

RECEIVED

By Linda Amerighi at 8:42 am, Oct 11, 2022

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

The Sharon ARPA Advisory Committee held a regular meeting at 6:30pm. It was a hybrid meeting, in-person at Town Hall and on Zoom.

Attendees (in person):

Tom Bartram
Jill Drew
Barbara Prindle

Attendees (on Zoom):

Doug Cahill
Tom Casey
Meghan Flanagan
Gretchen Hachmeister
Casey Flanagan (ex officio)

- I. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Jill. The agenda was approved without changes and the minutes of the Sept. 7 meeting were approved without changes.
- II. Public Comment: There was no additional public comment raised.
- III. New Applications
 - A. ([*see recording, 10-5-22 ARPA Committee Meeting, TC 2:00 – 30:00*](#)) Town of Sharon's application for the Town Road Crew in the amount of \$12,000 to pay each member of the crew a one-time payment equal to 2.5% of his annual salary for 2022. The Committee members discussed the reasons for this request as well as how it might fit under ARPA guidelines. Jill commented that because the application was made by the First Selectmen and the decision to approve or reject the application would be made by the Board of Selectmen, the ARPA Committee's review amounted to a public airing of any questions or comments that might assist the Selectmen in their decision-making.

Jill suggested 4 possible ARPA categories that could be tapped to fund this request:

1. Spending on Government Services – Treasury allows towns to assume they lost up to \$10 million in revenue because of Covid, so therefore can spend ARPA funds on any government service that would traditionally be provided by a government. On Page 11 of the Treasury's overview of its final rule, it lists "Road building and maintenance" as one of the expressly permitted government services to which ARPA funds can be allocated. In this category, many of the permitted expenditures are assumed to be capital expenses, which this is not; however, it also allows payment of general government administration and staff, as well as

police, fire, and other public safety services, so it seems clear that members of the Road Crew would fit under this category.

2. Supporting and Retaining Public Sector Workers. In this category, as explained on Page 28 of the Treasury Rule Overview, towns can use ARPA funds to provide “worker retention incentives, including reasonable increases in compensation to persuade employees to remain with the employer as compared to other employment options.” There are restrictions to using the funds in this way, however. In the actual text of the rule (on page 4387 of the Federal Register, Vol 87, No. 18), it states that towns “must be able to substantiate that the employees were likely to leave employment in the absence of the retention incentive and should document their assessment.” In this situation, we are unaware that it has gotten to this point that members of the crew have actually sought alternative employment.
3. Premium Pay. Road crew members would seem to be eligible because they meet the definition of three tests: They are 1. “needed to maintain continuity of operations of essential critical infrastructure sectors.” Transportation is listed as a covered sector. 2. They perform essential work that involved regular in-person interactions with the public or co-workers and involved the physical handling of items that were handled by others. 3. Pay “responds to” workers earning at or below 150% of their state’s or county’s average annual wage for all occupations. (See Pages 35-36 of the Treasury Overview.)
4. Individuals Experiencing Negative Economic Impacts of Covid. To be eligible under this category, the negative effects of inflation would have to be attributable to Covid. The Town would identify an individual or class of individuals affected and “design a program that is related and reasonably proportional to the harm identified and reasonably designed to benefit those impacted.” (See Page 12 of the Treasury Overview.)

Committee members discussed the options and, after weighing many arguments, members agreed that Options 1 (Spending on Government Services) and 3 (Premium Pay) were the best categories under which to consider the application. Co-Chair Tom Bartram noted that even though the category is called “Premium Pay,” he sees this as a request for one-time “Supplemental Pay.” On a motion made and seconded, 4 voted in favor of sending the application to the Board of Selectmen and 3 abstained.

- B. Herb Road Comcast application. ([*see recording, 10-5-22 ARPA Committee Meeting, TC 37:00 – 44:00*](#)) Residents of Herb Road applied for ARPA funds to pay Comcast \$110,117.58 to connect 15 premises to its high-speed internet network. After discussion, in which it was confirmed that the amount requested would be enough to connect all the addresses listed in the application, members voted to send the application on to the Board of Selectmen – 6 voting in favor and 1 abstaining.

- IV. Jill reviewed the Board of Selectmen actions on previously forwarded applications.
 - a. The Cornwall Bridge Garden application was discussed and tabled until Megan Mollica could inquire whether she would be eligible for ARPA funds in Cornwall. Megan was told that individual applications for assistance were no longer being accepted in Cornwall, so it was hoped she would appear again before the Board of Selectmen. Meghan Flanagan said she had been told that Cornwall Bridge Gardens had just closed. Other committee members said they heard that the bakery on the site had closed, but not the whole business.
 - b. The Selectmen reviewed Individual #3's second application and agreed to pay bills totaling \$2,000. Melia Hill, the Town Social Services Agent, had attended the meeting and advocated for the client. Selectmen Casey Flanagan informed the ARPA committee that he had just learned that Individual #3 had passed away. Committee members expressed their sadness and offered condolences to the family. Casey asked if the second \$2,000 payment had not yet been made, would it still be permitted under ARPA rules to be disbursed to the estate? Jill said she would research that question.
- V. Administrative Issues
 - a. The final tranche of funding was received by the town.
 - b. The committee will continue its work without a secretary
- VI. There was no other new business and the meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, Oct. 17 at 4:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Jill Drew