



**TOWN OF WINDSOR
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL
HYBRID MEETING – VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON
JANUARY 31, 2022**

APPROVED MINUTES

1) CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Mayor Donald Trinks, Deputy Mayor Lisa Rampulla Bress, Councilor Nuchette Black-Burke, Councilor James Dobler, Councilor Kristin Gluck Hoffman, Councilor Kenneth Smith, Councilor Jody Terranova, and Councilor Len Walker

Absent: Councilor Ronald Eleveld

Staff: Peter Souza, Town Manager; Scott Colby, Assistant Town Manager; Patrick McMahon, Communications and Community Outreach Specialist; Sarah Maffioli, Youth Services Coordinator; Jim Burke, Economic Development Director, Michael Pepe; Director of Health and Jasmine Hall, Social Services Coordinator

2) PUBLIC COMMENT – None

3) DISCUSSION REGARDING POTENTIAL ALLOCATION OF AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDING

Town Manager Souza said at this time, the town has received \$4.25 million 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.

This item is being presented 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.

Town Manager Souza asked Mr. McMahon to provide an overview about the opportunity to establish a small business incubator and support center located in the

town center. Mr. McMahon stated the town is looking to attract an operator of a co-working space in a joint effort with the Loomis Chafee School in the building on Broad Street which was formerly the Bank of America. There is a co-work space in West Hartford called West Hartford CoWorking and they support entrepreneurs. Coworking spaces have designated offices where you can rent a table and/or seat. Depending on the level of service that you want as an entrepreneur is how much you would end up spending per month to use the space. The work space on Main Street in Manchester has been a major draw for entrepreneurs. The number of new businesses is significant, but they require support. One of the great things about these co-work spaces is the synergy as business owners get to bounce their ideas off of one another. Over the course of a couple of years, the town is looking to provide ARPA funding that would help with the fit out of the space as well as to assist the operations. This could include getting furniture and equipment and/or educational programming to help entrepreneurs get launched. The benefit is they would start in the co-work space and build up to brick and mortar space.

Mayor Trinks asked the Council if there were any questions or comments from the Competitive and Sustainable Economy section from the Town Manager's presentation.

Deputy Mayor Rampulla Bress commented that the co-work space sounds like a great opportunity. She asked Mr. McMahon if there could also be a registry for job opportunities for people in our community connected to this endeavor. Who would oversee this and would we just be providing the space or more support? Mr. McMahon said the operator would be the social enterprise. Our role would be to give some seed capital to get this launched. Thereafter, it would be up to the revenue that is generated from the facility itself and by having this overlapping non-profit to assist with their mission. We hope that we would have a long partnership with the operator. The potential operator from West Hartford Coworking is all about creating partnerships.

Town Manager Souza stated that in the first few years, he would like to have a more formal arrangement where the operator would have to meet certain deliverables. This would help ensure we are meeting some of the goals that we have as a community. So far our philosophies are in agreement with the potential operator and it wouldn't be a far reach to come to a Memorandum of Understanding if funds were to be allocated.

Mr. McMahon addressed Deputy Mayor Rampulla Bress' question on a jobs opportunity/job bank. At this current time, the Chamber of Commerce is putting together a job bank where companies can post available jobs in Windsor. He would assume from a partnership model that the co-working space would help publicize the availability of that job bank.

Councilor Black-Burke had questions about the school-to-business career connection. They are looking to serve 15-20 participants each summer for 3 years. How does that

expand the program? What percentage of an expansion would that be? Town Manager Souza called on Ms. Maffiolini to address Councilor Black-Burke's question. Ms. Maffiolini stated the program had 20 participants in the step program last summer. If we increase that by another 20 participants, that would be a 100% increase. Town Manager Souza asked how many participants we are serving through the Hartford Foundation Grant during the school year. Ms. Maffiolini stated there are 20 students per semester with a leadership program, not a teen employment program.

