & Families
 - Housing Rehabilitation and Energy Efficiency
 - Elderly Housing Storm Drainage Improvements
 - Neighborhood Enhancement Projects, Programs & Events
 - Windsor Volunteer Ambulance Operating Grant

- Discovery Center & Caring Connection Operating Contributions
- Community Health & Wellness
 - Expand Mental Health Clinician Services through police department
 - Youth Mental Health Services
 - Community Mental Health Awareness & Training
 - Health & Fitness Initiatives
- Capital & Infrastructure Investment

Financial Impact

At this time, the town has received \$4.25M in ARPA funds. In October the Town Council authorized \$500,000 to be used for the small business and not-for-profit grant program and an additional \$125,000 was approved on December 20th. The second portion of the federal funds is expected to be received by the town late this spring or in the summer.

Other Board Action

None

Recommendations

This item is being presented as an overview to provide an opportunity for the Town Council to continue reviewing and discussing the preliminary allocation plan.

Possible next steps for the Council to consider include providing direction to staff relative to the proportion of overall funding the Council desires to allocate towards capital projects and identifying program or service areas that staff can initiate further research and development on.

Attachments

Potential Allocation Summary and Plan

Allocation Summary

ALLOCATION SUMMARY

COMPETITIVE ECONOMY	1,580,000
SAFE, STRONG, DIVERSE NEIGHBORHOODS & FAMILIES	1,150,000
COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELLNESS	490,000
CAPITAL INVESTMENT ALLOCATION	5,130,000
Sub-total	8,350,000
Project Management / Administration	150,000
TOTAL ALLOCATED	8,500,000
EXPECTED REVENUE	8,500,000
UNALLOCATED	0

Competitive & Sustainable Economy

Small Business & Nonprofit Grants (Previously Authorized)

Council authorized a grant program to provide direct financial assistance to small businesses and nonprofits with 25 or fewer employees that demonstrated a financial hardship resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Grants totaling \$530,000 have been awarded to 56 entities (including 12 grants to nonprofit organizations). Of the for-profit businesses 43% were minority-owned and 51% were women owned.

School to Business Career Connection* \$285,000 over 3 summers

Building off our successful Summer Teen Employment Program or STEP, it is proposed to expand the STEP model to incorporate business and not-for-profit partners to provide paid work co-op and internship programs for our High School juniors and seniors, as well as recent graduates. This program would ideally serve between 15 to 20 participants each summer for 3 years. Funds would be used to pay the participants either an hourly wage or a stipend as well as to hire part-time “coaches” who would work with participants on a range of work readiness skills such as developing a resume, interviewing, time management and interpersonal communication. Possible partners include: Windsor Public Schools, Windsor Chamber of Commerce, and Capitol Area Workforce Partners

Workforce Development - Municipal Apprenticeship Program* \$520,000 over 2+ yrs

Develop an on-the-job training program combining hands on work and classroom instruction. This will help expose participants to jobs and careers within local government, develop their technical and interpersonal skills as well as build a talent pipeline for both the town and private sector. It is envisioned the program will provide full-time employment for three cohorts, each lasting 9 or 10 months in length. Depending on pay scale and benefits offered each cohort would include 3 individuals. Field work would be combined with offering a range of other formal training opportunities to help participants create a technical and professional portfolio. Ideally first preference for participation in the program would be provided to town residents. Positions could be offered in a range of areas such as public works, library, administrative services, public safety, marketing / public information and recreation.

Small Business Incubator & Support Center \$150,000 over 2 yrs

Facilitate the establishment of a small business support center or “hub” in Windsor Center. A social enterprise entity focused on providing shared or co-work space, small business collaborations and technical / professional assistance to small businesses and start-ups is interesting in locating in a currently vacant Broad Street property. Grant funds are proposed to be used to support establishing the shared work and collaboration spaces, write-down a portion of start-up costs, as well as provide resources for technical support and education programs geared to existing small businesses and those aspiring to start or grow a new venture. This type of shared work space combined with programs, seminars and workshops will bring new entrepreneurial activity and increased energy to town center.

