

TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT  
***SPECIAL MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON ARPA***  
**REMOTE ONLY**  
**TUESDAY**  
**MARCH 15, 2022**

**6:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M**

**AMENDED RECORD OF VOTES & MINUTES**

The Special Meeting of March 15, 2022, was called to order at 6:00 p.m. There was a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance was said. Councilors in attendance were Autumn Allinson, Thomas Laffin, Christina Tatta, Vincent Testa, and Jason Zandri.

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll Call
3. Approve Special Meeting Minutes of the Town Council Subcommittee on ARPA for March 3, 2022.

**MOTION WAS MADE TO APPROVE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
OF THE TOWN COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON ARPA FOR  
MARCH 3, 2022.**

**MADE BY: ZANDRI  
SECONDED BY: TATTA  
VOTE: ALL AYE  
MOTION: PASSED**

4. Discussion and possible action regarding Not-For-Profit draft applications and involvement in the process.

Maria Harlow, United Way, and Liz Davis, WCI, worked on draft applications and made two adjustments to what consultants provided. Ms. Harlow stated she invited colleagues to share their perspective.

Robert Gross, Long Hill Road, inquired about private schools and churches being able to apply and Councilor Laffin stated that is what we are discussing tonight.

Mandy Miranda, YSS, stated she loved the application proposal, however, felt it would be difficult in the realm of the consultant running that and feels it is very open ended. She thinks there needs to be yes or no questions and some of the questions should be made objective vs. subjective.

Ms. Harlow stated non-profits can apply in two ways, as business or project request which needs open ended questions to explain what business is going to do.

Ms. Miranda stated everything Maria is saying is accurate and noted YSS does this and can be a part of this committee to assist as a whole.

Councilor Zandri stated that the material Maria sent over is the type of document we want to see - a mini business proposal that is well defined.

Councilor Testa stated that there is a lot he wants to discuss and he has questions for Maria. He stated we need to address consideration, looking at non-profit in two different ways - direct contribution to agency and whether and/or how they would assist us in helping individuals.

Ms. Harlow stated grants to individuals should be handled by YSS and that we will come up with application. She also commented that the businesses must use the right application for their request and remarked that Meriden has a good application. Ms. Harlow stated that open ended questions are needed for program proposal and we must decide who is going to be reviewing applications. Ms. Harlow commented that a criteria scoring sheet and brainstorming could give clarity of what is needed in the community. She stated we should make a list and define where gaps are and that it is crucial the Town Council has a deep understanding of needs.

Councilor Testa asked who the groups are and Ms. Harlow said she would send a list. He feels it is important that we come to grips with what we're trying to accomplish - reimburse losses, replenish savings, pay accumulated debt. Councilor Testa and Ms. Harlow discuss the application process and qualifications and that we are going to have to identify what we can/should do.

Ms. Miranda stated Councilor Testa made good points and YSS gets a lot of individual phone calls and we need to make sure we are not duplicating. She stated COVID exasperated situations and is concerned with the amount of work that will come in. She feels having a committee will be helpful.

Tim Ryan, EDC, mentioned that when appropriate, people from the business community are here to comment.

Councilor Laffin questioned if we are looking at the application the consultant gave us first then the application Maria sent and if components need to be adjusted. Councilor Laffin stated he would like to lock that in tonight. Councilor Zandri stated that we discussed last meeting and it was decided non-profit shoe boxing didn't make sense and we were not going to limit them.

Councilor Allinson said for fund replenishment, lead them to consultant application and for program lead them to other application, take away employee number - funding is funding.

Councilor Laffin remarked we want to incorporate to non-profit as well the strike out of employee limit and create two separate applications, one for non-profit to make whole and one for programs.

Ms. Harlow suggests that members of WCRA reviewing applications could be a conflict of interest and recommends putting together a volunteer committee for allocation. She went on to say separate into review panels, set up interviews, use score sheet, and submit recommendations to Town Council.

Councilor Testa, stated to Ms. Harlow that he thought non-profits would handle applications and now it sounds like that might not be possible.

Councilor Laffin stated that non-profits could still handle individuals and there has to be a level of trust. He went on to say that allocations of resources assigned to alleviate hardship could best be handled by YSS.

Ms. Miranda would like to form a small committee with Town Council having a final say on individual piece. Councilor Laffin stated Town Council would need to do rubber stamping but would look for recommendations from allocation committee.

