

ARPA Committee Meeting

03.08.2022

Attendance

ARPA Committee Members: Bill Wade, Ben Herman, Diane Schwenke, Estrella Ruiz, Laurel Cole, Bill Findley, Linda Taylor, Gary Schroen, Raul De Villegas-Decker

Not In Attendance: Kay Ramachandran

Councilmembers: Abe Herman, Dennis Simpson, Randall Reitz

City Staff: Greg Caton, Jodi Welch, Greg LeBlanc, Johnny McFarland, Isabella Vaz

Committee Introductions

Committee members went around the table and discussed what areas of interest/expertise they bring to the committee:

- Diane Schwenke: Knowledge of economic development and what small businesses need
- Estrella Ruiz: Advocate for latino community, business owner, parent, lived here all her life
- Laurel Cole: ED Habitat for Humanity – new to area but has experience in housing and housing concerns, including advocacy in GJ
- Abe Herman: Councilmember, small business owner, soft spot for housing and homelessness
- Bill Findley: retired after 40 years in pediatrics, healthy lifestyle for kids and families, land trust, parks and rec board, want to make GJ healthier place for people to grow up
- Gary Schroen: parks and rec board, retired accountant, understands cash flow and profitability
- Cindy Enos-Martinez: served on city council, school board, catholic outreach, minority action, CMU involvement, 32 years with the County. Interested in aspects of covid as it pertains to youth, seniors and homeless
- Linda Taylor: ED Center for Independence for 17 years, understand contracts including handling government grants. Here to advocate for marginalized groups such as those with disabilities
- Raul De Villegas Decker: clinical and organizational psychologist, worked in areas such as social determinants of health, housing, governor’s task force on behavioral health, mental health Colorado
- Dennis Simpson: Retired CPA, active citizen bringing financial knowledge and background to the table.
- Ben Herman: retired consulting city planner, worked for cities across the country. Specifically, cities looking to bring sustainability in to their communities. Interest came from being on Sentinel editorial board, seeing the impacts and challenges various groups faced because of covid
- Bill Wade – retired investment banker, worked on homelessness issues in New York City. Spent last 9 years working with the Coalition in the valley and as chair of Homeward Bound. From a housing perspective, wants to focus on the most vulnerable populations.

Overview/Possible Framework for Committee Recommendations

The Committee Chair provided an overview of his discussions with councilmembers and staff regarding direction of the committee. Arrived at 3 primary goals. The first is to create a process for allocating funding into specific areas. The second is to develop and refine the process into specific targeted areas within the broader categories. Third step is to review applications or recommendations in a given category and make specific recommendations to City Council.

The Chair clarified that while Councilmembers are on the committee, they will not vote on items brought before the committee.

Greg Caton, City Manager clarified the total amount of funds that will be available to the committee to recommend for allocation. There is a literal shortfall of revenue to local government, specifically in lodging tax of \$1.5 million and those industries are still struggling. As a result, City Council will be meeting on April 6th to decide whether to put \$1.5 million in ARPA funds toward lodging tax shortfalls, leaving the committee with approximately \$9 million in funding to work with. Mr. Caton also clarified that it is City Council's wish to declare all of the total funds received as "revenue shortfall" as it pertains to the eligible use categories under the ARPA Final Rule. This will eliminate some of the bureaucratic processes involved in using funds under other eligible use categories. However, Council would like to see funds generally utilized within the parameters of the Final Rule.

The Vice Chair gave out a short sheet summarizing the eligible use categories that committee members should look to when considering uses of the funds including:

- Public health
- Economic impacts
- Water, sewer, and infrastructure

Goal Setting Exercise

The Vice Chair and committee members engaged in an exercise to begin framing the primary policy interests of the committee with the goal of building some consensus on where the committee should spend their time. Members wrote down three areas they feel the funds would be most appropriate for. Each members 3 areas were then grouped by major categories.

- Housing: affordability, and transitional housing
- Homeless Population: digital access, people with disabilities
- Job Training: reemployment, broadband, education
- Direct Household Assistance: rent, mortgage assistance, food, childcare, etc.
- Mental Health: behavioral health, training, emergency mental health, long-term mental health.

Outliers included youth, and early education, prevention programs, childcare, business/nonprofit loans, economic development with a community-wide focus

Additional discussion around this exercise included concerns that because these are one-time funds, the list should probably be a little less broad, or maybe they should think about currently available sources of funding for each area. The Chair agreed and added that at the previous meeting they had agreed to really focus their efforts on identifying key areas where the maximum benefit to the most people can be achieved. An example was brought up of businesses. They are not really looking for loans at this point, rather skilled labor, childcare, upskilling, etc.

Discussion regarding how the committee looks at projects or funding opportunities included ensuring that funds are going to organizations that are sustainable, meaning they can make the best use of the funds and potentially leverage funds for continued investments in a specific area. An example of another way the funds could be leveraged would be rather than focusing on building housing, the funds could purchase land and the land could be parceled to developers to achieve housing goals.

The idea was raised that the committee members, upon coming to an agreement on the policy areas that have consensus, could break off into subcommittees and begin evaluating. City Council's hope is that this committee could bring specific recommendations forward within 6-12 months, so the subcommittees could help move the process forward. This would include getting a sense of the current needs, what's being addressed or not addressed, other funding availability, or specific projects in need of seed funding or additional support.

Significant time was spent by the committee discussing specifically how best to use the funds for specific policy areas. One comment that led to additional discussion was that areas such as housing or childcare would be fairly straightforward to address with one-time funding, but soft policy areas or areas that are chronic like behavioral health, might be more difficult to address with these funds. It was suggested that one way to think about the chronic issues in the community is to think upstream, as in what would help to stymie these chronic issues, rather than focusing on direct aid to individuals experiencing chronic issues as it may only have a temporary impact. A member suggested that the committee build a strong sense of what the root cause of any policy areas are, how the city got here, and what can be done to mitigate the likelihood of the community ending up in the same position a few years down the road.

The Vice Chair suggested that through the committee's discussion, there were four primary areas that regularly came up, housing, homelessness, childcare, and nonprofit funding. Councilmember Herman suggested that the committee think of nonprofit aid not as a separate issue, but as a means to an end. Potentially bolster funding to a nonprofit to address an issue identified by the committee, such as housing issues.

There was agreement from other committee members to begin by focusing on three major emphasis areas, housing, homelessness, and childcare. The Chair asked if committee members would like to break off into subcommittees in these areas to begin working on more in-depth research on the topics. There was some agreement that certain members would begin tackling one of the three issues and prior to the next meeting, the committee members would be assigned one of each category.

Meeting Schedule/Frequency

The Chair asked if it would be helpful to begin meeting bi-weekly. One member suggested they continue to meet monthly, but that the subcommittees would work in the interim to bring more substantive ideas to the full committee.

The Chair summarized by indicating that prior to the next meeting the Chair and Vice Chair will be in contact with each committee member to identify their area of interest on a subcommittee and the subcommittees will meet bi-weekly to begin working on developing information to bring to the full committee.

Adjourn

