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SHARON ARPA FUNDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Draft Minutes – 8/19/21 meeting

An initial organizational meeting of the Sharon ARPA Funding Advisory Committee was held on August 19 at 6:30PM at the Town Hall and on Zoom. Present in person: Jill Drew, Tom Bartram, Carol Flaton, Tom Casey, Michele Pastre, Meghan Flanagan and Barbara Prindle. Present on Zoom: Doug Cahill, Dale Jones and Casey Flanagan.

Co-chairs Drew and Bartram called the meeting to order at 6:30PM. Drew distributed fact sheets that outlined the rules for determining how the approximately \$800,000 in funding the Town of Sharon will receive from the federal government can be spent.

Committee members introduced themselves and noted other town organizations of which they are members. It was determined that so long as the connection was disclosed, there was no conflict for the member to participate in all discussions of ARPA funding options. Selectmen Flanagan and Jones expressed gratitude to Committee members for volunteering to serve.

Members agreed to hold hybrid meetings (both in-person and on Zoom) on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month at 6:30 PM, starting in September (Sept. 1 and Sept. 15). [NOTE: The day after the meeting, we learned that Town Hall is not available on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, as another committee has that time. Perhaps the group could meet on the 1st Wednesday of the month and the 3rd Monday? We will discuss at the Sept. 1 meeting.] It was determined that better technology is needed to make hybrid meetings more functional. Currently it is difficult for those on Zoom to be able to hear those participating in person.

It was determined that the Committee would ask the Selectmen to use ARPA funds to pay for a part-time contractor to take Minutes of the meetings, post them online, and send out meeting notices. Drew offered to draft a job description for the Committee to review and then send to the Board of Selectmen for approval. If the request is not approved, Flaton offered to take Minutes, though the Committee believed it would be best to have a designated Recording Secretary rather than a Committee member attempting to both engage in the discussion and take detailed notes. Bartram said meeting notices must be publicly available and the agenda posted 24 hours in advance of each meeting.

It was determined any Committee expenses would be submitted to the Board of Selectmen for approval. Drew noted that the only expenditure so far was \$52.40 to print the fact sheets for Committee members. Town Treasurer Tina Pitcher has consulted the town's accountant for how to keep track of expenses and pay invoices.

Bartram said the Committee's work would likely be divided between evaluating the Town's short-term needs and long-term needs and that the Committee itself would likely meet for the next 2 years. Committee members agreed that public outreach and communication is important for residents to understand what the committee is doing and that the public is encouraged to offer their input early and often in the process. Pastre emphasized the importance of having public hearings to which all residents would be invited to participate. The Committee agreed that the public is invited to all meetings and that the Committee will hold an informational meeting that will

be widely publicized once its goals and direction are better determined. The possibility of creating a Committee website and email newsletter was discussed. Flanagan offered to rough something out to discuss at the next meeting. Other publicity ideas included press releases for local media and posts to social media, including the Sharon Community Facebook page.

The Committee discussed initial ideas for funding and determined that organizations or individuals should be asked to present budgets of what Covid-related expenses might qualify for assistance. Flaton urged the Committee to develop baseline levels for applicants from which it could be determined what assistance might be needed to offset Covid costs.

The Committee discussed a few examples of immediate, identified needs. Casey reported that the Sharon Volunteer Ambulance Squad needs to buy additional PPE and that costs have tripled since this time last year. An initial expense estimate for purchasing a year's supply of surgical gloves and N95 masks to protect Ambulance volunteers is \$7,000. Bartram noted that the Fire Department also had Covid-related expenses. Cahill reported that Sharon Center School has received funding from another federal program and assistance is not needed at this time as school goes back into session. Cahill said that Sharon Daycare, however, could be in need of assistance. Cahill, Prindle and Flanagan agreed to pursue more information from Sharon Daycare. Better broadband internet connections for all residents and Town Hall was discussed. Drew and Flanagan agreed to perform a tech audit for Town Hall to determine a possible budget for upgrading its communications and technology capabilities, including improving its resilience by considering installing a generator.

The Committee discussed the need to set up a fair and transparent process for handling any possible direct payments to individuals or business owners who might qualify for assistance. Drew mentioned that the US Treasury rules also allow for "premium pay" for essential workers. The Committee determined that it would need to set up a framework and establish clear criteria for any payments so that they would be fair and equitable and that people's privacy would be respected. Bartram suggested that advisory committee member Mary O'Reilly, the Sharon Social Service Director, could be of great assistance in creating a fair process. The Committee discussed contacting local churches, community organizations and asking residents who might have an understanding of neighbors in need. The Committee also discussed reaching out to small businesses to better understand exactly which (if any) were hurt or put out of business because of Covid restrictions. To understand how much aid they might qualify for, the Committee determined that it would have to set up a process to learn what federal aid those businesses have already received (eg. PPP loans, etc.)

The meeting adjourned at 7:40PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Drew, Co-Chair

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, September 1, 6:30PM