

## ARPA Minutes 4/28/22

Attendance: Clrs Dave Adams, Gus Steeves, Mike Marketti; TM Michael McCall; FinDir Karen Harnois, Kristine Russell, Noor el Gaderi, Mary O'Coin, Glenn Juchno, Sue Cassini.

Ms O'Coin began by summarizing what she thought United Way could do is chosen to manage part of our ARPA money (regarding health, financial stability, education and basic human needs programs). She said UW already has programs for all of these, mostly by funding other agencies and tracks them; serves Southbridge, Sturbridge, Charlton, Webster and Dudley, but can easily limit our ARPA money to Southbridgians. UW's top three programs – Open Sky, St Lukes & Catholic Charities – serve 900+ people and UW provides ~40% of their funding and is managing \$4.5M in DESE funds. Need goes far beyond that, though.

She suggested starting such a fund with about \$100K and recommended using \$25K for SCHAP to cover things HUD does not, such as mental health. We'd need to tell her how to allocate the funds – upfront, quarterly, monthly, etc. – and what level of reporting we need. Won't charge admin fees.

Ms Harnois noted we're already in the 1<sup>st</sup> reporting cycle, and noted the federal requirements have changed several times since ARPA rolled out. Thinks we can just say what we did without a line-by-line breakdown.

Mr McCall said it's similar to what the Quaboag CDC does for our small business grants.

Mr Juchno and Ms Cassini talked about the YMCA's recent history and programs, noting its resources are now “strained” due to Covid reducing membership while increasing need. UW funds \$5K for teen center and \$15K for the What's For Dinner program (weekly meal-prep distribution), both in deficit and very popular. Also need to replace HVAC system in gym (\$95K quote, expects higher actual cost).

Ms Cassini said the WFD program aims to encourage families to cook together. Started a year ago, and see many people having difficulty paying for meals. Mr Juchno noted YMCA has spent \$36K on it this year, distributing ~150 meal kits a week, with food supplied by Big Bunny.

Regarding the teen center, they said it recently reopened 3 days/week and is “bombarded with kids,” thus needs lots of staff. Halloween teen night saw 165 kids.

Mr McCall mentioned the recent MVP forum, which included a proposal for a social worker for the PD & FD to help reduce the use of ambulances, etc.

Ms el Gaderi said she's looking to update the town's tech for FOIA tracking. Sought quotes and identified Stellar Corp and both cheapest and local (in Lexington). Software can assign a FOIA request to somebody specific or get info from a department, will store the documents for future requests, has online request forms, and tracks the time remaining to fulfill them, automatically redacts protected info. Mr McCall said Chelmsford used them when he was there. He talked to town clerk; we don't have a central repository of such info. Clr Adams suggested doing this with free cash rather than ARPA.

Ms Harnois noted her department needs help to track ARPA money for 2.5 years, with last report due after 12/31/24. Saw CARES Act reporting as “very complicated,” but this isn't as bad. Proposes hiring a contract person at ~\$54K/year. Mr McCall noted we might be able to get someone as a temp via an agency and wouldn't need to pay benefits to a contractor.

Next meeting 5/19.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gus Steeves