



Watertown City Council

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ELECTED OFFICIALS:

Mark S. Sideris,
Council President

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Vice President &
District C Councilor

John M. Airasian,
Councilor At Large

Caroline Bays,
Councilor At Large

John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large

Nicole Gardner,
District A Councilor

Lisa J. Feltner,
District B Councilor

Emily Izzo,
District D Councilor

Committee of the Budget and Fiscal Oversight Report of the Meeting of February 21, 2023

The Committee convened on Tuesday, February 21, 2023 at 7:00 pm in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber. It was a hybrid meeting, with remote participation by Zoom, and was broadcast by WCATV. Present were Vincent Piccirilli, Chair; Emily Izzo, Vice Chair and Nicole Gardner, Secretary. Also present were Councilors Lisa Feltner, Caroline Bays, and John Gannon. Roughly 20 residents attended the meeting by zoom and in person. City Manager George Proakis was unable to attend, but he submitted an email with comments (Attachment A).

The purpose of the meeting was to continue the discussion to set priorities for the federal funds from the American Rescue Plan, specifically to 1) develop guidelines for interested parties to submit proposals for ARPA funding and 2) develop criteria for the Committee to use for evaluation and prioritizing proposals for ARPA funding. The Committee was not soliciting proposals for specific ARPA projects at this meeting.

Discussion of guidelines for submitting proposals

The Committee began by reviewing City Manager Proakis's email on information to be collected. All recommendations were agreed to and some additional ideas were added.

Information the Committee would like to receive is:

1. Applicant name
2. Contact person (if applicant is an organization)
3. Contact email address
4. Contact phone number
5. Project name
6. Amount of ARPA funds requested to run the project
7. Matching funds available for the project from other sources:
 - a. Source of funds
 - b. Amount
 - c. Are funds guaranteed or if not, likelihood
8. Other sources of funds that could be used for the project other than ARPA funds:
 - a. Source of funds
 - b. Amount
 - c. Are funds guaranteed or if not, likelihood
9. Minimum funds needed to make the project worth doing
10. Recommended project manager (i.e. City department, non-profit entity. Note that if a non-profit entity is proposed as project manager, they should submit the proposal.)

11. A narrative description of the project. This can vary from a simple description of an idea being recommended by a resident, to a proposal being submitted by a department or other entity. If possible it should include:
 - a. A detailed budget
 - b. A timeline for the project: encumbrance of funds by December 31, 2024, how soon can it start, key milestones, how long will it take to execute, and expenditures of funds complete by December 31, 2026
 - c. Any resources required in addition to the ARPA funding
 - d. Metrics for success of the project
 - e. Outputs / outcomes
 - f. What will be the overall benefit (financial or otherwise) to Watertown residents
 - g. How the project meets the City's ARPA proposal criteria (to be published on the city webpage)

The Committee would like to use the following process for proposal submissions:

1. They are to be submitted on our City ARPA Webpage whenever possible; residents and organizations may also submit them by email or on paper if needed.
2. Users will enter all data elements other than the project narrative into a google form on the webpage, and they'll attach the narrative on the webpage as well.
3. The City will post all proposals on the website, in the order received, so that there is full transparency for the public.

The Committee would like the City staff to support the process as follows:

1. Create an input form for the webpage.
2. Create an email address for people who need to email their submission rather than using the input form.
3. Ensuring all paper and email submissions are entered into an input form so they are visible to the public and the Committee.
4. Post all proposals on the ARPA webpage in the order in which they are received.
5. Once the submission form is on the website and ready for use, publicize that the 2 month proposal window is open and provide the link, using all possible channels.

Discussion of criteria for assessing proposals

The following criteria were developed together by the Committee, the Councilors attending, and the public. They fall into 4 categories: Practicalities, Benefits, Financial, and Strategic

Practical:

1. Can the project meet the deadlines for encumbrance no later than December 31, 2024 and expenditure in full by December 31, 2026?
2. Does the applicant demonstrate that they are qualified and have the capacity to execute the project?

Benefits to residents:

1. What number of residents are being served?
2. Does the project serve the most impacted residents?
3. Are the benefits long term and over what period?

Financial:

1. Does the project leverage other sources of funding so we get more bang for our buck?
2. Is there a funding cliff and if so what is the plan to deal with it when it comes?
3. Does the project address the unintended impact of COVID on our City's ability to maintain the service levels expected?