Sean Doherty, YMCA, stated that applications to United Way are vetted through panel and process was smooth and impartial.

Lindsey Walters, MOU Partners Meriden, commented that she is in the process of working on transitional housing and there could be a housing crisis in the next few years.

Adriana Rodriguez, Executive Director, SCOW, stated they have been assisting the needs of the Latino community for 50 years and their services doubled since the beginning of the pandemic. She went on to say they have bilingual staff and hope to alleviate stressors such as paying a bill, buying food, help move people forward and asks committee to please use SCOW to help with this.

Councilors Laffin and Zandri suggested looking over and marking up drafts. Councilor Allinson suggested the consultant update their side.

KenWelch, Coalition for a Better Wallingford, remarked that COVID had a devastating effect on organization and individual ongoing need.

Ms. Miranda asked if there will be a non-profit and individual application. Councilor Laffin responded yes and asked if committee would like to vote now or at next meeting. Councilor Allinson suggested one big vote and Councilor Tatta questioned the meaning of that. Councilor Laffin stated drafts will be completed and presented for vote at the next ARPA meeting. Councilor Tatta stated she would prefer to vote each time and is not in favor of moving forward.

**MOTION WAS MADE TO MOVE FORWARD AS DISCUSSED FOR FINAL DOCUMENT.**

**MADE BY: ZANDRI  
SECONDED BY: TESTA**

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

**ALLINSON: YES  
LAFFIN: YES  
TATTA: NO  
TESTA: YES  
ZANDRI: YES  
4 - AYE  
1 - NAY  
MOTION: PASSED**

Councilor Zandri asked about the actual mechanism to communicate to non-profits that this is available. Councilor Laffin stated the non-profits all talk to each other and meetings are posted as any other.

Councilor Zandri would like to see a notice in the newspaper to remove all arguments of "I didn't know".

Councilor Tatta stated she would like to make clear that we have not decided how we're going to spend funds at this point and we have not received revenue loss. She remarked that if we go with standard deduction, basically we have \$10 million to spend as we want and if we do not go with standard deduction the rules are much more-strict. She noted the April 30<sup>th</sup> deadline is fast approaching.

Councilor Zandri questioned what is keeping them from making determination and suggested putting item on agenda next meeting.

Ms. Harlow stated that one process doesn't exclude the other and to keep working on the application process and listen to non-profits tonight.

Councilor Allinson expressed thanks to everyone that showed up and stated that her opinion from the beginning has been town projects behind community need. She remarked that the turnout for the meeting is amazing.

Donna Ditrio, 55 West Main Street, Meriden, stated she appreciates commitment and feels \$13 million is not really a lot of money. She stated individuals still need resources that they are so far behind and can't catch up and need help to get back on their feet. She also stated that there will be an influx of people getting eviction notices and questioned how we will keep people housed. She stated landlords are charging more for rent and security deposits and it is important to remember who the group is that needs service.

5. Review and possible action on the draft outline ARPA applications as provided by the consultant and Law Department.

Councilor Laffin asked if there are any major adjustments. Councilor Zandri remarked we are looking for the biggest multipliers and wants to hear creative elements from the business community. Councilor Laffin agreed.

Tim Ryan asked that EDC/WCI make recommended changes and stated he has no issue with Councilor Zandri's change regarding number of employees. He stated ARPA has been challenged on that and referred back to a document from 3/1/2021 listing uses. He feels the scope has been broadened and changed. He stated with regard to comments about small businesses receiving other forms of relief there is no question that has been the case. Mr. Ryan recommends to first determine where need is most and stated that is not necessary to fully fund every application. Non-profits as well netted against other funds received. He stated businesses that have been made whole are not eligible.

Maria Ascenzia, 1114 North Colony Road, business owner of M Salon and Spa for 20 years, came to the meeting to advocate for small business. She stated focus should be on small business that they are the heart and soul of this town and keep people employed. She remarked it has been a rough two years and they received nothing from the State and they were shut down for three months. She lost customers and staff. She stated town projects get funded and small businesses need these funds to stay alive. Ms. Ascenzia stated that she put off shoulder surgery because she had to work hard behind a chair in order to bring home a paycheck and that it's been very tough. She feels Federal funds should be going to small businesses.