Councilor Black-Burke asked if we receive any other funds for summer programming. Ms. Maffiolini stated that we are not receiving additional funding. We do receive a small amount from the Metropolitan District Commission which goes towards community block parties and everything else is town funded.

Deputy Mayor Rampulla Bress asked if eligibility will include those with special needs and if data will be collected as far as job placement success goes. That data could provide more support for these programs in the future. Town Manager Souza responded that the town has not gone to that detail of planning but those are well received thoughts. If we do go forward, your feedback will definitely be part of the conversation with our potential partners.

Deputy Mayor Rampulla Bress said she loves the idea of the apprentice program. She asked would the jobs be entry level positions and how would the applicants be determined? Would it be a lottery method? Will there be criteria on how someone is chosen? Town Manager Souza responded that, at this point, we would be looking at entry level positions. We envision we would have an interview process with basic criteria so the applicant would understand what is being asked of them. It is broader than an employment program.

Councilor Smith asked if the ownership of the building is secured. Mr. McMahon responded that Loomis Chaffee owns the building and they would lease it to the potential operator.

Councilor Black-Burke asked about the workforce development. Is there a specific age range that is hoped to be reached? Town Manager Souza stated that initially the thought was that there would be an age range like high school graduates to early 20's. Someone who would be starting their career path.

Town Manager Souza stated that the town has a variety of possibilities under Neighborhoods and Families category. He asked Jim Burke to provide some backup with the Housing Rehabilitation and Energy Efficiency programs. He stated that for many decades we've had a housing rehabilitation program with its primary focus being on single families, but there have been projects that have been multi-family in nature. We are asking for money to be allocated for low interest forgivable loans that focus on

affordable rental properties with 2-4 dwelling units.

Town Manager Souza asked Mr. Burke to help explain where we are and how that money may be used. Mr. Burke stated that they've come across a number of properties through the homeowner rehab program that we can provide loans to. However, it starts to get complicated when we go to multi-units, as there are particular requirements from the Department of Housing. We have come across a number of multi-unit buildings and we'd like to encourage them to deal with some of the code issues that they have to make in order for them to be more livable. In return, we would look to them to maintain those units at an affordable rate. The thought is if we can provide a matching forgivable loan, we could get an improvement up to \$15,000/unit if we offered half the cost at \$7,500/unit. We want to take the experience we have in our rehab program and streamline it a little bit and encourage participation by these "mom and pop" type landlords. Town Manager Souza added we are looking to maintain our housing stock and support small landlord units. It builds off a program that the town has had for many years. The second program is to improve energy efficiency and build off of other programs we have. This would meet some of the goals and objectives from the Clean Energy Task Force. By matching and leveraging other money, we think we can assist close to 35-40 units in lowering their energy consumption and therefore reducing the cost of their utilities.

Town Manager Souza mentioned the Fitch Court project is included as there was support last year in assisting with improving the drainage issues there. We are looking at possible options on how to address the ground water issues. The next idea was to resurrect a town program called Volunteer Support Program from about fifteen years ago. This program allowed volunteer organizations, civic groups, and non-profits to receive small grants for programs, events and even minor capital projects. The idea is to have projects and programs that bring residents back together. We could develop guidelines and parameters if Council would like to support it.

The next three items are related to operating grant assistance to two programs that are run by the town and one by our EMS provider. Due to the pandemic, the Discovery and Early Childhood Center has had to use a substantial amount of their retained earnings and has pretty much exhausted their reserves. These funds would be used to make minor building repairs, address payroll expenses, provide training for staff and help build their reserves back. Similarly, the Caring Connection has had similar impacts to their revenue. The Town Council could decide to apply it to FY22 or FY23. The third operating grant is for Windsor Volunteer Ambulance. They need to purchase two replacement vehicles.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked if the Discovery Center is a separate entity from Montessori and is that why we are helping them. Town Manager Souza responded that they are operating as one business unit. Councilor Hoffman wondered if other schools

have approached the town. Town Manager Souza stated other schools have not come to the town.

