

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOS MEETING

TOWN OF WESTBROOK  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
SPECIAL MEETING  
Thursday, July 22, 2021  
Multi-Media Room  
Mulvey Municipal Center and  
ZOOM

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectman Bishop called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. In attendance included: First Selectman Bishop, Selectman Hall, Selectman Fuchs, Donna Castracane, Director of Finance, Joe Brucella, Retirement Board Chairman, John Rie, Harbor Commission Chairman, Tony Cozza BOS member, Lee McNamar, WPCA Chairman, Gregg Prevost, Westbrook Ambulance, Don Izzo, Emergency Management Director, Bonnie Hall, ZBA Chairman, Rich Annino, Park & Rec Director, Jim Crawford, EDC Chairman, Chet Bialicki, Paul Winch, BOF member, Gary Gavigan, BOF Chairman, Carol Hess, Asst. Director of Finance, Salvatore Campaila and Vincent Gentile.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION – ARPA – Rescue Funds

At an earlier date, the Chairmen of Boards/Commissions were invited to this meeting to provide potential ideas for ARPA funds.

Mr. Bishop reported that he met with Department Heads on 7/21/21 to solicit ideas for the use of the ARPA Funds. Chairmen of Boards/Commission's received the agenda that clearly states the purpose of today's meeting. What this meeting **IS** and what it **IS NOT**. Let me reiterate a statement in the 6/29/21 BOS minutes: **"It was clearly understood that all of these discussions are to generate potential ideas and that at some time, once we have input from employees and Board/Commission/Committee Chairmen, the BOS may prioritize some of the recommendations and invite comment from the Westbrook general public. Until this process is complete, the BOS will be responsible for managing the initial process.**

During the last 3 to 4 months, there have been several communications regarding the ARPA Funds. As a member of the Executive Committee of the RiverCOG, there have been many discussions and clarifications of these funds by staff from the offices of Congressman Courtney and Senators Blumenthal and Murphy. Donna Castracane, as Director of Finance, and myself have carefully monitored all of this information and while much of it is redundant, it is clear that the 17 towns that are members of the RiverCOG are all in the process of struggling to determine what the next steps will be.

As stated above, the BOS is committed to listening and gathering information from various entities regarding ideas for the allocation of these funds. For example, yesterday I met with Department Heads for their ideas. These ideas will be presented, at a future date, to the BOS who will then determine the next steps in the process.

It is important to keep in mind that we have several months to determine what projects and initiatives will be funded and until at least 2024 to identify expenditures and until 2026 to expend the funds.

I encourage all of you, once your ideas are presented today, NOT to leave this meeting thinking that yours and other ideas will be funded. To reiterate, this is a brainstorming session and it is very important that we seek ideas and suggestions from the community.

It has been strongly suggested that it may be appropriate for municipal governments to identify 2 or 3 major initiatives to be funded, but keep in mind, as the guidance states, all projects must be somehow related to Covid-19.

Ms. Castracane has kept the BOF informed on the status of the funds and has discussed guidelines and protocols with her colleagues from surrounding towns.

Suggestions included:

- Mr. Izzo
  - Funding for Soup Kitchen and Social Service programs
    - Suggested Soup Kitchen CEO be invited to a BOS meeting to discuss

- The increased food needs experienced during the Pandemic were discussed and the suggestion was made for regional support (funding of a refrigerated truck) for the Soup Kitchen via RiverCOG.
  - PPE replacement – Don has discussed PPE needs with Ms. Brainerd, Facilities
  - Premium pay for Health Director
  - Funding for Youth and Family Services – mental health

Ms. Castracane reported that an Infrastructure Bill is currently being debated in Congress and aside from items specifically allowable via the ARPA Funds (water, sewer broadband), other infrastructure projects would probably not qualify for use of these funds (sidewalks, paving, etc.).

