

**TOWN OF WALLINGFORD
WALLINGFORD ARPA APPLICATION REVIEW COMMITTEE
129 Center Street (HUBCAP)
Wallingford, CT 06492**

**Monday, February 1, 2023
6:30 p.m.**

DRAFT RECORD OF VOTES AND MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Members in attendance were Carl Bonamico, Mike Brodinsky, Craig Fishbein, Robert Fritz (via Zoom), Mike Glidden, Robert Gross, Jacqueline McNamee, Christopher Regan, Jesse Reynolds, and Amy Walsh.

Recusals: Jesse Reynolds for Lyman Hall Music Parents Association

Members of the public: applicant Lyman Hall Music Parents Association

Updates

Mr. Reynolds explained how the applications will be scrambled for future agendas. He downloaded an excel file of all the submitted applications and used a formula to generate random numbers for each application. Then he sorted the list by the random numbers and ordered them accordingly. He removed those applications already scored.

Mr. Brodinsky added that when the application deadline passes (the end of this week), Mr. Reynolds will do another scramble and list business applications separate from non-profit applications. That will be the list he will use to create agendas. He stated that he intends to put more applications on agendas than he expects the committee can handle. If the meeting runs late, agenda items can be moved to the next regularly scheduled meeting agenda. There has to be enough time for notification, so there are some issues that need to be resolved.

He reviewed the concept of rotation of members to take the first swing and present applications at a meeting. He will assign members two applications on each agenda. Let him know in advance if you can't do it at that meeting or if you don't want to be assigned the first swing.

He noted that we will document the recommendation and dollar amount with a motion after each application is scored.

A. Discussion and possible action on the following grant applications.

Mr. Brodinsky noted that #2 on the agenda, Wallingford Church of the Nazarene Food Pantry is an adjunct program of the United Way. He suggested tabling it for discussion when the United Way application is discussed. There were no objections.

Mr. Brodinsky noted that this is the first time the committee will be reviewing non-profit applications. He reviewed the two ways for a non-profit to apply for a grant.

1. Programming is directed at beneficiaries who need ARPA programming, impacted by the pandemic, through adverse health or economically.

2. Have their own hardship caused by the pandemic and need funds to mitigate them. The committee voted to score programming applications to be recommended as 75 or higher and scores of 74 or less will not be recommended for funding.

The process again will be one committee member presenting the application and beginning the discussion. We go around the table up to two times to discuss the merits. Score sheets are handed in and an average score will be determined.

Mr. Fishbein noted that non-profits can ask for more money. He asked if a score of 75 or above is for 100% of the request. Mr. Brodinsky replied that if there is a reason to reduce an amount, the Committee can determine the appropriate amount. We would need the motion to do so. The amount would be agreed upon before the amended request is scored.

Mr. Regan noted that we will record in the minutes the score and the dollar amount.

Mr. Glidden stated that we didn't discuss pro-rating the amount. We voted for all or nothing.

Mr. Brodinsky stated that during the discussion a reduced amount can be proposed. The award can be reduced or items can be pared out by a vote. If inappropriate items are not culled out at a vote, then reflect that in your scoring.

Mr. Fishbein asked if it is appropriate to have the motion to reduce the amount after scoring.

Mr. Gross stated that if the applicant wanted 5 items, we could knock off one and vote on the remaining budget by motion. We would vote on reducing the total award and then score the revised application. Or if the items stay in the application, and you feel they are inappropriate, reflect that in your scoring.

Ms. Walsh asked if we can recommend a reduction during the round table discussion. Mr. Brodinsky replied yes.

Mr. Regan clarified that before scoring we will determine that reduced amount. If there is interest in reducing it we can do a motion. Then the application is scored. If the motion fails, you can score to reflect your opinion.

Lyman Hall Music Parents Association

Mr. Brodinsky noted that the application is complicated as they used both hardship and programming pathways to get to a \$25,000 award. This is allowed. He also noted that we don't have scoring criteria for non-profit hardship applications yet. He proposed that we score only on the programming pathway. He asked committee members to note during the discussion if they are willing to approve scoring solely on programming.

Mr. Brodinsky outlined the application. He noted that, to him, this was a case where the pandemic had an adverse health impact on the student population. He referred to emotional and psychological health. This group provides support to the school music program and students served by the programs are very diverse. They want to use the money for equipment for the band and technicians to help implement

programming. Regarding the financials, if we are not considering hardship, they don't have to prove it. He noted that they survived during COVID through fundraising.