Mr. Ray Anderson, Chamber of Commerce, stated he is humbled by comments. He stated some business had to furlough employees and some had to refinance to pay themselves. He commented that Mr. Ryan made it very clear and to recognize that people are part of infrastructure.

Francine Viscuso, 852 North Main Street Ext., owner of Amici Salon, agrees with Maria and stated staff are hard workers and this has been very difficult, not knowing if they would survive. She stated she has a great landlord and it was a horrible Christmas with Omicron. Ms. Viscuso said she employs 15 people and has been in business in Wallingford for 23 years and they cannot be forgotten. She feels funds should be to help people affected by COVID. She went onto say she is a proud Italian woman who wants to go to work every day and she appreciates the committee.

Councilor Laffin reassured Ms. Viscuso that no is considering not including small business.

Ian Brooks, Master's Manna, stated the interest and needs of community are aligning together and that he is here to bat for non-profits. He is hopeful we can work together to allocate funds.

Mike Terrace, Rt. 5 and Center Street, stated he purchased building and tried to do something with it and is here to represent landlords in town. He is uncertain how landlords are going to pay mortgages and taxes. He wants to beautify building and noted that attracts businesses. He stated people were unable to pay rent for months and discussed the impact of COVID on his properties and businesses . He feels ARPA would stabilize the community.

Linda Belli, owner Body and Soul Day Spa, backed up what Maria said and stated they are a hands-on business and funds would go a long way to help.

Liz Davis, WCI, stated she works with historical downtown area businesses and is working with EDC to provide guidance to small businesses. She stated ARPA monies are imperative to small business survival and doesn't want to lose purpose of what this was for. She wants the committee to be focused on business, non-profits, and residents.

Councilor Tatta commented that she has worked for family business for 15 years and can see this from that side of things. She stated she did get flack for mentioning that \$500 is not a lot of money and reiterated that it needs to be a substantial amount to make a difference. Councilor Tatta would like to say how much we're going to spend and devote to each project before applications go out.

Councilor Zandri agreed with Councilor Tatta and would like to figure out how we're going to handle funds and applications together and to choose bucket dollar amounts or percentages. He echoed catching flack for sensitive issue and noted his family had a business for 90 years and had to make changes fast. He stated we need to hear every story being told and need to listen and look for ways to address it. He stated we are doing our best here and appreciates everybody's time.

Councilor Testa stated he wants to get to the meat of what we're doing here and believes a larger percentage of funding should be allocated to businesses. He stated he is very familiar with language in act and final version and suggested making motion for percentage breakdown as follows: 40% to businesses, 30% to non-profits/individuals, 20% to town wide project and 10% buffer. He asked what we are looking to accomplish within the spirit of this and listed four questions: 1. Any other aid programs received, how much, how much forgiven, and are there any balances that need to be repaid? 2. How was money used - payroll, operating expenses? 3. How much accumulated debt due to COVID? 4. Replace lost revenue - what are plans for that money? What did your employees lose? Will money be distributed to employees? Councilor Testa stated prioritizing is difficult to do and businesses should be able to address those kinds of questions.

Michael Terrace, 19 Doherty Drive, added to his previous statement that they have put money back into the building itself and utilized contractors in town.

Tim Ryan thanked committee and knows they want to support small business. He stated he sees proportioning funds differently and feels community projects should not receive

allocation. He stated looking at application question #27 it is our intention to make this a “net event”, no double dipping. That is the assertion that comes with the net number. He suggests using the application process to determine need, allocate zero to community projects unless other needs are met. Mr. Ryan stated he really appreciates the work the committee is putting into this.

Maria Ascenzio, M Salon, stated we did get some relief, but COVID is not over yet. She went on to say they received PPP over a year ago and to look at how much business has been lost.

Liz Davis stated she hopes she did not offend Councilors Zandri and Testa and with regard to accountability, ask if loans have to be paid back.