Councilor Black-Burke asked regarding the Housing Rehabilitation and Energy Efficiency program, historically how many citizens per year apply for to this type of program? Mr. Burke responded that Windsor has a high acceptance rate or involvement in this program. There are about 300 units that have participated in the last 4 years and that's in the energy efficiency program. For the housing rehab, we have 25 people on the active waiting list and another 11 on the inactive waiting list.

Deputy Mayor Bress asked about the Housing Rehabilitation and Energy Efficiency program. Will this initiative fit into our housing plan that we need to create for the State? The program seems to be more focused on energy efficiency. Town Manager Souza provided clarification and stated these are two distinct programs. One being a multi-family rehabilitation program where \$300,000 can be allocated for properties with between 2-4 units and then there is a second potential allocation of funds for energy efficiency alone. Regarding if a multi-family can be used for the upcoming requirement to have an affordable housing plan adopted and submitted to the State is a question that's up in the air. This goal is to help our multi-family housing stock to be in good condition in terms of life safety and codes. I think it is very important, but it may not be counted towards the 10% requirement by the State.

Councilor Walker wanted to speak to the multi-family rehabs. He has had owners speak to him about the difficulty in getting assistance. He stated that maybe the \$300,000 is not enough and maybe the Council may want to reconsider the amount.

Councilor Black-Burke stated it is possible for the amount to be increased for the housing rehabilitation and energy efficiency program as many residents will look to access this and be a part of this program.

Deputy Mayor Bress agreed with statements made by Councilors Walker and Black-Burke. She also wanted to concur about the Discovery Center. The latest data is that three to four private childcare providers have closed during the pandemic. This is especially true for women, women of color and women who work in the health care industry which have been severely impacted by the loss of childcare. She does support any help we can provide in getting people back to work.

Town Manager Souza moved to the next category, Community Health and Wellness. On a town by town basis, there is a lack of detailed information on the health and wellness of our residents. We have participated on a regional wide survey done by Data Haven and it was very broad. It didn't give us much detail. Town Manager Souza asked Mr. Pepe to provide more details on this category. Mr. Pepe stated they would look at items such as older adults and aging, mental health, nutrition, injury, physical activity,

infectious disease, substance use and abuse, transportation issues, chronic disease, and access to healthcare. This is an opportunity for us to get this information and see how the town is really doing and to help us drive the programs we need. Town Manager Souza added that we would look to contract this out by professionals as we don't have the staff capacity to work on this at this time.

The second item under Community and Wellness is the police department has had for several years a contractual part-time mental health individual working to respond to calls. This person is contracted through the Community Health Resources Agency and we would like to bring that up to a full-time position and ultimately be able to fund it fully by the general fund. This has been a priority discussion at the Health and Safety Committee over the last few years.

The next two areas will look at mental health services for our school-aged population. Town Manager Souza called on Ms. Maffiolini to provide more information. Ms. Maffiolini provided detail on what tasks an individual would be hired to assist with. She also provided data from 2-1-1 stating in the last year 76% (193 calls) of calls for crisis intervention were for individuals under 18 years old. Town Manager Souza said the focus is to provide more one-on-one support. He then called on Social Services Coordinator, Jasmine Hall, to provide an overview of the community wide mental health awareness and training efforts. Ms. Hall stated there will be more programs and workshops focused on normalizing mental health as a public matter and to facilitate trainings for town employees specifically in crisis intervention. Assistance will also be available in crisis intervention for residents and to provide them support along with support groups.

The last area is we hope to bring together people from all age groups and communities throughout Windsor. The goal is to increase our health and fitness. This is an opportunity to provide programs for individuals and groups.