Committee comments on this application included:

- Looking at the health impact of the pandemic, music helps bring spirits up among other things, so they do meet that criterion.
- The program is ready to implement and the timeline is reasonable.
- The proposed budget is appropriate and supported by documentation, though there are no attachments showing prices.
- The entire budget goes to direct costs.
- The cost compares to the number served.
- The pricing in the budget is spot on.
- All students were impacted by COVID and services like these, whether core or extra-curricular, are valuable.
- Can look at the programming aspect with hardship in the background.
- Good application.
- Documented the need.
- Fits the parameters.
- Ready to be implemented.
- Would have been nice to have some quotes.
- This is a community-wide program
- This project will help current and future students.
- The application was not signed by the people who are listed in Concord as the principles.
- Definite health impact
- Well documented
- Important program

No second-round comments were made. Score sheets were handed in.

Total Scores:

Brodinsky:	80	Gross:	95
Bonamico:	80	McNamee:	100
Fishbein:	100	Regan:	95
Fritz	100	Reynolds:	recuse
Glidden:	75	Walsh:	97

The average score is 91.33

Motion to authorize the Chairman to send a positive report to the government concerning the application of Lyman Hall Music Parents Association with the grant amount of the full \$25,000.

Made by: Mr. Glidden

Seconded by: Mr. Gross

Vote: Unanimous with one recusal and no abstentions

Wallingford Public Library Association

Mr. Brodinsky outlined the application. This is a programming grant to make Wallingford residents more computer literate by developing a Digital Navigator program. This is a program used around the country that responds to the pandemic which created an urgent public need for digital inclusion programs. Navigators address home connectivity, access, and skills. The Navigators would be employed by the library. They expect to reach approximately 200 residents over the next 12 months. They are asking for \$99,786. They provided all the financials.

Committee comments on this application included:

- Thorough and detailed
- Some doubt that sufficiently connected to the pandemic
- Budget appropriate and used for direct costs and appropriate for the number of people to be served.
- More documentation would have helped.
- The program seems to be ready.
- Touched on everything they needed to touch on.
- Supplements the library resources
- Provided demographics, showing we have an older population than the state average
- This will provide services to those most in need due to pandemic.
- Addresses the digital divide highlighted during COVID. Closing the gap is needed.
- The kind of program we want to fund
- Tied to the Federal Affordable Connectivity Program and falls under the CARES act.
- Stellar application
- Technology is a necessity, not a luxury

No second-round comments were made. Score sheets were handed in.

Total Scores:

Brodinsky:	85	Gross:	95
Bonamico:	95	McNamee:	100
Fishbein:	100	Regan:	85
Fritz	100	Reynolds:	100
Glidden:	90	Walsh:	100

The average score is 95

Motion to authorize the Chairman to send a positive report to the government concerning awarding a grant to the Wallingford Public Library Association in the amount of \$99,786.

Made by: Mr. Glidden

Seconded by: Ms. Walsh

Vote: Unanimous with no abstentions

Columbus House, Inc.

Mr. Brodinsky outlined the program application. This is a big organization that runs a homeless shelter in town. They provide emergency shelter and case management to families and individuals experiencing homelessness in the Wallingford area. They seek to make the main shelter building safer for clients by putting in wall-mounted Ora air purifier units that reduce concentrations of active SARS COP-2 from the

environment at a cost of \$1,865 each plus the electrician to install them. They are asking for a total of \$36,680.

Committee comments on this application included:

- Tax returns and financial statements were included
- A lot of detail provided
- Connection to the pandemic is self-evident. Also a mitigation strategy.
- COVID is not going away and this will benefit health and safety
- Happy to see that the money is to be used in Wallingford
- Needed service
- Not a lot of money
- Do tremendous work in town
- The kind of use that addresses the question of what if this happens again
- Reasonable request
- The perfect type of thing to remedy the situation

No second-round comments were made. Score sheets were handed in.

Total Scores:

Brodinsky:	98	Gross:	100
Bonamico:	95	McNamee:	100
Fishbein:	100	Regan:	100
Fritz	100	Reynolds:	96
Glidden:	99	Walsh:	100

The average score is 98.8

Motion to authorize the Chairman to send a positive report to the government concerning the application of Columbus House, Inc .with the grant amount of \$36,680.

Made by: Mr. Glidden

Seconded by: Mr. Fishbein

Vote: Unanimous with no abstentions

B. Discussion and possible action on a policy regarding incomplete applications. (Example no tax returns/no documentation that substantiates the amount of the request.)

