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[Home](#) > American Rescue Plan Committee Meeting Minutes - 01/19/2022

American Rescue Plan Committee Meeting Minutes - 01/19/2022

Meeting date:

Wednesday, January 19, 2022

Minutes:

Meeting of the Old Lyme American Rescue Plan (ARP) Committee

Meeting Date: January 19, 2022 @ 12:00

Location: Old Lyme Town Hall – Meeting Hall

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 12:07 p.m. by the Chairman, Tom Gotowka.

Present: Jennifer Datum, Mary Jo Nosal, Dennis Powers, Dave Roberge, Mary Seidner, Martha Shoemaker, Nicole Leger and Cheryl Poirier'

Via Phone: Phil Parcak

Absent: Rick Stout

1. Approval of Minutes:

Jennifer motioned to approve the January 5, 2022 minutes and Martha seconded.

The minutes were unanimously approved with the following amendments:

- Item #5 - Dave said the OLVAA had an immediate need for new power stretchers. Ambulance calls have increased during the pandemic and the current inventory of stretchers is antiquated. The committee decided that this request should be considered via the application process.
- Rick motioned to recommend that the Board of Selectman allot up to \$115,000 of ARPA funds to assist with purchasing and distribution of Test Kits to the 8,000 residents of Old Lyme.

Jennifer motioned to approve the January 12, 2022 special meeting minutes and Cheryl seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved

1. Report on Survey Results Executive Summary prepared by Martha Shoemaker

The purpose of this brief summary is to provide the Board of Selectman and the residents of Old Lyme an update on the recent survey of Old Lyme residents, businesses, and organizations by the American Recovery Plan Committee. The survey was designed to help the committee recommend a strategy to the Board of Selectman for using the designated federal funds under the American Recovery Plan Act. The survey was open from December 9 through January 7, 2022. The committee has the initial findings of the survey and is working now to complete their analysis of the results.

The survey resulted in 896 completed electronic responses and 4 handwritten responses. The total includes 704 residents who consider Old Lyme their primary residence including 67 who also run a business or organization in town; 168 property owners (that includes seasonal residents); and 28 business owners who do not also live in Old Lyme. This indicates roughly 10% of the Old Lyme population participated in the survey. The ARPA Committee is pleased with the number of participants.

Old Lyme residents, business owners, and organization leaders were asked how the pandemic affected their lives, as well as their preferences for how the Town spends its ARPA funds. Respondents could also include additional comments if they wished.

The Committee strives to operate in a transparent and objective manner, and looks forward to sharing with the public the complete findings as they are compiled and analyzed.

The first set of findings ready to share regards a question asked of all survey takers. The survey asked participants for their input regarding how the money should be allocated across 11 categories. These categories were chosen because they are deemed appropriate and legal uses of the funds by the US Treasury Department. The committee has reviewed respondents' beliefs of how important each of the categories are in the distribution of funds. The categories are listed below in ranked order from most to least important.

1. Investment in current and future infrastructure challenges such as clean water and sewer/waste treatment: – 68.99%
2. Investment in Old Lyme post-pandemic small business recovery – 67.37%
3. Financial assistance to Nonprofit Organizations that provided relief and services to Old Lyme residents during the pandemic – 67.12%
4. Investment in Mental Health Services or other Public Health Services to assist Old Lyme residents – 65.97%
5. 5) Reinvestment in Old Lyme government services that were deemed essential during the pandemic (such as Emergency Services) to ensure preparedness for future services – 63.77%
6. Investment in town-wide broadband (internet) improvements and/or cell services for potentially recurring needs such as remote work, remote schooling, and Telehealth services – 60.62%

1. Grant premium pay to Old Lyme front line essential workers who were at heightened risk due to the character of their work during the public health emergency – 57.86%
2. Financial assistance to Old Lyme families and households having difficulty recovering from pandemic losses (noting there are funds available now for Old Lyme families through a fund administered by LYSB) – 54.3%
3. Investment in early childhood care and education – 54.1%
4. Investment in bringing visitors to our Old Lyme attractions, restaurants, shops, and accommodations – 41.92%
5. Investment in affordable housing to meet the needs of those working and living in Old Lyme. – 38.55%

1. Reports on Priorities by Category:

Public Safety Dave & Mary Jo reported their findings. The residents require an improved public safety messaging system that is more frequent, and enhanced hybrid meeting capabilities. The lack of test kits and testing sites is concerning.

Entertainment Arts Hospitality Cheryl feels this category is a subset of small business support. Visitors who attend cultural events also frequent restaurants and retailers. There are 5 restaurants and 4 retailers that are not financially sound. They would like to see an increase in visitors. Infrastructure improvements were required to keep the cultural events up and running.

Mental Health, Social Services Mary and Jennifer reported that 53 primary wage earners experienced reduced hours or lost their job and secondary wage earners also suffered. 66 people lost their childcare services. People are concerned about inflation, and 95 people feel the economy will worsen. The lack of mental health providers was an issue for some and seniors were very isolated.

Infrastructure Martha & Phil reported that there is an excessive need to improve broadband and cell services. Seniors and physically challenged individuals have trouble accessing the beaches. There is a need for consistent access to town meetings. Sewers, bike paths and sidewalks would make the town more attractive.

Business & Industry Rick & Dennis reported 1 business closure and 30 to 40 that are hurting financially. The sewer issue poses many questions that need to be addressed.

1. Funding Requests (Informational)

- OLVA updated their request for regarding funding for new stretchers; i.e., they are able to cover the cost of one stretcher from their own 501C3 funds.
- Mr. Corto submitted an update on the request from “Lenny’s On the Beach” to support distribution of eco-friendly packaging products to Old Lyme businesses. (was included in the Call to Meeting”)
- LLHD’s 9 constituent municipalities are providing 1 percent of their total ARP funding to LedgeLight. (for us, about \$21, 620) Director Mansfield will be a guest at our Feb. 2nd meeting.
- An update on our \$115000 request for at-home test kits.

Mary Jo moved to withdraw the motion posed on January 5, 2022 (*Rick motioned to recommend that the Board of Selectman allot up to \$115,000 of ARPA funds to assist with purchasing and distribution of Test Kits to the 8,000 residents of Old Lyme. The allocation would also include communication costs.*) Cheryl seconded and there were no abstentions or nays. The committee would also like to have the request removed from the Town Hall Meeting Agenda as Nicole Leger stated that the ARPA fund expenditures do not require a Town Meeting vote.

Dave reported that testing kit protocols have been expanded and he will have more to report at the next meeting.

1. Committee Member: Ross W. Higgins (FCCOL)

Mary was pleased to announce that Ross has submitted her application to become a member of the ARPA committee. Martha will follow up on the confirmation as it was not on the slate at the BOS meeting on January 18, 2022.

7. New Business: None

8. Public Comment: None

9- Adjournment: a motion to adjourn was made by Cheryl and seconded by Mary. There was no discussion. The motion passed with all attending in favor. There were no abstentions or nays. The meeting adjourned at 1:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne McAuliffe, Clerk

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