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*By Linda Amerighi at 1:42 pm, Jan 11, 2022*

Sharon ARPA Advisory Committee  
January 5, 2022 Meeting Minutes  
*Draft until approved at the next regular meeting*

The Sharon ARPA Advisory Committee held a regular meeting at 6:30pm on January 5, 2022. The meeting was held in in hybrid mode, in person at Town Hall and online via Zoom.

**Committee attendees:**

*In person*

Jill Drew  
Tom Bartram  
Barbara Prindle  
Carol Flaton

*On Zoom*

Donna DiMartino  
Gretchen Hachmeister  
Meghan Flanagan  
Doug Cahill  
Tom Casey  
Sophia Wang

**Public attendees:**

*In Person*

Robert Loucks – American Legion Post #126  
Judy M. Loucks – Sharon United Methodist Church  
Darlene Luminati – Lower Deer Run  
Eliza Luminati – Lower Deer Run  
Juliana Pecchia – Lower Deer Run

*On Zoom*

John Simoncelli – Greenwoods Counseling & Referrals, Inc.  
Penny Hartz, Silver Lake Shores Association

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm.
2. The proposed meeting Agenda was approved, after corrections (\$8,000 American Legion Post; \$10,000 Sharon United Methodist Church, \$10,000 Greenwoods Counseling & Referrals) and with the addition of a discussion on our policy for non-profit requests under item 5
3. Minutes of the December 20, 2021 meeting were approved without change.
4. Public Comment: Additional public comment to be added when items were discussed.
5. Review ARPA grant applications
  - a. American Legion Post 126: The organization was hit hard by COVID, Income loss was estimated to be roughly \$10,000 in the past two years. Membership is down. The building has a generator, a kitchen and has been used to serve Sharon

residents as a warming station, etc. The Hotchkiss Library of Sharon is currently occupying the building at only \$300/month while renovations are being done on its building. The American Legion owns the building, but it's possible to vote and turn the building back to the town.

\$8,000 in ARPA funds are requested to replace the furnace, which is more than 30 years old. The Committee requested that the American Legion Post add the specific amount of revenue loss caused by the pandemic shutdown to the existing application. The organization is also recommended to get the American Legion's consent to give the building to the town of Sharon before a decision is made about allocating ARPA funds.

- b. Sharon United Methodist Church: The church lost at least 5 members who could not attend in person due to COVID. It also was not able to hold tag sales, Thanksgiving pie sales and its Christmas fairs which generally raise more than \$10,000. Expenses for 2020 were \$25,000 more than income; expenses for 2021 were \$24,000 more than income. People cannot come to the Church because of COVID.

The budget planned for 2022 is more than \$86,000. The church requests \$10,000 in ARPA funds, but really more is needed to cover the operational losses. The committee suggested that the church provide a list of all the projects that the church does for the people in our community, along with all income loss caused by COVID.

- c. Lower Deer Run Residents: Residents at Lower Deer Run (4 families – 22 people) do not have access to high speed internet because Comcast will not run a cable down their private, dirt road, which has direct-bury utilities. Comcast would charge more than \$30,000 to wire the road. Their only alternative is Frontier dial-up internet, which does not qualify as high-speed, as it cannot provide 25 Mbps download/3 Mbps upload speed. This has made their life extremely difficult during COVID because children need to learn remotely and adults need to work from home, and both require a stable high-speed internet connection. Both parents in the Pecchia family are teachers and Juliana described how she and her husband had to drive to a place with wifi access and teach remote classes from their cars. Their children who had to join them in the car to get access to their online classes on a daily basis.

\$33,170 in ARPA funds are requested to pay Comcast to wire this road. The request is eligible under Treasury's ARPA fund guidelines, but because there are also other families in Sharon with the same issue, the committee discussed how to address this issue on a town-wide basis. It was noted that the Sharon Connect Task Force is working on a proposal for universal access to high-speed internet for all homes and businesses in Sharon. It will be complicated and will take time – perhaps three years. The committee will present the Lower Deer Run request to the Board of Selectmen to consider in light of the other ongoing proposals and other families in the same situation.

- d. **Greenwoods Counseling & Referrals:** This nonprofit has a primary mission of addressing mental health issues affecting residents throughout Litchfield County, including substance abuse disorders, which have jumped sharply since the pandemic hit. It has a mobile van and can provide direct care to families using telehealth. It is requesting funds to expand its community outreach and treatment.

Greenwoods said the pandemic brought the crisis of depression, anxiety and addiction to a new level in the region. Though Litchfield is a small county in terms of population, it usually has the highest or the second highest per capita rate of alcohol use disorder, opium use disorder and overdose. Greenwoods has been distributing Narcan kits to families that it believes has reduced overdose deaths. Even though overdose cases have risen in the past two years, Litchfield is the only county in CT that saw a reduction of overdose fatalities.

Greenwoods has asked for a total of \$160,000 from each town that is a member of the Northwest Hills Council of Governments – either \$10,000 per town or 1% of each town's ARPA allocation. The fund will be used to add a full-time clinician and a full-time community outreach worker to connect with leaders and individuals in small towns. This capacity increase will enable Greenwoods to serve more individuals, families, and communities. It has very little presence in Sharon and perhaps that would increase if there were a grant from the town. The committee will include Greenwood's request in the report to the Board of Selectmen.

#### 6. Additional applications/ideas for funding:

- a. Three applications to be scheduled for committee review at the Jan. 24 committee meeting:
  - i. Application from Hotchkiss Library of Sharon for \$3,000 for stress reduction, resilience, mental health program
  - ii. Two applications from private businesses

- iii. Jill will add up the total amount requested from all applications received so far before the next committee meeting and do a preliminary analysis of how/if the requests meet Treasury guidelines for funding. Once the committee has a clear picture of where the current applications stand, it will also look at the ideas without individual sponsors and decide how to bring these ideas forward for the Board of Selectmen to consider.

b. Report on results of additional community outreach:

- i. no additional surveys submitted. Megan will summarize the survey results by Friday, Jill will publish a Facebook post.

- 7. Review draft process for evaluating application: Jill has started the draft but not finished yet. Jill will send her draft to everyone before the next meeting to frame the conversation.

Jan. 15 is the initial deadline for funding applications. The committee will attempt to get a review of its analysis of which applications qualify from a lawyer who is familiar with ARPA regulations before submitting the results of this initial round to the Board of Selectman by the end of February. Lots of good ideas came out from the process. Not all of them may qualify for ARPA funding, but the town might be able to add some to the five-year capital plan or consider them as items for the town's annual budgeting process.

- 8. Other new business: The State General Assembly has launched a \$34m relief program for front line workers, to cover wage loss, out-of-pocket medical expense or burial cost tied to COVID-19. The program is open to hospital workers, first responders, grocery store workers, bus drivers and others who could not work remotely and maintain vital services during the pandemic. The application deadline is July 30 and requests will be considered on a first-come first-serve basis. Jill encouraged committee members to get the word out.

- 9. Unanimous approval of a motion to adjourn. The meeting concluded at 8:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sophia Wang