* Possible ongoing program

Safe, Strong, Diverse Neighborhoods & Families

Housing Rehabilitation & Energy Efficiency* \$500,000 over 3 years

Multi-family Rehabilitation: It is proposed that up to \$300,000 be allocated for low interest forgivable loans to address various building and life safety code repairs in affordable rental properties that have between two and four units. There is currently several multi-unit rental property owners that have expressed a need and desire to participate in our existing Community Development Block Grant funded rehabilitation program, but are currently on our waiting list. Among other criteria, eligibility would be based on rental unit affordability and the property owner would need to match the amount of requested loan funds. A maximum loan amount per unit would be established. Projects totaling 36 units could be completed over a three year period assuming a \$7,500 loan per unit plus 10% for project management.

Energy Efficiency Forgiveness Loan Program: It is proposed that \$200,000 be allocated towards this initiative. The initiative aims to incentivize income eligible homeowners to take advantage of energy efficiency programs currently available such as Eversource's *Home Energy Solutions* (HES) and *Home Energy Solutions – Income Eligible* (HES-IE) programs, by providing funding to close a financial gap. Eligible work includes window replacement, insulation, heating systems and water heaters. Eligible homeowners would have access up to \$5,000 of funds per unit. Thirty-five units could be completed after accounting for program management and administrative costs.

Fitch Court Senior Housing Stormwater Improvements \$250,000

The Town Council has expressed interest in possibly having the town participate in partially funding solutions to address storm or ground water drainage issues at the Fitch Court senior housing apartments. Field survey work to identify site grading, elevations of public and private storm drainage structures as well as confirming locations of various site improvements has been completed. This information is now being used to identify possible options on how to address the water issues. Information on options is expected to be available in 30 to 45 days.

Neighborhood Enhancement Projects, Programs and Events \$100,000 over 2+ years

This allocation is proposed to help support community organizations, civic groups, town boards and commissions as well as not-for-profit entities to develop or enhance community programs or events, along with small scale improvement projects as a way to bring our residents together as neighbors and community members. Grant funding parameters and guidelines would be developed and presented to the Town Council for approval.

Discovery Center & Montessori Early Education Center Operating Grant \$100,000

The pandemic has drastically impacted the revenues and expenses of the Discovery Center. The center has been forced to utilize a substantial portion of their approximately \$400,000 accumulated retained earnings (cash reserves) in the past 24 months. This is due to the limited enrollment coupled with increased part-time staffing needs to accommodate recommended classroom cohorts and the inability to cross teach staff among classrooms, all caused by the pandemic. These funds would be used to make minor building repairs, cover additional payroll expenses due to State licensing requirements, provide for teacher training and program accreditation and meet other operating expenses while the center continues to work on growing program enrollment.

* Possible ongoing program

Caring Connection Operating Grant \$100,000

Similar to the Discovery Center, the pandemic has drastically impacted the revenues and expenses of the Caring Connection. The center has needed to operate under public health protocols which has limited their attendance but staff to client ratios have needed to be maintained. The Caring Connection was the first adult day center in the region to safely re-open (August 2020) and to date has had no illness transmission among our clients. However, the perception regarding the ability to provide safe elder care during the pandemic continues to be a challenge. These funds would be used to cover additional payroll expenses due to external market conditions, replace aging furniture, increase program marketing and professional networking in order to grow the client roster.

Windsor Volunteer Ambulance Grant \$100,000

It is proposed that \$100,000 be allocated to Windsor Volunteer Ambulance to assist in their purchase of replacement vehicles and refurbishing older ambulances. This would result in mitigating loan repayment expenses in their annual operating budget.

Community Health & Wellness

Community Health and Wellness Needs Assessment* \$30,000

Conduct a community-wide needs assessment survey to gauge the health and wellness needs of our residents. The assessment will help in identifying areas of concern and potential gaps that will inform the development of strategies with community members and area partners. It would be expected such an assessment would be done on a periodic basis (every 3 to 5 years) to gauge progress as well as identify any new gaps or areas of concern.