Strategic:

1. Is the project aligned with our Comprehensive Plan and our Charter Preamble?
2. Are we ensuring a variety and a balance of spending across priorities and needs?

Other issues discussed

The Committee discussed possibly using a survey to get public feedback once proposals were in. This could be using the website, or FlashVote. The Committee will come back to this at a future meeting.

The Committee agreed that it would be prudent to recommend that the City Council move the maximum \$10 million into "revenue replacement" for reporting purposes as soon as possible, as recommended by Hannah York of Clifton/Larsen/Allen at the February 1st Community Forum.

The Committee briefly discussed the possibility that some proposals with broad support might be approved for action before all funding decisions were taken.

Chair Piccirilli reminded the public of the process going forward, namely that the Committee would:

1. Create a page on the City website to provide ARPA information and to enable residents to make recommendations.
2. Invite suggestions and recommendations from both residents and from City departments.
3. Synthesize the input and assess it against the proposed criteria.
4. Develop a draft set of recommendations.
5. Share the draft recommendations publicly and invite community feedback and further input from the City Administration.
6. Revise the Committee's recommendations accordingly, and submit a proposal to the full City Council for debate and vote.

➔ **Action Item:** Councilor Gardner made a motion, seconded by Councilor Izzo, that the Committee recommend the City Council move the maximum \$10 million into "revenue replacement" for reporting purposes as soon as possible. Voted 3-0.

➔ **Action Item:** Councilor Gardner made a motion, seconded by Councilor Izzo, that the Committee recommend the City Council agree to use the application process as described above. Voted 3-0.

➔ **Action Item:** Councilor Gardner made a motion, seconded by Councilor Izzo, that the Committee recommend the City Council agree to use the assessment criteria as described above. Voted 3-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:48 pm on a unanimous vote.

Report prepared by Nicole Gardner

Attachment A - City Manager George Proakis email February 14, 2023

ARPA application

Proakis, George <gproakis@watertown-ma.gov>

Tue 2/14/2023 2:49 PM

To: Piccirilli, Vincent J <vpiccirilli@watertown-ma.gov>

Dear Councilor,

Thank you for continuing to lead the process of determining how to spend Watertown's ARPA funds. As I mentioned when we last spoke on the phone, I will be returning from a vacation on Tuesday February 21st, and unable to join the committee meeting to discuss the ARPA funds application process.

So, I want to just share a few thoughts. Feel free to share this with the committee:

- A. The process should allow anybody with an idea to provide it – but should acknowledge that sometimes the person submitting the idea may have no method to execute it. I encourage us to invite applicants to share information about which government agency or non-profit partner may possibly execute an idea. But, after receiving all these applications, there may be a need to review to ensure that the proposed entity (especially if it is a city department) has the staffing capacity to take on the project.
- B. In general, I recommend that the City Council ask applicants for the following information:
 - a. Contact info
 - b. Amount of ARPA funds they need to run the project
 - c. If there are any matching funds available from other sources
 - d. If there are other sources of funds that could be used to fund this project instead of ARPA
 - e. If the project is still worth doing if it is only partially funded (i.e. what is the minimum necessary to make it worth doing the project)
 - f. Who should operate the project (city agency or a non-profit – and who is it)
 - g. Narrative about the project
 - h. How it meets ARPA goals
 - i. What will be the overall benefit (financial or otherwise) to Watertown residents
- C. Proposals will come with a wide range of ideas. Hopefully, we can use the ARPA web page to identify what is and what is not an eligible project, as well as provide access to the application. Our IT team is ready to help with this effort with the guidance of the council on the particulars of the application.
- D. I will make sure that city staff submit their own proposals for items such as water/sewer upgrades, etc. We will probably also submit a placeholder for high school cost overruns, as we keep an eye on the overall school cost.
- E. We have total funding in an amount of about \$10.5 million. There will be some funds that we will need to use for the administration of the program by CLA. The City Council should consider moving the maximum \$10 million into 'revenue replacement' for reporting purposes, even if the Council decides to use those funds for efforts that are permitted under any of the other categories.
- F. After the application process is complete, you will likely need to group together some repetitive and similar applications as you do reviews.
- G. We also have the FlashVote tool available at that point if you are interested in using it to get public feedback as you look to rank your priorities

I hope this info is helpful for the meeting on the 21st. If you have more questions, just ask. Otherwise, I'll also see you at the committee meeting on the 22nd to discuss the CIP.

Thanks,
George

George J. Proakis
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