Councilor Dobler thanked everyone for putting this section together. He previously talked about the citizens of Windsor seeing something that comes out of these funds. He touched on reoccurring expenses with bringing on new people. In regards to the police department, the 3 years at \$100,000 is just to take a current part-time person and make them full-time with the idea that if everything works out, we would keep the same funding moving forward for a full-time position. Is that correct? Town Manager Souza responded, yes, that is correct.

Councilor Dobler asked about the youth mental health position for \$210,000 over 2.5 years. How did you come up with 2.5 years opposed to 2 or 3 years? Town Manager Souza responded that it is a combination based on the contract and estimates from Community Health Resources. Including their overhead, it's about \$85,000/year for a clinician including benefits. Depending on when that contract started, we are looking at

2.5 years. If Council wanted to make it a full 3 years, it could be adjusted. Councilor Dobler said these are great ideas that we are looking at but he wanted to make sure everyone is aware that there is some money that will have to come out of the general fund in order to continue.

Deputy Mayor Rampulla Bress commented on how lucky we are to have Ms. Hall and Ms. Maffiolini working for the town and she appreciates what they bring to the table for us. She had a couple of suggestions for them. She is aware of some great programs with Mental Health Connecticut. One is a writing program involving children of all ages. It is another program combining mental health and the arts. She also suggested the National Alliance on Mental Illness as another resource. As a Councilor, she would like to see the Community Mental Health Awareness and Training be doubled from \$50,000 to \$100,000 over the 2.5 years. This is her preference based on the data that staff has presented as well as the data that she is aware of across the country. She is in full support of the Social Worker in the police department and has questions about CIT training for officers. This has been on the agenda on the Health and Safety Committee and she thanked everyone on the committee for their work on the social worker issue. Based on the number of mental health calls that come in, she would like to see all officers receive training in crisis intervention. Also she asked Mr. Pepe if domestic violence and needs for childcare and elder care will be included on the survey.

Mr. Pepe responded and stated that those could definitely be added to the survey. Town Manager Souza responded to Deputy Mayor Rampulla Bress' questions about CIT training for officers. The police department has a training budget and has tried to get as many officers through the full 40 hour CIT training. The State of Connecticut hasn't offered it in the last few years and so we have fallen back a little bit. He would suggest that we continue to keep that within the general fund operating budget in the police department. Deputy Mayor Rampulla Bress was thinking that we have a unique opportunity and she remembered that the Chief said that it creates difficulty when the officers go to take the training because other officers have to cover for them while they are out. She was thinking to use the ARPA funds to offset any types of costs that are incurred when officers go to take the training. Town Manager Souza responded that right now the issue is the availability of training being offered and having enough officers to cover the shifts. These are the contributing factors and it is not a money concern.

Councilor Black-Burke asked in regards to the needs assessment, would Mr. Pepe like a few dollars after the assessment is completed to have further conversations about how things could be implemented or what could be next. Town Manager Souza stated that some of the money in the WinWellness program could be shifted over as well. Councilor Black-Burke stated that she is excited to see the mental health clinician, the youth mental health counselor and the community health training. We've been having this conversation across the board and she is really excited to see this.

Councilor Terranova stated there is definitely a need for additional behavioral health help in the world of pediatrics. Her question/comment was that it looks like we would like to continue to fund these positions beyond the ARPA funds. As Councilor Dobler stated, that money would come out of the general fund and she thought everyone would be happy to support it as long as we can show that these are well needed and well used. She stated that staff should be deliberative when measuring some outcomes as these positions begin so we can start from the beginning and collect data to be shared with the Council and the public over the next few years.

Town Manager Souza moved to speak about the Capital Investment section. He stated 60% of the ARPA funds will be allocated toward capital projects and that is approximately \$5.1 million. To put it in context, \$5 million of capital would defray approximately \$6.6 million in future debt liability. This is an opportunity to lessen the burden in terms of debt service over time for our tax payers.

