



**American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Task Force Economic & Community Development  
Committee Orientation Meeting  
Meeting Minutes – Thursday, July 22, 2021  
3:00pm Virtual Zoom Webinar**

**Attendance:**

**Committee Members Present:** Chair Rich Hall, Co-Chair Councilman Penrose Hollins, Co-Chair Councilman John Cartier, Brett Sadler, Bill Lower, Jennifer Kmiec, Izuru Osegbu, Sarah Lester, Stewart Ramsey, Shelia Bravo, Bob Chadwick, and Denita Henderson

**Committee Members Absent:** Jay Patel, James Ray Rhodes

**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 Co-Chair of the Audit and Compliance Committee ARPA Taskforce, Heather Palmer w/ DDIL, Ben Morris-Levenson, George Haggarty - Department of Land Use Assistant General Manager, Philip McBride - Department of Land Use, Michele Gildea, Linwood Jackson, Council President Karen Hartley-Nagle

**Proceedings:**

- Meeting called to order at 3:04 p.m. by Committee Chair Rich Hall
- Committee member and support staff introductions
- Vote to approve the minutes from the July 8th Meeting, Councilman Cartier made a motion to approve the minutes, Brett Sadler seconded the motion, the July 8<sup>th</sup> minutes were approved.
- Committee reviewed the revised mapping created by New Castle County GIS to help identify additional areas that should be targeted for ARPA funding. Map using similar criteria for Qualified Census Tracts (QCTs) to identify census block groups, which covers a smaller geography. This helps identify additional areas that may not be included as a QCT because, census tracts cover a larger area.
- Councilman Cartier agreed that the map shown at the block group level accurately identifies areas of need that were not captured by QCTs.
- Committee Chair Hall presented the updated recommendation/implementation table, based off the recommendations and discussion from prior meetings.

- For the Community Improvements/Community Greening category of the table, Bill Lower asked that trails should be explicitly included in this category and suggested Bike Delaware and Delaware Greenways as potential organizations that could be partners.
- Brett Saddler shared a table from Alexandria Virginia, which shows how their ARPA funding was allocated by “Recovery Goal,” “Project Name,” and “Cost,” that may help inform how the committee develops the recommendation/implementation table. Jennifer Kmiec liked that the projects in the example were categorized by goals and suggested a similar structure for the Committee’s table.

## **Housing**

- Councilman Cartier commented with regards to affordable housing, there should be more emphasis on home repair, promoting homeownership, as opposed to being competitive in the private market. Sheila Bravo also added that the cost of construction materials has increased over that previous year, which has had an impact on home repair programs.
- Councilman Hollins discussed that there are also other programs available that address some of the housing issues identified, such as the Housing Trust Fund.
- Committee Chair Hall asked the committee if there are specific people/organizations that should be partnered with. Sheila Bravo suggested the Housing Alliance of Delaware as it covers many areas such as home repairs and homelessness. For utility bill assistance, Catholic Charities has done work in the past with utility assistance. Councilman Cartier suggested that Senior Home Repair Program (NCC Community Services program) be added to the list for additional funding as there is great need. Councilman Cartier noted that there is also opportunity to incorporate job training as part of the home renovation program (TwoFish non-profit example).
- Izuru Osegbu added that there is a need for housing specifically for homeless youth. Councilman Hollins noted that CDBG funding has been allocated in recent years for homeless youth (Duffy’s Hope non-profit example).
- Councilman Cartier noted that a larger problem with regards to housing is the lack of supply, which in-turn affects affordability of both owner-occupied and rental units.
- Brett Saddler added that homelessness in LGBTQ youth is an area of concern specially with regards to youth homelessness.

## **Education**

- Councilman Cartier noted that the lack of access to high-speed internet and access to a computer at home remains a challenge.
- Sheila Bravo added that literacy, including adult literacy, is an area of concern as it is an impediment to applying to jobs.
- Councilman Cartier suggested partnering with Community Centers. Jennifer Kmiec suggested the non-profit Nerd it Now, which helps provide computers to individuals in need. Sheila Bravo suggested Literacy Delaware, public libraries, United Way (youth).

- Councilman Hollins asked if there was a committee focused on providing aid to non-profits (noted that there was during the allocation process for CARES Act funds).
- Izuru Osegbu suggested that tutoring services for students be added to the education category. Councilman Hollins noted that tutoring services is provided in community centers (ex. Rosehill Community Center, Kingswood Community Center, etc.)

### **Business Assistance & Job Creation**

- Councilman Cartier noted the need for technical support for small non-profits, which usually have capacity issues and need support navigating the application process for applying for aid.
- Sheila Bravo noted that all volunteer organization were not eligible for Paycheck Protection Payments (PPP) and CARES Act funding. Also noted that because of lockdowns, these types of organizations were not able to fundraise.
- Councilman Hollins added that the committee should look beyond the usual non-profits like the United Way and focus on smaller non-profits/community organizations what are working on the ground.
- Jennifer Kmiec added that support for entrepreneurs should be included, this includes start-ups, incubators, etc.
- Councilman Cartier suggested focusing on small businesses specifically along commercial corridors (ex. Philadelphia Pike, Bellefonte), which may need technical support to apply for funding. Could also include marketing support for small businesses, rental support, etc.

### **Community Improvements/Community Greening/ Environmental Justice**

- Councilman Hollins again highlighted the importance of focusing on commercial corridors.
- Jennifer Kmiec agreed with the focus on commercial corridors, particularly focusing on making investments that will have longer term impacts on a corridor regardless of which individual businesses are located there. Suggested the Main Street Program, which is administered by the State.
- Brett Saddler noted that CRDC (Claymont Renaissance Development Corporation) has a program where businesses located in the Claymont Hometown Overlay are eligible for matching grants for façade or signage improvements. Also discussed underutilized strip shopping centers and noted that in other places, the conversion of these types of shopping centers into affordable housing. Asked if funding could be used for a similar type of pilot program in the County.
- Councilman Cartier cautioned that it can be difficult to create change in commercial properties due to ownership of those properties (resistance to change).

### **Other Business**

- Brett Saddler asked how funding is allocated over the length of the program to 2026 (allocated each year or in one lump sum).
- Meng Ting Chen noted funds are obligated by 2024 and must be spent by 2026.

### **Public Comment:**

- Karen Hartley Nagle asked if it was possible to get a copy of the recommendation/implementation table

### **Adjournment:**

- Councilman Hollins moved to adjourn the meeting; Councilman Cartier seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 4:33 p.m.