Mr. Brodinsky stated that at last night's meeting, the committee decided to consider business applications on their merits even when tax returns were missing. It is clearly stated on the application that they are necessary. The tax returns are important because the Town Council voted that they want them as verification. Business applications are hardship applications and need to prove current hardship or adversity. Self-declaration was rejected by the Council. Options include:

- Proceed as if tax returns don't matter, or
- Pass a resolution that says we are deferring consideration of applications until the applicant has another chance to provide the tax returns, within a limited period. This is not our role to get them. It would be the role of government. We can report to the government that we have deferred that application and that it might be a good idea for government or the consultant to

go back to the applicant and ask for tax returns. This deferral would be automatic if no tax returns provided.

Mr. Regan asked if the Council considered an appeals process. Mr. Brodinsky replied no. Mr. Regan stated that to be fair to applicants, we assumed we would get complete application packages. If the requirements include tax returns, etc., then we shouldn't consider incomplete applications. If they prepared their own financials and can't afford a CPA review or an audit, we could consider reviewing other versions of P&Ls. If they just forgot a page or two, there can be leeway in the conversation.

Mr. Brodinsky asked for input on the specific remedy the Committee should take.

Mr. Regan asked if the committee is asking for additional documentation. Mr. Brodinsky replied, no, the effort is over. It's up to others, now. Mr. Regan asked if it is our responsibility to suggest an appeals process if we defer or deny due to incomplete applications. Mr. Brodinsky stated that we could automatically reject if there are no tax returns and signal that to the Council. The applicant can ask Council directly for funds. That would be administratively difficult. The other option is to give them more time. Council could grant more time and ask the consultant to follow up with applicants. If after more time, the consultant doesn't get the information, then it's over.

Mr. Brodinsky clarified that the Committee can report no action due to an incomplete application and give it back to the Council for it to decide how to proceed.

Mr. Glidden noted that he reviewed the consultant's contract and RFP and they were supposed to review for completeness. We were handed incomplete applications. The Council should ask why so many applications are denied. We will have already told applicants they are denied. We can't take it back. This is a bigger issue for Council. He stated that the Committee should continue as we are. Some will score below passing due to missing tax returns. If an application still passes, Mr. Glidden noted that would mean the Committee thought it met the criteria.

Mr. Fritz noted that he is resentful that the Committee was put in this position. We need to stay within the constraints of our charter. The consultant should have advised the applicants. This can be a slippery slope. If the application is incomplete they should not be considered. Council needs to decide and redirect us if necessary.

Mr. Brodinsky asked Mr. Fritz to clarify: If an application appears without tax returns, should we proceed and score on the merits. Mr. Fritz replied, no. It would be an automatic turnback. It's not beyond the scope of the Committee to send recommendations to the Council and maybe re-examine applications. All applications need to be treated equally. So, the incomplete application should not be considered based on our Charter. Applications are not denied but sent back with no action. They are not voted on.

Mr. Brodinsky summarized that choice. If an application has no tax returns, there is no action and we report up?

Mr. Reynolds noted that one application provided Quickbooks reports instead of tax returns. If we start denying based on missing information, where does it stop? Everyone had the opportunity and there were extensions. It's more favorable to judge on merit and if an application is missing information it can be reflected in the score. He stated that he is not opposed to sending the application back if incomplete,

but they should not come back to us. He asked if the fact that one passed without tax returns creates a precedent. Mr. Brodinsky replied that it does not create a precedent.

Mr. Brodinsky noted that there is no guarantee that an application without a tax return will be passed. If we are serious that they should automatically fail or be escalated, we can vote on that tonight.

Ms. Walsh stated that it is unfortunate that the consultant was not managed properly. Not having tax returns is different from not having quotes for a project. Missing information is reflected in the scores, but tax returns are important. She stated that she is leaning towards applications not being reviewed if there are no tax returns. That means they are escalated to the government.

Mr. Gross stated that the applicants should have another chance if they are missing something. We can't give one applicant a second chance and not another. He reported that he is aware that some applicants were asked for additional material. He agrees that if there are no tax returns the application should be sent back to Council. That would be fair and equitable. This would not be a denial from the committee, an automatic referral.

