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By Linda Amerighi at 1:54 pm, Feb 05, 2024

Sharon ARPA Advisory Committee

February 1, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Video recording of meeting:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1fYacl5DzT14KhRLqyWNnuf6JFib0hmQi>

The Sharon ARPA Advisory Committee held a regular meeting at 5:00 pm on February 1, 2024.

The meeting was held via Zoom hybrid format.

Committee Attendees:

In person:

Jill Drew

Donna DiMartino

Barbara Prindle

Zoom:

Jean Bustillo

Tom Bartram

Tom Casey

Public Attendees:

Brett Colley, chair of the Sharon Housing Authority

Sharon First Selectman Casey Flanagan

1. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.
2. The proposed agenda as amended was approved.
3. Minutes of the November 21, 2023 meeting were approved as circulated.
4. Public comment:

Jill discussed with Casey Flanagan how the ARPA Advisory Committee had previously suggested the remaining ARPA funds (roughly \$215,000 remains unobligated) be put toward upgrading Sharon Town Hall's technology security and systems. Casey explained that cyber security is the Town's top priority for the remaining ARPA funds. He has met with four technology vendors and has one proposal for an upgrade project in hand. He is awaiting bids from the other three. Town Hall will likely need new wiring to be able to take advantage of the faster speeds available with an upgraded internet connection. The State of Connecticut is recommending that all Town Halls move to a .gov internet address for official communications.

New Applications

- a) New generator for the Town garage. Casey Flanagan answered questions regarding a \$40,000 request to purchase a generator for the public works facility. The existing

generator was handed down from the Sharon Fire Dept. Tom Bartram noted that the Fire Dept. had gotten the generator used. The generator is so old that it is becoming difficult to find replacement parts. After discussion, the request amount was raised to no more than \$41,000 to cover the costs of hooking up a new generator (roughly \$500) and removing/disposing of the old one (roughly \$800).

- b) Brent Colley presented two requests for funding on behalf of the Sharon Housing Authority. The first is for \$40,000 to pay off the remainder of a \$55,000 loan from NBT Bank that had been taken out in late 2020 to pay for the replacement of a common water well and storage tank for Sharon Ridge and the Sharon Ridge Expansion. The \$1,000/month that is currently used for loan repayment would be redeployed to bring accounts payable current and prepare for preventative maintenance. Tom Bartram commented that the Sharon Board of Finance has put \$100,000 from the Town's unallocated funds into reserve to backstop repayment of outstanding SHA loans; if this loan were to be paid off, those funds could go back to the general unallocated funding line in the Town budget. The Housing Authority believes this request for ARPA funds meets the Department of Treasury guidelines by investing in drinking water infrastructure and maintaining housing for moderate income households, many of whom are essential workers, elderly, or have dependent children.
- c) The second request from SHA is for \$39,500, which would be used to pay contractors with past-due bills (the property management company, auditor, HVAC installer). Sharon Ridge and the Expansion recently incurred an urgent charge to improve drainage near the common dumpsters, but the management company is having difficulty getting needed work accomplished because of the past-due bills. The properties have limited ability to raise rents to meet expense increases. The properties have a slight loss in their current operating budget. The properties are under financial stress and would like to free up capital.

Donna DiMartino stated that affordable housing is very important for the resilience of the Sharon community. It is difficult to attract people to work in the town because housing costs are so high.

Jill added that the Treasury has expanded its guidelines to allow ARPA funds to be used for general municipal purposes, and that the most recent guidance encourages spending to support affordable housing. Jill asked if there were ways to cut management costs, but Brent said they are operating bare bones.

Barbara asked for the specific amounts that were owed to each contractor, noting that the request was vague. Brent said he would get those figures to the Town.

Tom Bartram added that ARPA is project oriented. He agreed that having more affordable housing would boost the resilience of our community.

5. Jill stated that these Minutes would be shared with the Board of Selectman. Motion made to adjourn at 5:41 p.m.

The next meeting will be held March 7, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Bustillo

ARPA Advisory Committee Secretary