Councilor Dobler mentioned that funds should be used to do projects that our citizens can plainly see and he looked at the different possibilities. He stated that absolutely all of these should be on the CIP plan over the next few years. If he was going to choose one that we use Federal funds for, he would choose the \$3 million for the road diet, \$1.5 million for the Wilson Gateway Park, \$500,000 towards a roadway quiet zone and the remaining \$130,000 to increase the allocation towards mental health.

Councilor Terranova asked Town Manager Souza to explain a little more about the funding for the Broad Street road diet. She heard Town Manager Souza say that it would be mostly grant funded. Would it be wise to spend the \$3 million or would spending a smaller amount be appropriate if we thought there was other grant money available. Town Manager Souza responded that all the potential grants are competitive unless we got a direct allocation through the Governor's office and the bond commission or in some legislative way. It is hard to gauge how successful we would be. The State of CT has committed \$1.2 million, which is \$200,000 towards the design on top of town funds that have been appropriated and \$1 million has been approved by the bond commission towards the construction so that leaves an approximate gap of \$3 million. The more monies that come from a non-state source makes a grant application stronger. A minimum of 10% is what grant programs would want to see come from the municipality.

Councilor Terranova asked if it would be fair to say that we could pencil in that \$3 million dollars for now for that project but if we were able to receive a grant or some other funding, we could then reallocate that \$3 million to some other funds. Town Manager Souza agreed that it would be fair to say that. He stated that could be similar for the quiet zone. We do have to spend all of our money by the end 2026 and there are times prior to that that money has to be committed. The Finance Committee will have conversations in the coming weeks regarding our unassigned fund balance and how

that plays in our overall capital programming. Our reserves are healthy at this point, so there are opportunities there to use some funds towards capital projects.

Mayor Trinks brought the Council's attention to the allocations summary which is the big picture break down of how the funds could be used. He stated that we need to keep moving forward. Is everyone comfortable with the percentages on how this is broken down? He would like to provide some guidance to the Town Manager on how to move along.

Deputy Mayor Rampulla Bress stated that she would like to see more of a 50/50 split between capital projects and what some call the "softer" projects. As Councilor Dobler mentioned, she would like to see more contributions to community health and wellness and if it had to come from anywhere she would take it from the capital investment allocation.

Councilor Black-Burke is in agreement with what Deputy Mayor Rampulla Bress shared and what Councilor Dobler mentioned earlier. The community is going to want to see and understand where the ARPA money went. When you look at it on paper, community health and wellness looks a little slim. Is there anything else we can do to further balance it out?

Councilor Dobler said that he is comfortable with the basic framework of the allocations. We can tweak the numbers as needed further down the road. He stated that the Town Manager and his team have done a great job. If we think there is an area that deserves funding, he is in favor of adding more.

Town Manager Souza asked if the Council feels prepared to be able to have an item placed on the February 7th Town Council agenda. That would give the Council the opportunity to, in concept, approve the overall framework and percentages towards capital and firm that up for guidance and direction. He and staff could then continue to refine the different elements.

Mayor Trinks thinks that is a logical transition and supports it. Town Manager Souza clarified that he would not be looking for funding authorization or appropriation. This would just allow him and staff to move forward.

Councilor Black-Burke asked if Council can still submit questions. Town Manager Souza said Council can always submit those questions. If it is on the broader aspect of the split between capital and programming, it would be great to have those by Wednesday mid-morning so staff can incorporate it into the agenda item material.

Councilor Dobler added that he would be in favor of moving it to the agenda for next week.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked to clarify that questions should be submitted by Wednesday, February 2 by mid-morning. Town Manager Souza confirmed that is correct.

4) PUBLIC COMMENT

William Pelkey of 133 Portman Street stated that we are better off with decreasing the future debt load which provides us more money in the budget to do the things we want. He'd like to see the debt amount come down and it does free up money and it doesn't change our taxes.

5) ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Rampulla Bress, seconded by Councilor Gluck Hoffman to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrea Marcavitch
Administrative Aide