



**American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Task Force Economic & Community Development
Committee Orientation Meeting
Meeting Minutes – Thursday, June 24, 2021
2:00pm Virtual Zoom Webinar**

Attendance:

Committee Members Present: Chair Rich Hall, Co-Chair Councilman Penrose Hollins, Michele Gildea for Co-Chair Councilman John Cartier, Jay Patel, Brett Sadler, James Ray Rhodes, Bill Lower, Jennifer Kmiec, Izuru Osegbu, Sarah Lester, Stewart Ramsey, Shelia Bravo, and Denita Henderson

Committee Members Absent: Bob Chadwick

Others in Attendance: County Executive Matt Meyer, Aundrea Almond - County Executive's Chief of Staff, Mengting Chen - Office of Law Assistant County Attorney, Charuni Patibanda - New Castle County Director of Economic Development, Susan Moore -County Executive Office Policy Advisor, Nique Traylor - Councilman Hollins Legislative Assistant , Rinku Banerji - New Castle County Auditor's Office, , Philip McBride - Department of Land Use, Bob Wasserbach Co-Chair of the Audit and Compliance Committee ARPA Taskforce, Heather Palmer w/ DDIL, Danielle Sullivan - Reach Riverside and Ministry of Caring, Bev Lacy - YMCA of DE, Muhammad Smith, Ben Morris-Levenson, Niell Wright, and Vandell Hampton -True Access Capital.

Proceedings:

- Meeting called to order at 3:03 p.m. by Committee Chair Rich Hall
- Committee member and support staff introductions
- Vote on to approve the minutes from the June 10th Meeting, Committee Co-Chair Hollins made a motion to approve the minutes, Jennifer Kmiec seconded the motion, the minutes were approved
- Opening remarks by Committee Chair Rich Hall
- Concern was raised about coordinating ARPA Funding allocations with the incorporated areas of the County. Committee Chair Hall in noted that there is another committee dedicated specifically to coordinating
- Committee Chair Hall discussed what qualifies for funding, specifically funding outside of the Qualified Census Tract. Funding can be used for areas outside of QCTs but more justification is required to justify those areas. Committee Chair Hall presented the map of the existing QCTs and

discussed that it may be possible for the County's GIS Department to use a similar criteria to identify other areas with similar characteristics.

- Discussed potential project funding ideas, specifically "green" projects. Consider funding greening projects in underserved communities (ex. communities with inadequate tree cover or parks), trails, communities most impacted by environmental justice issues, ect. These projects should be consistent with post covid healthy living lifestyle and opportunities for such in underserved communities.
- Committee Chair Hall asked the group if any items listed in the agenda and presentation (potential funding recommendations) were missing or if any of the items mentioned were potentially problematic.
- Brett Sadler noted that there needs to be more detail with regards to other issues like affordable housing.
- Sheila Bravo noted that, in relation to housing, there are still gaps in financial assistance for people. An example would be a family receiving aid for rent but is still behind on their utility bills. Also mentioned youth particularly impacted especially with regards to education, such as falling behind in school due to remote learning
- Committee Co-Chair Hollins noted that funds can be used for educational funding, but the guidelines are clear about when it can be. Also mentioned housing is a concern particularly as the moratorium on evictions is approaching. There is an opportunity to work with the Dept of Community Services when addressing housing and homelessness concerns.
- Ray Rhodes asked if the committee will be doing a needs assessment, in order to ensure that those most in need are not the last to receive aid.
- Muhammad Smith commented that, as a volunteer physician during the pandemic, there are still many people who are uninsured. Therefore funding for people who are uninsured should be prioritized.
- Sheila Bravo noted that another area that has been overlooked are organizations like historical societies, which have been particularly impacted during the pandemic, and should be considered for aid.
- Committee Co-Chair Hollins noted there is a Taskforce on Early Childhood Learning, also noting that the State and Department of Education will also be receiving ARPA Funding. This could be an opportunity for collaboration to address concerns mentioned regarding youth impacted by the pandemic.
- Sarah Lester asked, in addition to "main streets" and corridors, are there opportunities that address connecting places off of the main corridors. Brought up the possibility to incorporate funding for the arts and/or programming, not only were artists particularly impacted by the pandemic, but it could be a means to uplift communities.

- Brett Sadler noted that the state is also receiving significant funding. There should be a way to leverage that funding in addition to funds allocated for counties/municipalities. Co-Chair Hollins noted that there was collaboration/coordination with state funding for the CARES Act
- Co-Chair Hollins noted that with regards to investments in corridors, investment has not been evenly distributed (focus on investment on corridors in wealthier areas, while leaving other areas behind (ex. Market Street)). There could be opportunities to fill this gap while also coordinating with the City of Wilmington.
- Committee Chair Hall commented that the group seems to agree with the stated ideas (from the agenda and presentation), but that it sounds like there are additional issues that should be considered and further prioritization of the issues will be necessary.
- County Executive Meyer stopped by to address the committee.
- Sarah Lester listed a few project ideas based on her work: 1) funding for homeowner repair 2) Vacant property redevelopment (funding to incentive affordable housing development) 3) funding for corridor repairs (small businesses and residential)- minor or major 4) public art projects along the corridors 5) transportation improvements - extended sidewalks (room for outdoor dining!), more street trees, safer streets.
- Vandell Hampton emphasized the importance of providing funding, loans, grants to small businesses. Also discussed the initiative in Wilmington, Equitable Wilmington, as an example of neighborhood collaboration that could be mirrored in the County. Also noted that in Pennsylvania there is an Association of Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) which has been an important element to delegating funds.
- Brett Saddler discussed his research into how other jurisdictions have applied ARPA or similar funding. Noted that many times with this type of funding there is a focus on “one-off” projects, but may not create a sustainable long term funding. Discussed if there are ways that the ARPA funding could be utilized to ensure certain projects have long term funding mechanisms/long term investment.
- Committee Co-Chair Hollins, emphasized the importance of working with other groups and organizations in order to reach those in need who may be overlooked by the current avenues of engagement.

Other Business

- Chairman Hall asked the group if there was any additional business to discuss
- Nique Traylor noted that there are many businesses that opened around the beginning of the pandemic that did not qualify for aid during the first round of aid. These types of businesses should be prioritized for this round of funding. Particularly there should be assistance to help these businesses navigate applying and qualifying for funding.

- Michele Gildea noted that mental health services should also be considered as many people have faced some form of trauma during this time
- Denita Henderson noted that the SBDC has worked to help underserved businesses navigate applying for funding and will continue to with this next round of funding.

Public Comment:

- No members of the public provided comments

Adjournment:

- Chair Hall adjourned the meeting at 4:29 p.m.