**MOTION WAS MADE TO MOVE FORWARD WITH APPLICATION AS AMENDED.**

**MADE BY: ALLINSON  
SECONDED BY: ZANDRI**

**ROLL CALL VOTE:  
ALLINSON: YES  
LAFFIN: YES  
TATTA: NO  
TESTA: YES  
ZANDRI: YES  
4 –AYE  
1 – NAY  
MOTION: PASSED**

6. Discussion and possible recommendations on ARPA funds.

**MOTION TO ALLOCATE ARPA FUNDS AS FOLLOWS: 40% TO BUSINESS, 30% TO NON-PROFITS AND INDIVIDUALS, 20% TO COMMUNITY WIDE PROJECTS LATER IDENTIFIED, 10% NOT SPECIFIED.**

**MADE BY: TESTA  
NO SECOND**

Councilor Testa stated he is aware that a lot of people want to see funds used for community projects and we do that with our budget and bonding. He feels projects are a very real acceptable use of money that can be associated with the spirit of the law and to keep in mind people want to muster all of it to be used for community projects. Councilor Testa would like to keep 10% non-allocated in case we come up short somewhere else. He stated this could be discussed at next Town Council meeting and Councilor Laffin stated there is still time to get on agenda.

Councilor Allinson suggested allocating \$6 million with \$3 million for business, \$2 million for non-profits, and \$1 million to individuals. She also suggested the remaining \$7 million not to be placed on community projects, but saved for re-evaluation at a later date. Councilor Allinson wants to get feedback from full Council.

Councilor Zandri asked if that was a motion and Councilor Testa said he would second it. Councilor Allinson said this would create starting a bucket without casting out any other bucket. Councilor Zandri suggested a 2/2/2 split and Councilor Allinson said she was okay with that.

Councilor Tatta stated she doesn't know if we can decide this if we don't know if we're using the standard deduction, and that needs to be solidified. She stated applications are for individuals, non-profits, and small business, and asked who is representing projects. She wants to make sure they are not getting lost in the shuffle.

Ms. Miranda thought Councilor Allinson had a great idea and feels it's a starting point. She likes holding the remaining funds in reserve since it's hard to come up with a number and stated knowing there is a pool of money to tap into is a great idea.

Councilor Laffin questioned the benefit of deciding on an amount when applications are not out. Councilor Allinson remarked if we determine an amount we're telling them how we think funds should be used and it would be a starting point. Councilor Zandri agreed it would be a starting point. Councilor Tatta stated she has not seen another municipality do it this way and that we don't have a defined program. Councilor Zandri joked we don't do anything as anyone else does it.

**MOTION WAS MADE TO ALLOCATE 40% OF TOTAL ARPA FUNDS TO BUSINESS AND 30% OF TOTAL ARPA FUNDS TO NON-PROFITS AND INDIVIDUALS.**

**MADE BY: ALLINSON  
SECONDED BY: ZANDRI**

**ROLL CALL VOTE:  
ALLINSON: YES  
LAFFIN: YES  
TATTA: NO  
TESTA: NO  
ZANDRI: YES  
3 -AYE  
2 - NAY  
MOTION: PASSED**

Councilor Tatta stated there is a big demand for projects and it is not a good idea to cut that group of people out of this. Councilor Zandri stated there is still 30% that is not allocated and could be moved around, and we are not closing any doors here. Councilor Tatta stated if it's not being cut, it should be part of the motion.

Councilor Testa thanked Councilor Allinson for her consideration and noted he disagrees with her but respects her.

Bob Gross, Long Hill Road, inquired who is reviewing applications and Councilor Laffin responded that we haven't gotten there yet. Mr. Gross stated no other towns are doing it this way and asked how do you allocate funds if you don't know what need is. He also asked if we are using consultant and Councilor Laffin said yes.

Ms. Harlow stated this is very difficult and we are very stuck in this portion of process and agrees with Councilor Testa to get moving and trust the process.

Councilor Laffin stated applications will go out and this will move forward.

Councilor Tatta would like to get feedback from Town Council at next meeting.

Councilor Allinson questioned should she restate or withdraw motion.

Councilor Testa stated he wants to see Town Council discuss this.

Councilor Laffin stated vote is not binding.

Councilor Tatta asked for this to be put on next agenda.

RECEIVED FOR RECORD 3-21-22  
AT 3:00 p.m. AND RECEIVED BY  
Deborah McKiernan TOWN CLERK

The Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Deborah McKiernan  
Deborah McKiernan, Town Clerk

4/14/2022  
Date

Thomas Laffin  
Thomas Laffin, Vice Chairman

4/12/2022  
Date

*In accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act- Individuals in need of auxiliary aids for effective communication in programs and services of the Town of Wallingford are invited to make their needs and preferences known to the ADA Compliance Coordinator at 203-294-2070 five days prior to meeting date.*