Mr. Fishbein stated that there are more than just tax returns missing. But focusing on tax returns, he stated that they are not as important as some other aspects. He reported that he met with Corporate Counsel Janis Small to review the Consultants contract. He expressed his disappointment. It is inappropriate to send applications back and not act. This possibly opens door to circumvent the process. It potentially gives Council the ability to review applications. He proposed we score as zero and deny for non-completeness. An automatic denial if there are no tax returns. We shouldn't have to presume that the consultant reached out or did not. Our job is to review a complete application in fairness to everyone. If we deny it, then it's on the Council. No action is not as strong as a denial. In good faith, we can't review incomplete applications, so they should be scored zero. Recommendation not to appropriate with prejudice. No second chance.

Mr. Bonamico stated that it is a credibility issue. If they don't have tax returns, it's a failure. Score them zero. That is no different than the PPP applications. They are asking for municipal funds. No recommendation, no second chance.

Ms. McNamee added that if the Town Council stated that tax returns have to be included, then they don't meet all the criteria. She is fine with not taking action and making the Council decide.

Mr. Brodinsky clarified the two concepts in the case of incomplete financial documentation.

- A. Don't recommend, take no action, give them a second chance
- B. Don't recommend, taking action to deny the application, no second chance

Mr. Fishbein stated that the second chance is out of our hands. Whether the Council changes the rules or not is up to them. He supports the option of no second chance.

Mr. Regan noted that the application says tax returns or accountant-provided Profit and Loss statements. Mr. Brodinsky stated that the original criteria include a CPA-issued profit and loss statement for 2019, 2020, and 2021 or tax returns. This needs to be considered in the vote. Mr. Regan agreed with the denial and no second chance due to incompleteness.

Mr. Glidden favored denial with no second chance due to an incomplete application.

Mr. Fritz favored no action.

Mr. Reynolds stated that absent the appropriate financial documentation, he favors scoring as zero, denied r not recommended. No second chance.

Ms. Walsh noted that we don't know how much follow-up the consultant did. The application also says that the Town may request additional information. That was before we set our procedures that say we will not. It's possible the consultant told applicants that the Town would ask for them if they were needed. She favors not reviewing if there are no tax returns.

Mr. Gross stated that he understood that the consultant told applicants that they can submit without and they would be asked for more information. He favors no action and lets Council decide what to do.

Mr. Fishbein stated that no action means they may be considered later. That is unfair to those who complied, no matter who caused the problem. Our job is to review complete applications.

Mr. Regan asked if we can ask Council what to do with incomplete applications and get an answer before our next meeting.

Mr. Fishbein stated that we can send a list to the Council of applications that are denied because of this. That will show the gravity of the situation and give the Council the ability to act.

Motion that if the committee receives a business application that is not accompanied by either a CPA-issued P&L statement for 2019, 2020 and 2021 or tax returns for those years with redacted personal information, that application will be not recommended due to the fact that it is incomplete.

Made by Mr. Brodinsky

Seconded by Mr. Glidden

Mr. Glidden proposed an amendment to just read "required supporting documentation" so it includes more than tax returns.

Mr. Fishbein asked if that can be done by a subsequent motion to include that.

Mr. Brodinsky replied that we can do it as an addendum but it might affect the primary motion.

Vote:

Brodinsky:	Yes	Gross:	No
Bonamico:	Yes	McNamee:	No
Fishbein:	Yes	Regan:	Yes
Fritz	Yes	Reynolds:	Yes
Glidden:	No	Walsh:	Yes

Ayes: 7

Nays: 3

Motion carries

Mr. Brodinsky opened the discussion for business applications on the lack of backup documentation to substantiate a request.

Mr. Glidden agreed that we should focus first on the business applications. He noted that the required documents are clearly listed in the application instructions: complete application, copy of Target Revenue status letter, copy of Wallingford Business trade certificate, CPA issued Profit and Loss statement, and documentation supporting funding request. So he doesn't support separating the motions because they are all important documents. In the denial motion, we can spell out why the application failed.

Mr. Brodinsky stated that if that were strictly applied, then some that were already reviewed would have been automatically denied. Some applicants may argue that it's impractical to get the documentation. Cost estimates might be a formality.

Mr. Reynolds stated that the hardship is established by the financials. If they can't demonstrate it with financials they shouldn't be applying. If they itemize the amounts and items it is more verifiable. It is not seen as a failure if it didn't supply better documentation. It would score lower.

Mr. Brodinsky changed the question to a choice between automatic no recommendation versus deciding on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Reynolds stated he prefers the case-by-case.

