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By Linda Amerighi at 8:57 am, Oct 21, 2021

Sharon ARPA Advisory Committee
October 18, 2021 Meeting Minutes
Draft until approved at the next regular meeting

A regular meeting of the Sharon ARPA Advisory Committee was held on Zoom at 6:30PM.

Attendees:

Tom Bartram	Tom Casey
Jill Drew	Gretchen Hachmeister
Barbara Prindle	Carol Flaton
Megan Flanagan	Dale Jones, Selectman
Donna DiMartino	Casey Flanagan, Selectman

- 1) The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm.
- 2) The Agenda was approved with the amendment of including the 10/8/21 special meeting minutes in section 1b.
- 3) Minutes for ARPA meetings 10/6/21 and 10/8/21 were unanimously approved.
- 4) Jill Drew updated the Committee on the ARPA recording secretary/administrator search. On 10/07/21 Jill Drew and the Selectmen interviewed a candidate who recently moved to Sharon from Princeton, NJ. She is well qualified and wants to get more engaged with the town. She was offered the job, accepted the offer, and will start her duties at the meeting on 11/3/21.
- 5) Update on the ARPA submissions to the BoS: all materials were reviewed, discussed and approved as proposed. The BoS instituted a limit of 10% of ARPA funds (approx \$80k) for urgent requests received prior to the December 1st community meeting. Under that 10% limit, the request from the SFD Ambulance Squad for PPE for \$19,110.52 was approved.
- 6) Community outreach: All materials that the ARPA Committee has developed (and approved by BoS) are in process with the printer and will be completed soon and sent out/distributed at the places determined (Town Hall/Library/Post Office). The only open item is the translation of the materials into Spanish. Meghan Flanagan offered to start that effort with Mary O'Reilly checking the Spanish versions once deemed complete. Discussion ensued about outreach through the Lakeville Journal and via Robin Hood Radio (issuing a press release rather than a paid advertisement).
- 7) Discussion of appropriate protocol for approving and disbursing ARPA funds: Jill Drew described the process by which various types of town monies are approved and disbursed (e.g. via BoS or via BoF or another protocol). Because the ARPA funds are federal monies that do not obligate the town's residents through the tax base, it was discussed (and determined) that these monies should be administered in the same fashion as a traditional grant (i.e. not through the Board of Finance). The current process being followed should satisfy the federal requirements.

Beyond the ARPA Advisory Committee (essentially a subcommittee of the BoS) taking transparent steps (warning and minuting ARPA mtgs, hosting public ARPA meetings,

requiring robust community outreach, deliberating and recommending to the BoS but not having decision-making power) the BoS will ultimately approve and authorize disbursement of the ARPA funds.

Jill Drew and Tom Bartram highlighted that the ARPA Advisory Committee has no financial authority over the ARPA funds – all applications received will be forwarded to the BoS (whether the Committee is supportive or not). The benefit of the Committee's involvement is to optimize the process for the BoS so that applications received are complete as possible and determined to be eligible or not, to the best of the Committee's ability.

Discussion ensued about how to think about evaluating applications received in series (versus per a deadline) and the potential volume of applications. The Committee agreed that except for urgent cases (which obviously are unknown until they are urgent) a first deadline for applications could be January 15th, 2022 so that the BoS will be able to evaluate all the applications received with context - and in relation to the other applications received.

- 8) Jill Drew updated the Committee on the required draft report to the US Treasury which must cover the period from formation to 9/30/21. A report summary will be drafted to reflect the status and what is required by the Treasury. The report is filed by the BoS and Jill is working with Tina Pitcher to sort out this process. The next report to the Treasury (because Sharon is a non-entitlement unit or NEU and thus only has to file annual reports) is due on October 31, 2022.
 - 9) No public comment
 - 10) Request from the Housatonic Youth Services Bureau for funding: Jill Drew presented the application and highlighted the nonprofit's needs and some questions that need to be answered. Barbara Prindle highlighted some further unanswered questions (why are payments not pro-rata based on population? what are the details of the funding needed?) and reiterated that every entity should fill out the Sharon ARPA application so that every organization provides consistent information. Tom Bartram highlighted that hiring staff with one-time (i.e., ARPA) monies can be problematic. Donna DiMartino suggested including this application (once complete) with the ones to be received for the post January 15th, 2022 consideration.
 - 11) New idea received for ARPA monies: Via the website, a resident submitted the idea of using some of the ARPA funds to hire a Sharon Resident Trooper for one year (a cost of \$177k) to address some of the issues that developed during COVID. Tom Bartram highlighted again that hiring staff with one-time (i.e., ARPA) monies can be problematic. Dale Jones mentioned that the short-term nature of the ARPA funds does not necessarily fit with the optimal approach for hiring a resident trooper which provides
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the most benefits over a longer time period. Meghan Flanagan echoed the concerns about tying the ARPA funds to the resident trooper and expressed her desire for data, statistics for crime, etc., to determine whether an argument could be made that the desire for a resident trooper is even COVID-related. Jill Drew concluded that the idea would be put on the list of ideas and raised as a topic at the December 1st town meeting for open discussion. If the idea has traction with the residents, it will have to be determined if the BoF or Bos would be the applicant/act as the sponsor.

- 12) Jill Drew asked if any Committee member had information on how other towns' ARPA groups are progressing. Tom Bartram mentioned an article in the Republican American that certain (larger) towns are trying to encourage the federal government to loosen the rules around the ability to use their ARPA funds.
- 13) Carol Flaton updated the Committee on her understanding (after consulting with Linda Amerighi/Tom Hennick) the baseline FOIA requirements for the ARPA Advisory Committee. The protocol required is driven by the authority that the BoS has given to the Committee – and as such – the Committee is essentially deemed a subcommittee of the BoS and should follow the FOIA protocols as required for any public agency (CT Statutes Chapter 14, section 1-200).
- 14) Meghan Flanagan gave an update from her discussion with Sharon Parks & Rec about the idea of improving the waters of Mudge Pond. She said that the rake equipment that has been used in the past is insufficient to keep the areas weed free. An alternative approach is to use chemicals (which other towns do) but that raises a host of environmental issues. Tom Bartram mentioned that Salisbury and Lakeville own weed-eating equipment that is used annually to manage the waters. Carol Flaton mentioned that she had investigated the CT water ownership laws (littoral and riparian rights) and how that would factor into any project that would be done – should town residents consider this a valuable use of ARPA funds.
- 15) Jill Drew reported that she and Meghan Flanagan had tested a new video conference system (on loan) at Town Hall this week. The system would allow for public meetings to be held both online and in-person. It worked exceptionally well. The next test of the system (with the BoS) is scheduled for 10/21/21 at 3:30pm. The cost of the system if purchased by Sharon would be \$4,400.
- 16) There was unanimous approval of a motion to adjourn and the meeting concluded at 7:41pm.

Change made per Chairman for confidentiality reasons- 11/8/2021
