



**American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Task Force Economic & Community Development
Committee Meeting
Meeting Minutes – Thursday, July 8, 2021
3:00pm Virtual Zoom Webinar**

DRAFT

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, Sarah Lester, Stewart Ramsey, Shelia Bravo, Bob Chadwick, and Denita Henderson

Committee Members Absent: Izuru Osegbu

Others in Attendance: Aundrea Almond - County Executive's Chief of Staff, Mengting Chen - Office of Law Assistant County Attorney, Nique Traylor - Councilman Hollins Legislative Assistant, Bob Wasserbach County Auditor, Heather Palmer w/ DDIL, Bev Lacy - YMCA of DE, Ben Morris-Levenson, Andrea Trabelsi - Department of Land Use Assistant General Manager, George Haggarty - Department of Land Use Assistant General Manager, Philip McBride - Department of Land Use

Proceedings:

- Meeting called to order at 3:05 p.m. by Committee Chair Rich Hall
- Committee member and support staff introductions
- Vote to approve the minutes from the June 24th Meeting, Committee Co-Chair Hollins made a motion to approve the minutes, Jennifer Kmiec seconded the motion,
- Bill Lower, moved to amend the June 24th meeting minutes adding that, environmental projects discussed on top of page two include language that these projects are consistent with post covid healthy living lifestyle and opportunities for such for underserved communities. Jennifer Kmiec Seconded the motion. The June 24th meeting minutes were approved as amended.
- Committee Chair Hall informed the committee that the plan is to have recommendations set by August 5th so that they can be presented to the County executive August 19th.
- Committee Chair Hall presented a map created by New Castle County GIS to help determine areas of need outside of the Qualified Census Tracts (QFTs). In addition, it was noted that the federal government is going to release criteria and guidelines to help identify areas outside of the QFTs.

- Committee Chair Hall presented a potential recommendation framework table that can be used to layout recommendations by category as well as, implementation, estimated costs, etc. It was noted with regards to the housing and education categories that, while the committee can make recommendation related to these topics, there are other funding sources that may address these categories more directly.
- Councilman Hollins agreed that the proposed map identifies appropriate areas. Also noted that there is mapping done by NACo (National Association of Counties) that could also be another tool available to the committee.
- Brett Saddler shared an example flowchart from Colorado with the committee that summarized how ARPA funding is allocated and distributed from the Federal Government down to the local level.
- Committee Chair Hall asked the group if there was additional comment regarding the proposed map and recommendation framework table. Sheila Bravo said the category “community improvements” was broad and suggested that this category be broken down further by issues or population segments that have been disproportionately impacted. Some examples would be the elderly population that have been in isolation for extended periods of time or people with limited internet access. Jennifer Kmiec asked if there was additional information about coordination with other departments, state, county, etc. as this could help the committee identify if there are funding/access gaps.
- Committee Chair Hall asked the committee if there were items that should be highlighted in the housing category. Brett Saddler asked if it were possible for funding to be used to augment the high housing prices (due to current market conditions) so that affordable housing developers/nonprofits can compete with private investors.
- Sarah Lester suggested the “Housing Catalyst Fund” as an example to consider, which is being launched by the Housing Alliance of Delaware. A Housing Catalyst Fund could be used specifically for affordable housing and further require affordable housing to remain affordable for a period of time. In addition, there is significant need for homeowner repair support.
- Councilman Hollins suggested it would help the committee to understand what the County currently does with regards to affordable housing noting that the County currently has down payment assistance, the Housing Trust Fund, inclusionary zoning, etc. However, an immediate concern is the end of the eviction moratorium. Not only rental assistance will be needed but legal assistance for people who will be dealing with eviction.
- For the Business Assistance and job creation category, Sheila Bravo noted that, while there has been funding available to arts institutions, other organizations like historical societies have not received/been eligible for funding. Sheila Bravo noted that historical societies are usually volunteer groups and that many of them were forced to shut down due to the pandemic.
- Councilman Hollins emphasized a “downtown” concept to help small businesses along major corridors like Philadelphia Pike, Maryland Avenue, Market Street (which borders the city, but

located in the County). This could include façade improvements, streetscape improvements, business assistance, etc. In addition, funding could assist with creating an association between business owners, as currently there is little coordination in the County's corridors. This could include branding and marketing for a corridor.

- Councilman Hollins also noted that many small businesses did not receive first round of funding because many of them did not know about the assistance or how to apply for assistance. He noted County Council is working to ensure that there is funding available to help provide technical aid for small businesses to navigate applying for assistance.
- Brett Saddler asked if the County could provide assistance (by hiring staff) that could oversee corridor and local organizations like community development corporations, etc.
- Sheila Bravo noted that there are many existing collaborative groups or nonprofits that work in the County's corridors. Some examples are Healthy Communities Delaware, Equitable Wilmington, Housing Alliance of Delaware. There could be opportunities to collaborate with these organization listed, or similar, organizations.
- For the Community Improvements category, Chairman Hall noted that this is a broad category and could be broken down further into sub-categories.
- For the Community Greening/Environmental Justice category, Chairman Hall noted this category could include "green" tree planting, trails, etc. Pointed to an example in another jurisdiction where the overall tree canopy was evaluated. Funding could also go towards water management/green infrastructure projects like stream restoration.
- Brett Saddler asked about how the funding can for the long term. Is there a way to assess costs so that we can know the County will be able to continue funding and maintain projects, ex. pocket parks, etc. Hall noted that there unfortunately not a clear answer but the success of a project could be a catalyst for them to be continued to be funded. Councilman Hollins noted that County Council is usually reluctant to provide fund open space that may not be to the full benefit of the public.

Other Business

- Chairman Hall asked the group if there was any additional business to discuss
- Jennifer Kmiec asked if funding could be used for library funding.

Public Comment:

- No members of the public provided comments

Adjournment:

- Councilman Hollins moved to adjourn the meeting; Brett Saddler seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.