



**TOWN COUNCIL  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
HYBRID MEETING  
SPECIAL MEETING  
AUGUST 2, 2021  
APPROVED MINUTES**

**1) CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Trinks called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Present: Mayor Donald Trinks, Deputy Mayor Joe McAuliffe, Councilor Nuchette Black-Burke, Councilor Lisa Rampulla Bress, Councilor James Dobler, Councilor James Govoni, Councilor Donald Jepsen, Councilor Lenworth Walker

Absent: Councilor Kenneth Wilkos

**2) OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION REGARDING AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FUNDING**

Town Manager Souza provided an overview of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

The Town will be directly receiving federal funds over the course of the next two years.

Staff has continued to review guidance from the U.S. Federal Treasury related to program rules and there appears to be a degree of flexibility in eligible uses. Although the U.S. Treasury final ruling is not expected to be published until later this summer, it is appropriate for discussions to begin regarding a framework and process for allocation of these funds.

In July, the Town Council decided to hold a workshop to discuss the overall guidelines, eligible use categories, potential public input components, and next steps regarding the American Rescue Plan funding.

At a very high level, the ARPA includes overall eligible use categories such as:

- Support public health response to impacts of pandemic
- Address negative economic impacts to workers, households, and small businesses
- Provide premium pay for employees
- Water, sewer, storm water, and broadband infrastructure

The funding will be provided to the Town over a two-year period with the expected amount to be approximately \$8.5 million. Funds need to be expended or committed by the end of calendar year 2024. In some cases, such as capital projects, funds need to be committed by that date but not fully expended until 2026.

Town Manager Souza gave a presentation outlining some key points regarding the American Rescue Plan.



Town Council Special meeting  
August 2, 2021

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Based on the U.S. Treasury formula, the Town's projected revenue loss equals \$6.3 million. Therefore, \$6.3 million of the \$8.5 million of the allocation may be used towards "governmental services." The remaining \$2.2 million would need to be utilized under the four broad use categories.

Councilor Rampulla Bress asked for clarification on the \$2.2 million versus the \$6.3 million. Town Manager Souza explained that \$2.2 million of the \$8.5 million would go towards the four broad categories. The \$6.3 million can be used towards governmental services. \$6.3 million is the maximum that can be spent under governmental services.

Councilor Jepsen asked if the \$2.2 million and \$6.3 million are both under the same time constraints and if capital could be done out of the \$6.3 million. Town Manager Souza stated they both fall under the same time frame and confirmed that capital could be done out of the \$6.3 million.

Mayor Trinks expressed his concerns about the long-term effect the pandemic will have on office space as many offices transition out of traditional settings into remote workspaces. He questioned whether these effects might not be fully realized until after the time frame of this funding expires. He asked if there was any way to put some insurance in place with this. Town Manager Souza responded that the next property revaluation occurs in the Summer/Fall of calendar year 2023 which goes into effect for fiscal year 2025. We will be well down the path of allocating and expending these federal dollars by that time. In terms of strategic planning, if the dollars were used towards capital outlay projects, it may potentially provide relief and mitigate the burden on debt service

Councilor Govoni recognized the added expenses that have been incurred by adding sanitation stations and changing how we do business. He would like to see more of these types of mitigation strategies implemented in all facilities and hopes this funding will lessen the burden on the taxpayers to do so.

Councilor Jepsen stated that the referendum of 2024 is where this will hit. This is adding more money but opportunity to that cliff. As we take this capital off, not only does it reduce debt service, but if we take the imputed debt service, we could potentially create a sinking fund for that revaluation year.

Mayor Trinks stated that these funds will ultimately benefit the taxpayer as it takes other burdens off the table.

Councilor Rampulla Bress asked how much of this revenue loss would be directed to that area. She expressed concern for the individual people or services that are also going to take a hit.

Councilor Jepsen agreed that we must make sure we take care of our people who are hurting and stated that he is not suggesting all of this funding be used for capital.



Town Council Special meeting  
August 2, 2021

---

Councilor Rampulla Bress asked if we know how much might be attributed to certain areas. Town Manager Souza clarified that the calculation of lost revenue is a projection based upon the federal government's formula. In FY21, the Town only saw losses in recreation programs, Discovery Center and the adult daycare program. The \$6.3 million is not actual revenue loss; it is projected using the federal government's formula.

Councilor Jepsen noted that the Board of Education is getting \$5 million. He asked if they are subject to similar rules and how the Town could coordinate with them. Town Manager Souza explained that the Board of Education has a different set of parameters. Each district submits a spending/allocation plan to the State Department of Education. Town Manager Souza reported that he has had conversations with the Superintendent to coordinate and avoid duplications, and to identify where they should potentially team up.

Councilor Jepsen asked if the funds could be co-mingled. Town Manager Souza replied with a qualified yes.

Councilor Govoni agreed with Councilor Rampulla Bress and expressed concerns for small businesses. He also noted that recreation usage was down significantly, but they had the same overhead with reduced participation. He wants to ensure that they can still provide after school programs and other services.

Deputy Mayor McAuliffe asked if the projected office space shortfall would qualify as governmental services and if those monies would come from the \$6.3 million or the \$2.2 million. Town Manager Souza stated it would be more along the lines of one-time spending or "pay as you go" for capital type projects. If you built it into the FY23 and FY24 budget, by FY25 they weren't ongoing costs. That way those dollars could be shifted from the capital line item over to the ongoing operating budget and that has the potential to soften the impact of a revaluation swing between commercial over to residential.

