

TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT
ARPA Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 24, 2022

Members Present: Charlie Goodman, Leo Laferriere, Mac Rood, Christine Sullivan, Brian Voigt

Staff Present: Annie Decker-Dell'Isola, Town Administrator

Others Present: None

I. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm by Ms. Decker-Dell'Isola. The meeting was held in person at the Waitsfield Town Offices and remotely via Zoom.

II. Regular Business.

1. Agenda additions, removals, or adjustments per 1 V.S.A. § 312 (d) (3) (A)

No modifications were made to the agenda.

2. Introductions and committee goals

Committee members introduced themselves, provided some background information, and explained their interest in helping to determine the best dissemination of Waitsfield's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding award. In general, there was interest expressed in addressing projects that need to be taken care of but that are not customarily included in tax expenditures.

3. Appoint Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary

Annie explained that Jordan Gonda will be serving as the Selectboard alternate, and reminded the group that there are still two positions to be filled.

Mac was elected to the Chairperson position.

Charlie was elected to the Vice Chairperson position.

4. Conflict of Interest Policy and Open Meeting Law review

All of those presently on the Committee either currently serve on local government boards or have done so in the past, and have prior knowledge of these policies and requirements/restrictions. Annie provided a couple of reminders regarding email conversations and interactions when a quorum happens be present at other venues.

5. Review Waitsfield ARPA Advisory Committee Guidelines

Annie reviewed the guidelines for this committee which had been approved by the Selectboard, noting that the charge to the group is to make recommendations to that Board after reaching out to the community and soliciting input regarding potential projects. It was confirmed that the Selectboard will make the final spending decisions, and does not need further approval for the dissemination of these funds.

Dates included in the process include:

- A mid-November goal of providing an initial list of potential projects to the Selectboard; it was discussed that it might be decided to request that this be pushed back due to the later than anticipated onset of this Committee's meetings.
- Funds must be obligated by December 2024.
- Funds must be expended by December 2026.

6. Review summary of Waitsfield ARPA award and process

It was confirmed that the amount provided to Waitsfield through ARPA is approximately \$506,000. Some of these funds have been received; the other portion will be provided to the town at a later date.

Some of the logistics of the award process were outlined.

Christine and Annie explained that the Town had opted for the ‘standard allocation,’ indicating that all projects funded in some way reflect lost revenue and so may be funded as “government services.” While a broad range of focus is allowed, funded projects should demonstrate an intent to provide long-term benefits to the town and its residents.

The Vermont League of Cities and Towns has developed and published guidance for towns regarding how to prioritize suggested projects, including a list of questions to aid in determining whether a given project is a suitable recipient of these funds.

Recipients will be responsible for managing the work that is funded, the Committee will not provide project management. Annie will gather further information regarding the monetary oversight responsibilities that will follow these awards.

It was discussed that some questions should be asked of applicants, including whether there is another source of potential funds (ARPA or other) that should be sought and whether the funds, if provided, would leverage the receipt of additional monies.

7. Discuss project prioritization ideas

The group reviewed a letter from Governor Scott that outlined five categories he saw as state priorities that could be addressed with ARPA funding:

- Housing
- Broadband and wireless
- Climate change mitigation
- Water sewer and wastewater
- Economic development and recovery

Annie had mentioned earlier in the meeting that potential areas for focus might include stormwater work, the digitization of the Town’s land records, and addressing cybersecurity needs.

Leo presented three ideas generated by Conservation Committee conversations: improvement of public access to Wu Ledges, directional and informative signage on hiking trails, and development of a wetlands interpretative handicap-accessible walk in the Big Picture/Lawson’s area.

Charlie brought forward several items, including Joslin Memorial Park improvements, Wait House improvements, signage at either end of Town, cemetery improvements, the Fire Station kitchen, and potentially the Town pond at the Big Picture (although there was some discussion regarding ecological vs aesthetic benefits of the pond’s evolution).

Brian voiced support for land record digitization and online availability as well as recreational opportunities proposed by the Conservation Commission. He also raised the potential to support wastewater infrastructure development and/or water system connections that may result from the current study taking place related to these issues.

Christine mentioned the need for an overhaul of the Town's website as well as cybersecurity needs, pointed out that any Library or Fire Department considerations should include consultation with Fayston, and brought forth the need for generator installation at all Town buildings.

Mac explained that he looks at potential projects in terms of categories, and noted that he would prefer supporting just a few bigger projects rather than multiple smaller ones. He also mentioned wastewater infrastructure as a potential project, along with Mad River Path continuity and support for exploration of solutions to the housing shortage.

It was agreed that projects should be transformative and multi-generational, as this ARPA funding presents a unique opportunity to fund such projects.

8. Discuss public outreach and project intake

During the meeting, there was some mention of further committee discussion prior to reaching out to the community for input; however, Annie presented the one-question survey that Bristol has provided on their website, and committee members appreciated that simplicity and gave Annie the go-ahead to include something similar on Waitsfield's site. It was also agreed to reach out to the Valley Reporter and post information on Front Porch Forum in order to raise public awareness of this undertaking.

There was also agreement on the need for an intake form for specific recommendations for expenditures. Annie will present a draft form at the next meeting.

9. Determine meeting schedule

It was decided to set a regular meeting schedule for 5:00 pm on the first and third Wednesdays of each month, with the intent to meet for about 60 minutes but sometimes more if needed.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary