



**American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Task Force Economic & Community Development  
Committee Meeting  
Meeting Minutes – Thursday, August 5, 2021  
3:00pm Virtual Zoom Webinar**

**Attendance:**

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

**Committee Members Absent:** Co-Chair Councilman Penrose Hollins, Jay Patel, Denita Henderson

**Others in Attendance:** Aundrea Almond - County Executive's Chief of Staff, Mengting Chen - Office of Law Assistant County Attorney, Bob Wasserbach Co-Chair of the Audit and Compliance Committee ARPA Taskforce, Rinku Banerji – New Castle County Auditor's Office, Susan Moore – County Executive's Office, Ben Morris-Levenson, Andrea Trabelsi - 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
- Cartier moved to approve the July 22<sup>nd</sup> Minutes, Bob Chadwick seconded the motion. The July 22<sup>nd</sup> minutes were approved.
- The committee continued the discussion on the recommendation/implementation table. Chairman Hall asked that the group focus on the last three categories "Business Assistance & Job Creation," "Enhance communities (or commercial corridors) through Suburban Main Street Programs," and "Community Greening/Environmental Justice" as there has been a lot of focus on housing and/or education as there are
- James Ray Rhodes asked if it would be possible to conduct a survey/needs assessment of businesses/organizations to make sure funds are targeting the correct groups/needs. Suggested DANA as a resource to reach out to potential non-profits.
- Brett Saddler suggested that the "Business Assistance & Job Creation" category be separated to distinguish between non-profit support versus small business support.
- Councilman Cartier emphasized the need to focus funding on smaller community neighborhood focused non-profits, many of which are volunteer organizations (ex. Edgemoor Revitalization

Cooperative and the Knollwood Community Center). These types of organizations may not be part of larger non-profit umbrella organizations like DANA.

- Jennifer Kmiec suggested County Council members are best suited to identify these types of small non-profits in need that may otherwise be missed.
- Sheila Bravo emphasized the importance to making sure the application process to apply for funding be as simple as possible, such as verifying their 501(C)(3) status as a minimum standard to apply for aid.
- Brett Sadler asked if it would be possible for County Council to allocate funding to provide small/micro grants to small non-profits/organizations
- Aundrea Almond noted that the committee should be aware of the compliance monitoring requirements (after funds are dispersed), are fairly rigorous because as it is federal funding. Resources to help grant recipients with this process should also be built-in, as this has been an issue with CARES Act funding recipients. Councilman Cartier suggested partnering with larger organizations to help smaller organizations navigate this process.
- Bob Wasserbach suggested a having a technical advisory session for organizations receiving funding.
- Committee Chair Hall asked the group what some of the criteria should be used to identify activities that should be eligible for funding
- Brett Sadler voiced concern about the recommendations being within compliance with ARPA rules, specifically as it relates to small community service groups, non-profits, etc.
- James Ray Rhodes suggested a list of non-eligible expenses be compiled so the committee can better understand what activities are eligible. Sheila Bravo noted a similar list was compiled for the CARES Act funding, which may be useful for this round of funding.
- Bill Lower suggested the committee focus more on the “what over the how” at this stage of the conversation.
- Sheila Bravo raised the question whether there will be recommendations beyond micro-grants for small non-profits. Noted larger organizations will need aid as well regardless of size. In addition, there has not been much discussion on organizations that help senior citizens.
- Sheila Bravo suggested identifying certain populations or organizations that are not currently getting funding from other sources. Also, suggested to consider community impact as a criteria, such as a competitive grant program based on impact.
- Councilman Cartier also noted that food insecurity has not been directly addressed, specifically as it relates to lockdowns. Support for food banks/food closets
- Jennifer Kmiec asked if there were policies that could more broadly address food insecurity. Sarah Lester suggested the SNAP Incentives program for local produce/farmers markets, which allows SNAP money to be used at farmers markets (“Bonus Bucks” model)
- Jennifer Kmiec suggested community-based healthcare/delivery of healthcare (ex. health truck going directly into neighborhoods). Councilman Cartier emphasized the importance of trying to get

vulnerable people vaccinated, this should include more on-the-ground strategy meeting people where they are.

- Sheila Bravo asked if it would be possible to use ARPA funding to provide cash incentives to people get vaccinated? Councilman Cartier noted that there are already talks about providing incentives such as gift cards to those who get vaccinated.
- Chairman Hall asked the committee if there are more detailed recommendations for small business start-ups, incubator, entrepreneurs, etc.
- Jennifer Kmiec noted that there is an existing network of startup support organizations (ex. incubators, startup organizations), which could allocate funds directly to small businesses/entrepreneurs.
- James Ray Rhodes suggested grant writing assistance is an area of need for smaller startups/small businesses
- Councilman Cartier noted that start-up capital is an issue for many small businesses. Suggested partnering with local organizations like CDFIs or business incubators to provide start-up or expansion capital.
- Committee Chair Hall asked the committee if there are specific types of businesses that should be targeted
- Jennifer Kmiec suggested food space for small food-based businesses
- Brett Saddler asked if this would include minority/women owned businesses.
- James Ray Rhodes noted there is a need for assistance to organizations that provide services like mental health counseling, even though these type of organizations may be for-profit.
- Shiela Bravo noted that some service providers (like certain healthcare providers), which are reliant on an in-person format, were left out in previous rounds of funding.
- Committee Chair Hall asked the committee with regards to the focus on commercial corridors, coordination/organizing small businesses, ect. if there were any areas not identified
- Brett Saddler raised concerns about coordination between agencies such as DeIDOT or DNREC in regard to commercial corridors/green infrastructure. For example, streetscape improvements would likely require coordination with DeIDOT as they maintain the public right-of-ways. Councilman Cartier noted that, while this is a constraint, the County does regulate signage and could also implement façade improvements, lighting, landscaping, etc. which are not located within this right-of-way.
- Councilman Cartier noted that it would be successful to identify a commercial corridor then create an overlay zoning district on that commercial corridor.
- Jennifer Kmiec asked if funding could be used to acquire properties (like vacant/derelict properties) that could then be fixed-up and sold. Councilman Cartier noted that there are current efforts to address vacant properties in the county through sheriff's sale.
- Regarding community greening/environmental justice, Bill Lower suggested solar panels (community solar), Delmarva Power would be a likely partner for this.

- Brett Saddler, suggested that, in addition to smaller “pocket” parks, larger parks should be included (ex. waterfront park in on former Claymont Steel site). Jennifer Kmiec also suggested the Riverfront East Project (in Southbridge City of Wilmington).
- Jennifer Kmiec suggested support for the cleanup of Coastal Zone properties (along the Delaware River). Brett Sadler asked if it would be possible to identify if there are funding gaps with DNREC in which the County could help meet.
- Brett Saddler asked if specific corridors have been identified. Chair Hall noted that specific corridors have not been identified at this time.

### **Other Business**

- Discussed next meeting on August 19<sup>th</sup> where the recommendations of the committee will be presented to the County Executive.

### **Public Comment:**

- No public comment

### **Adjournment:**

- Councilman Cartier moved to adjourn the meeting; Jennifer Kmiec seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.