Town Manager Souza provided a possible framework and identified four areas which follow some past goals set by the Council.

- Community Health & Wellness
  - Public health education
  - Social services
  - Recreation programs for youth, families, seniors,
  - Library and literacy programs,
  - Behavioral health services and outreach
  
- Competitive & Sustainable Economy
  - Small business assistance
  - Workforce development training or apprenticeships
  - Promotion and marketing
  - Redevelopment and Workforce housing



Town Council Special meeting  
August 2, 2021

---

- Safe, Strong, Diverse Neighborhoods & Families
  - Direct assistance to individuals and households
  - Housing rehab and weatherization
  - Safety services
  - Tenant and landlord assistance
- Physical and civic infrastructure
  - Invest in capital improvement projects
  - Support non-profit community organizations

Councilor Jepsen asked if the money could be used in a revolving fund fashion. Town Manager Souza stated that the money could be used in both ways and there is flexibility within the guidelines.

Councilor Jepsen asked if it would be possible for the revolving funds to go beyond the three years. Town Manager Souza stated that he believed so. He spoke about the Housing Rehabilitation Program that has been funded almost completely by the Community Development Block Grant in a fashion of deferred loan or forgivable loan.

Councilor Rampulla Bress inquired about tax reduction programs for veterans, seniors, and disabled individuals. She asked if these funds could be used to enhance these types of programs. Town Manager Souza stated that with certain eligibility criteria put in place, those funds could be used in terms of the direct assistance category, but he asked to consider the longevity of this. Another set of eligibility criteria could be established outside of these programs.

Deputy Mayor McAuliffe expressed support for non-profit community organizations and noted that local civic groups are hurting, resulting in a lack of scholarships. He felt that those groups could demonstrate their losses and benefit from these funds as well.

Councilor Black-Burke stated that the areas of community health and wellness and recreation would be a good place to collaborate with the Board of Education. She suggested that a fund be created to assist families who might want to access recreation services. She also suggested possibly ramping up availability of mental health services which might be done by hiring a part time social worker.

Town Manager Souza presented some possible next steps:

- Gather public input
  - General public (e.g. online survey, community forum)
  - Appointed Board & Commission members
- Council sets general parameters such as
  - Adopt focus areas
  - Invest X% of funds in capital improvement projects



Town Council Special meeting  
August 2, 2021

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- Reduce future borrowing costs by cash funding planned CIP projects
- Direct staff to present preliminary allocation plan by certain date
- Appropriation approval process
  - Council approves overall allocation plan
  - Specific program or capital project approval per *Charter* thresholds

Councilor Walker stated that it is important to get as much public input as possible. He believes that online or snail mail surveys elicit more participation than setting up public meetings.

Councilor Black-Burke agreed with Councilor Walker. She suggested a link be made available on the Town website whereby the public could leave a comment or ask questions, providing the Council with another way to gain feedback from constituents.

Deputy Mayor McAuliffe agreed with Councilor Walker and Councilor Black-Burke but also suggested a 30-minute open forum before the next Council meeting.

Councilor Rampulla Bress agreed with all suggestions. She also expressed the importance of including appointed Boards and Commission members.

Councilor Govoni agreed with all suggestions as well. He stated that very few residents know about the ARPA or the basics of the program. He stated that we should try to be very creative and suggested the possible use of electronic signs.

Councilor Dobler agreed with all ideas presented thus far. He noted that, while some proposed uses of funds are one-time expenditures, many are ongoing. He would like to discuss using some of the funds to jump start a program that would be kept permanently to help needy families or small businesses that the Town does not already have.

Councilor Jepsen asked if it would be possible to generate a breakdown of capital versus “softer costs.” With capital improvements, costs are easily identifiable. Councilor Jepsen asked if they could more concretely identify the “soft costs” such as housing rehab or needy families.

Councilor Rampulla Bress felt that the focus areas put forth by Town Manager Souza and staff for setting general parameters were fantastic. She recommends adopting those four categories as their parameters. She echoed the sentiments of Councilor Jepsen relative to the “soft costs” and asked Town Manager Souza when that type of information might be available. Town Manager Souza stated that staff has begun the initial idea generation. They know what it costs from a personnel perspective, for example, to hire a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. They could possibly have more concrete figures available to Council later this month.

Councilor Jepsen stated it would be good to know what percentage would go to capital versus the human side.



Town Council Special meeting  
August 2, 2021

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Councilor Rampulla Bress was glad to hear it would be possible to have this information relatively soon.

Mayor Trinks mentioned it would be interesting to see how much could be saved and how much relief could be provided.

Councilor Rampulla Bress asked for confirmation that this overview would be available on the town website. Town Manager Souza confirmed this information would be available on the Town website.

Councilor Govoni also asked that an area for public comment be available on the website.

**3) ADJOURNMENT**

MOVED by Deputy Mayor McAuliffe and seconded by Councilor Jepsen to adjourn the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

Motion Passed 8-0-0 (Councilor Wilkos absent)

Respectfully Submitted,

Deanna Schuetz  
Clerk of the Town Council