Ms. Walsh stated that the language that specified documentation did not give guidance, so people have done the best they can. This will come out in the contract when they submit receipts. It is fair to consider this on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Gross stated that if we were following federal guidelines they would need to submit multiple quotes for large items. He agrees on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Fishbein also agreed with case by case for this issue. Some situations may be hard to document.

Mr. Bonamico agreed with case by case.

Ms. McNamee agreed with case by case.

Mr. Regan agreed with case by case.

M. Fritz agreed with case by case.

Mr. Glidden agreed with case by case.

No action was taken.

Mr. Fishbein asked about the section on the last page that has an affirmation and acknowledgment that they agree to do certain things. What if it is not checked off as yes or no? That is also an incomplete application. Do we treat that like we did the tax return?

Mr. Bonamico agreed.

Mr. Glidden agreed.

Mr. Fritz agreed.

Mr. Reynolds agreed but noted that some scanned applications may be cut off in some versions. If we look at the actual application and it is not checked, yes. Mr. Brodinsky can ask the consultant to clean up any PDFs that have problems.

Ms. Walsh agreed, assuming the consultant already checked.
Mr. Gross agreed.

Mr. Brodinsky would like to read applications on their merits. We don't want to get hung up on interpretations of completeness. Maybe something is less than perfect but can still be assessed on its merits. Rejecting because they didn't check a box seems harsh. This can be handled in the scoring. It shouldn't be a disqualification.

Mr. Bonamico stated that applications that go to the federal government get rejected if something is not checked. It is important to have completeness. This program came from the government. Completeness should be given merit. The instructions say a completed application.

Mr. Fishbein stated that the Council asked for 'complete applications'. Not talking about other subjective parts. The affirmation is just as important as the signature.

Ms. Walsh stated that if it is rejected by the Federal government, you get a second chance to submit it.

Mr. Brodinsky added that committee members may disagree on completeness. Do we vote on each concern? Every incompleteness can turn into a debate and vote.

Ms. McNamee stated that if people find an application incomplete, yes we can vote on it. But if it's minor things, it shouldn't be denied. If someone finds an application incomplete, weigh it.

Mr. Fishbein stated his concern is specifically with the affirmation statement. This a requirement like a signature.

Mr. Regan stated a concern with signatures also. If it is not signed it should be denied. He noted that there are also some handwritten forms. Is it reasonable to expect that the contract by the Law Department will ensure that all the information is there? We need to identify what are the mandatory items that have to be there. If we agreed on specific elements and are not there, then deny.

Mr. Brodinsky suggested that Mr. Regan start drafting a motion for that and bring it to the next meeting. Mr. Regan asked if this has to be answered tonight. He is willing to work with Mr. Fishbein to come up with something before the meeting on the 16th. Mr. Brodinsky stated that we can focus on non-profits on the 16th. He noted that the committee shouldn't authorize members to get together outside of a meeting because that might be a meeting implicating of freedom of information rules. Mr. Glidden clarified that two members connect offline but can't send a reply to all messages with the results because it becomes a meeting and against FOI.

Ms. McNamee noted that the Lyman Hall application would have been denied since the wrong names were in the signatures. It was noted that that will be taken care of when the Law Department writes the contract.

Mr. Glidden noted that some applicants completed the online form and some were scanned. He doesn't know if that caused some problems. He asked about applicants with English not being their primary language who needed more accommodation to explain the questions.

Mr. Reynolds reported that the application in Mr. Fishbein's example did submit an application with the affirmation checked, but it was the wrong form and they resubmitted. So in this case it was not intentional. This is all in the backup. So it is not technically incomplete.

Ms. Walsh asked if it is possible to approve contingent on them checking the box if it's a clerical error. Mr. Brodinsky replied yes.

Mr. Gross agreed with a contingent approval, not a failure.

Mr. Fishbein stated that procedurally, our job should not be that difficult. We said the application is not complete if doesn't have certain financial information. Now we are saying we can approve contingent on correcting an aspect. He proposed approving contingent on signing the application.

Mr. Brodinsky stated that the next agenda will be non-profit programming applications. The criteria for non-profit hardship applications should be approved in two weeks. The defects being discussed apply to both non-profit and business applications. We won't have a policy in place by the next meeting, February 16th, so we will proceed as we have been.

Mr. Gross asked if there is anything else that needs to be brought to Council as it would need to be decided now. Nothing was mentioned.

Motion to adjourn at 9:05 pm

Made by Mr. Fishbein

Seconded by Mr. Glidden

Vote: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl-Ann Tubby
Recording Secretary