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By Linda Amerighi at 8:14 am, Dec 27, 2021

Sharon ARPA Advisory Committee  
December 20, 2021 Meeting Minutes  
Draft until approved at the next regular meeting

The Sharon ARPA Advisory Committee held a regular meeting at 6:30pm on December 20, 2021. 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

Donna DiMartino

*On Zoom*

Gretchen Hachmeister

Meghan Flanagan

Doug Cahill

Sophia Wang

**Public attendees:**

*In Person*

Matthew Schwartz – Silver Lake Shores Assn

*On Zoom*

Melia Hill – Sharon Social Services Agent

Craig Nelson – NWCT Transit

Lindsey Larson – HVA

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm.
2. The proposed meeting agenda was approved without change.
3. Minutes of the Dec. 1 community meeting and Dec. 2 special meeting were approved without change.
3. Public comments were made when specific items were discussed.
4. Review ARPA grant applications

a. **Sharon Social Services Agent**

Melia Hill, Sharon's Social Services agent, explained that the volume of request for assistance has significantly increased due to COVID. The office computer is out of date and greatly impacting her productivity. The committee unanimously approved a motion to support this application as an urgent request. Jill will write an email to the Board of Selectman requesting the approval of \$2,920 in ARPA funds to be allocated to Sharon Social Services for purchase of a laptop and printer/scanner.

b. **Silver Lake Shores Association**

Matthew Schwartz represented the Silver Lake Shores Association was asked to give a brief history of the community and how it has been impacted by the pandemic. After discussion, he was encouraged to review the current \$50,000 request and consider submitting a new application that more directly fit the aims of the ARPA grant funding. Guidance included:

- i. Silver Lake Shores Association's shortfall in HOA fees may fall under the loss of revenue category caused by COVID under the Treasury guidelines;
- ii. Its fire hydrant issue may be an urgent need. It's not COVID-related but it's a safety issue for the community, so that could make it a town issue;

- ii. Requests to support improved water drainage and sewage fall within the guidelines, especially as the water flows into Mudge Pond;
- iv. Individual families of the community impacted by COVID may apply for support via Sharon Social Services.

**c. Northwestern CT Transit District**

Craig Nelson explained that the organization provides transportation to elderly and disabled residents of 17 municipalities across Northwestern part of Connecticut. Sharon does not currently have a representative on the District's Board and our residents are not frequent users of the service. Sharon has given \$811 to the Transit District each year as part of its town budget – an amount that has not changed in the past 14 years. The organization lost 80% of its annual income since 2019 due to COVID. It is asking each participating municipality for a minimum of \$10,000 to cover operating costs – mainly worker salaries. The employees are considered frontline workers by federal transit authorities. Barkhamsted has agreed to provide \$10,000. Torrington has allocated \$50,000.

The district is considered a quasi-governmental non-profit. The bulk of its income comes from the federal and state government through DOT, but it also receives private donations, including from riders. Even though ridership dropped a lot due to COVID, the buses have continued on their routes to serve the remaining riders who otherwise have no transportation. The buses are cleaned daily and passengers must wear masks following government regulation.

The Transit District was given funds from DOT for PPE and cleaning supplies. The previous management did not apply for PPP loans.

The service is available in Kent twice a week, in Salisbury/Falls Village 3 days a week, in Sharon every Tuesday and Thursday. Residents in Sharon can use the service to go to Torrington for shopping, or an affiliated service called the Reach program takes people to Yale or UConn Medical for medical appointments. It's a separate organization from Geer Transit, but the two rider services back up each other with the Reach program.

Melia Hill commented that the town of Sharon is considering purchasing a bus for local transportation for its residents. Craig Nelson said Northwestern CT Transit is open to coordinating with Sharon.

The committee will include this request in its review with the Board of Selectman after Jan. 15. The committee will also recommend the Selectman to nominate someone from Sharon to the board of the Transit District so its service can be better promoted to Sharon residents. Craig said usually the board members are first Selectman or the head of the social service from each municipality. Jill will email Craig if there is any update.

**d. Housatonic Valley Association**

Lindsey Larson, HVA's CT Watershed Manager, submitted a revised proposal that requests each of seven river towns contribute \$3,034 of ARPA funds. The funds will be used to support two initiatives: River Information and Outreach (RIO) and Enforcement.

The first initiative was started in 2018 and hires bilingual River Stewards to work weekends from June 18-Sept. 5 to travel among high-priority river access sites to ensure visitors are aware of regulations. The second initiative is new and aims to fund overtime hours for enforcement patrol staff along popular stretches of the river.

Though the same fund request was submitted to all 7 towns, the question was raised by the committee that if Sharon were to contribute more than \$3,34, could it's two access points get more enforcement patrol time. Lindsay said she would go discuss that with colleagues and get back to us.

The committee will include this request in its review with the Board of Selectman after Jan. 15. Jill will keep Lindsay updated with any feedback or decisions.

6. Overview of other applications received so far, discuss process and timetable
  - a. The committee has not received further information from Sharon Day Care Center.

Tom said there are discussions about whether to apply.

- b. The committee also received applications from the American Legion Post 126, Sharon United Methodist Church, four families on Lower Deer Run for high-speed internet, Greenwoods Counseling & Referrals (a non-profit counseling center for Litchfield County residents). They will be scheduled to present at ab ARPA meeting in January. Gretchen Hachmeister said there will also be a small application from the Hotchkiss library coming in before January 15.

- c. Jill will draft a process memo for review at the next meeting.

7. Report on results of additional community outreach

Resident participation in the survey remains low. Only 61 survey responses have been received so far. Outreach continues. Meghan Flanagan did a radio interview on WHDD, Gretchen has included a link in the library email, Gretchen had the library print new posters and Carol Flaton posted them in various high-traffic locations in town. Jill decided to postpone the publishing of a link on Sharon Facebook page until after the new year. Jill will also email a note to the Sharon Connect email list.

8. Discuss whether to recruit advocates for funding ideas suggested in survey:  
The Committee agreed that if no sponsor is available to submit a formal application for ideas from the survey, the committee could submit an application. The Committee commended Meghan for the successful interview.

9. 2022 meeting schedules were reviewed: Monday meetings will be at 4:30 pm and Wednesday meetings will be at 6:30; the Monday meeting next month will be moved back a week to Jan. 24 to avoid conflict with the MLK, Jr. three-day holiday, and the Monday meeting

in February will be moved up a week to Feb. 14 to avoid conflict with President's Day. That meeting will be Zoom-only, as the large conference room is already booked for that Monday.

10. Other topics:

a. Jill went to the Board of Selectman meeting on Dec. 14, informing them of the Committee's discussion about our role in researching whether applications fit Treasury's criteria, but not making policy decisions about whether to award funding or not. The BOS agreed and members reaffirmed that will make the final decisions.

b. Jill has talked with Tom Hennick, the public education officer for the state's Freedom of Information Office about the confidentiality issues for businesses that ask for ARPA funds. He said that there is no clear-cut rule that covers this situation. The committee agreed that any business applicant needs to understand that information shared with the ARPA committee will be subject to FOIA disclosure since they are requesting public money.

11. Unanimous approval of a motion to adjourn and the meeting concluded at 8:16pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sophia Wang