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By Linda Amerighi at 7:36 am, Jul 22, 2022

Sharon ARPA Advisory Committee  
July 18, 2022 Meeting Minutes  
Draft until approved at the next regular meeting

The Sharon ARPA Advisory Committee held a regular meeting at 4:30pm on Monday, July 18, 2022. It was a hybrid meeting, in-person at Town Hall and on Zoom.

Attendees (in person):

Tom Bartram

Jill Drew

Heather Mathews (applicant)

Meghan Flanagan

Gretchen Hachmeister

Tom Casey

Donna DiMartino

Attendees (on Zoom):

Doug Cahill

Casey Flanagan (ex officio)

The meeting was called to order at 4:30pm.

- I.
  - a. The Agenda was approved as circulated.
  - b. The Minutes from July 6 were approved as circulated.
  
- II. There was no public comment.
  
- III. Review of Board of Selectmen recent decisions
  - a. Jill explained that the federal government has not yet released the second tranche of ARPA funding, but that funding is expected soon. She read over the list of four awards the Board of Selectmen made at its July 12 meeting, pending receipt of the funding. [Minutes of that meeting are available here.](#)
  
- IV. New Applications.
  - a. Carson/WW#2 internet  
([see 7-18 Zoom recording here](#), TC 4:00 – 17:35) Claudia Carson explained that when she and her husband purchased the land on West Woods #2 seven years ago, they assumed there was internet available because there is a Frontier utility pole on the road nearby. Claudia built a small studio on the land to work here, but unfortunately, when she requested internet service be installed, Frontier told her it cannot supply an internet connection. (Meghan Flanagan explained that Frontier’s “hut” is in the center of town and the signal degrades over distance. The Carson’s property is too far away for a usable signal to reach them.) Frontier told her to call Comcast. The Carson’s main home is currently being built and expected to be livable at the end of the year. Both she and her husband work from home, so they must have internet before they can move to Sharon full-time as is their plan. She also said that, for safety reasons during the construction, it would be beneficial to have internet connectivity on the property now. She has contacted Starlink to try to get

satellite service, but Starlink says it will not be shipping new units to the Sharon area until sometime next year. There is only very weak and spotty cell service at the property, because they are below the tree line and the signal from the tower on Herb Road does not consistently reach them. Claudia has spoken with a few others in the area who also have problems – one family paid a lot of money for Frontier to connect them, only to find that the signal is not good. She got a quote from Comcast to wire the new home and is asking for ARPA funding to help defray the expense of \$6,501.35. She does not expect the town ARPA funds to cover the full cost, but hopes that the town can contribute something and bring the town closer to the goal of providing access to high-speed internet to all residents.

b. H&H Educators

([see 7/18 Zoom recording here](#), TC 20:27-42:55) Heather Mathews, on her own initiative, bought a bus that she wants to outfit as a mobile classroom so that she can travel to children's homes and other settings during the summer (like Little Rascals and Sharon Ridge), and perhaps during school vacations and during her weekend tutoring sessions, to offer books and lead educational sessions for children who attend Sharon Center School and perhaps other area schools. Heather is a certified teacher who has taught at Sharon Center for more than 30 years. She now teaches remedial reading at Sharon Center School. Her dog, Holly (the other "H" in H&H Educators) is a therapy dog who accompanies Heather and also helps students. She also runs a tutoring business. She presented a [slide show during the ARPA committee meeting](#) to demonstrate the need for the children of Sharon to read, particularly during the summer to prevent the "Summer Slide" of reading ability (nearly 40% of students in first through fourth grade slid back to where they were in April reading ability when they return to school after summer break). On top of that, there is now also a "Covid Slide," where masks prevent students to really learn phonics and there are many more absences from school, which severely interrupts learning. She bought the van with part of her retirement savings because she feels so strongly that the need is too great to ignore. "I don't think people realize how fragile our town is," she said. "I just need to get books in the hands of these children." She is requesting \$21,000 in ARPA funds to defray the costs of outfitting the van to be a mobile classroom, including the purchase of an awning that can pull out from the side of the van to allow her to offer outdoor instruction during these Covid-conscious times and also to get an RV-centric Starlink system. She has submitted a detailed budget for the items and labor that is needed, getting good prices for all of it as she enlists her neighbors and friends in Sharon to do the work. Doug Cahill noted this would be a great addition to the formal schooling of the children of Sharon. Tom Bartram asked if the ARPA funds the school system received could be used for this, and Doug responded that some of that money had been committed, but he would look into whether any could be available. Heather said she spoke with SCS principal Karen Manning could support this project, but Dr. Manning said there were no funds available. Heather noted that 44 percent of the children at SCS qualify for free and reduced lunches and additional help because of the low

incomes of their families. Gretchen noted that the library is eager to work with Heather to provide books and to make sure all children have library cards. Donna DiMartino asked about funding the ongoing expenses of the bus in the future. Heather responded that she is passionate about the project and committed to making it happen and sticking with it for at least the next 10 years before she reaches retirement age. She told us that she has received many donations for gas etc.

II. There was no other new business

III. Adjourned at 5:15 pm.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, August 3, 2022 at 6:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Donna DiMartino and Jill Drew