Embedded Mental Health Clinician within Police Department* \$100,000 over 3 years

For several years, the town has contracted with Community Health Resources to provide a mental health clinician within the Police Department to assist the police officers on calls that involve persons that may be in mental health crisis as well as to provide follow up services with individuals. It is proposed that additional funding be provided to increase the current part-time contractual position to full time. Town funds could be increased in the annual operating budget through a phased in approach so that at the end of three years, the operating budget would have adequate funding to maintain a full-time contractual position.

Youth Mental Health Counselor/Clinician* \$210,000 over 2.5 years

In the past 12 to 18 months, care providers and experts have described an overwhelming surge in demand for pediatric behavioral health care as greater numbers of children with more acute symptoms arrive in emergency departments and turn to community providers seeking care. Children have confronted social isolation, disruption, sickness and death. Care providers have noted that rates of anxiety, depression and suicide have significantly risen. It is proposed that funds be allocated to engage a full-time contractual Youth and Family Counselor /Social Worker to primarily focus on working with our children and teens. The individual would work with the young persons on a one-to-one basis, provide crisis intervention services, make basic needs assessment and referrals, and work with families and guardians as appropriate. The counselor would also work with the Juvenile Review Board, collaborate with professional peers in the schools and our social services department.

Community Mental Health Awareness and Training \$50,000 over 2.5 years

To build community awareness and resiliency related to mental health, it is proposed to allocate funds to increase current staff hours and resources within our Social Services Department to plan and coordinate an array of community-based mental health education and training programs. The additional hours will also allow for increased collaboration with community providers and agencies to deliver enhanced crisis intervention and mental health awareness training for town personnel across a variety of departments.

WinWellness Health & Fitness Initiatives* \$100,000 over 3 years

Create a wide array of program offerings across all age groups and neighborhoods to build community health, wellness and togetherness. Programs could range from prenatal classes to intergenerational pickle ball events to seminars on healthy cooking and eating to weekly walking and hiking clubs. It is envisioned a portion of the funds would be used to provide additional program scholarships for families and individuals in need.

* Possible ongoing program

Capital Investment Allocation \$5,130,000

There are a range of possible projects that could be considered. The six-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) can be used as a guide in identifying potential projects and priorities. The ARPA funding also provides the opportunity for the Town Council and community to consider projects that can perhaps meet other strategic objectives or emerging community needs that are not incorporated in the current CIP.

The ability to use the federal funds to cash finance projects provides enhanced flexibility in terms of future capital and operating budgets. For example, by cash financing part of the planned HVAC replacement project at the LP Wilson Community Center, the town reduces the forecasted annual debt service payments in the general fund operating budget. It also provides the option for the Council to consider advancing another capital projects given the available borrowing capacity due to cash financing a previously planned bonding project.

Below is a listing of possible projects the Town Council could consider cash financing in part or entirely. It is noted whether the project is in the CIP or not and if local bonding is the planned funding source. Cost estimates are preliminary as not all projects have been fully designed or bid.

	<u>Estimated Cost</u>	<u>Possible ARPA \$</u>	<u>Bonding</u>
<u>IN CIP</u>			
Broad Street Road Diet	\$4,500,000	\$3,000,000	No
LP Wilson HVAC*	\$2,100,000	\$1,050,000	Yes
Sage Park HVAC	\$2,100,000	\$1,050,000	Yes
Milo Peck HVAC	\$2,600,000	\$2,600,000	Yes
Wilson Gateway Park	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	Yes
<u>NOT IN CIP</u>			
Neighborhood Parks	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	NA
Railroad Quiet Zone – local match	\$ 750,000	\$750,000	NA
‘Activity Hub’ @ Mill Brook	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	NA

*Board of Education Administration has indicated part of their Federal funding allocation could be dedicated to cash finance a portion of the LP Wilson HAVAC project.