- WPCA – Chairman McNamar
  - Passive Nitrogen System to replace the system at West Beach - \$50,000 to \$80,000.
  - It was suggested that these “once in a lifetime” funds be utilized to transform the Town Center via a viable adequate waste water solution. Addressing the waste water needs of the Town Center area would be instrumental in facilitating the economic growth of Westbrook. Town Center, EDC and WPCA Committees/Commissions and other appropriate parties pledged to work together to develop a waste water plan for the Town Center.
    - Potential/availability of Clean Water Funds (CWF) was briefly discussed.
    - Note that data is currently being developed to address the waste water in Town Center; i.e. Wren Park study, Ted Lane study, etc. and it may be premature to discuss a project of this magnitude until all data is collected and analyzed.
    - Multiple funding sources will be necessary for a waste water solution to the Town Center.
- EDC – Chairman Crawford
  - Revolving funds to aid businesses wishing to improve the aesthetics and/or efficiency of their property.
- Harbor Commission – Chairman Rie
  - Funding to dredge the channel – probably not an allowable use of ARPA funds.
  - Chairman Rie is working with Congressman Courtney’s office to facilitate a dredging project.
    - Approximately 20% of the town’s economy is dependent on the channel; i.e. marinas, etc.
- Conservation Commission- funding to maintain the Town’s Open Space - \$30,000 to \$50,000
- Ambulance – Gregg Prevost
  - Reimburse payroll/stipend program/seed money for hourly staffing – return fund balance to required levels (DPH regulation) - \$250,000
  - Reimburse facility upgrades mandated by Fire Marshal – bunk rooms/bathroom - \$100,000
  - Essential worker stipend - \$100 per month per employee who worked during Pandemic – averaged 30 employees per month - \$60,000
  - Automated CPR devices for each ambulance - \$30,000
  - Automatic stretcher loading system for 2<sup>nd</sup> ambulance - \$30,000
  - P25 Radio system upgrade - \$150,000
    - Radio infrastructure throughout the town should be upgraded ASAP.
  - Replace current 2<sup>nd</sup> line ambulance - \$250,000
  - Replace current extrication gear for all employees - \$50,000
  - Establish contract with Town to offset cost of staffing ambulance with hourly staff on primary ambulance – annual budget \$600,000 – town share would be \$300,000 - \$25,000 per month – 24 hours per day coverage guaranteed

The Ambulance is currently not an agency of the Town. The Town may choose to “fund” the Ambulance Association via a grant. Mr. Prevost will provide a prioritized list to the BOS by the 8/10/21 BOS meeting.

- Money to address climate change, coastal flooding, etc.

To facilitate the upcoming budget process, Chairman Gavigan requested a copy of the Department Head’s meeting minutes.

The Town is scheduled to receive \$2.3 million dollars in ARPA funds (including County funds). Ms. Castracane reported that the Town has received, to date, \$1 million in ARPA funds. These funds are currently in the Citizen's account. The remainder ARPA are to be received approximately June 2022. The Westbrook Public School system has also received funding (approximately \$700,000). These funds are being administered by the BOE and school administration. The Town has no purview over the use of BOE funds.

Presently, funds received have been deposited in the Citizen's Bank account (the Town is permitted to keep any interest earned on the funds). However, interest rates are low at this time and Ms. Castracane and Ms. Butterworth, Treasurer, are exploring options to handle the interest.

Mr. Cozza requested that the Director of Finance review the Capital Budget to determine if any Capital projects meet the criteria for ARPA funds.

Mr. Salvatore Campailla, Middle Beach, requested that a jetty in the Middle Beach vicinity be funded via the ARPA. Ms. Castracane reported that this request would not fit the guidelines provided for use of the money.

Ms. Castracane reported that information from the State and Federal government remains "fluid". FAQ sheets are updated regularly and she discusses same with her colleagues and the National League of Cities and other organizations. Ms. Castracane will review the compiled requests for ARPA and research with appropriate entities if said project is an eligible use of ARPA funds

A record of the Department Head requests and Board/Commission Chairmen requests will be developed and reviewed at the 8/10/21 BOS meeting.

A Public Hearing, to engage Westbrook residents relative to the ARPA funds was scheduled 8/19/21 @ 6:00 p.m. (in-person and hybrid).

Chairman Gavigan requested that a joint BOS/BOF meeting be scheduled, sometime after 8/19, to discuss ARPA funds.

Mr. Bishop thanked today's attendees for their input.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Bishop made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:16 p.m. Mr. Fuchs seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Attest,

Suzanne Helchowski  
Executive Assistant

Noel Bishop  
First Selectman