

State of Rhode Island

County of Washington

In Hopkinton on the thirty-first day of May 2022 A.D. the said meeting was called to order by Town Council Vice President Sharon Davis at 6:30 P.M. in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 1 Town House Road, Hopkinton, RI 02833.

PRESENT: Sharon Davis, Scott Bill Hirst, Robert Marvel, Michael Geary; Town Manager Brian Rosso; Deputy Town Clerk Marita Murray. Absent: Stephen Moffitt, Jr.

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order with a moment of silent meditation and a salute to the Flag.

ROLL CALL

Councilors Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Marvel, and Geary announced they were present.

The Workshop was held to discuss requests from non-profit agencies regarding distribution of the town's American Rescue Plan Act Funds.

Wood River Health Services

Alison Croke, President and CEO of Wood River Health Services was present. Ms. Croke suggested that the ARPA funds were intended to be used for COVID relief efforts and therefore for first responders. She noted that part of their proposal was to use some of these funds for premium pay for their front line medical staff who have been working every day and are still dealing with the high infection rate of COVID. They also wish money to help fund medical assistant staffing to assist in serving the community with COVID testing, vaccinations and treatment, noting that they have recently opened a pharmacy at the Hope Valley site. Ms. Croke explained that there is a need for behavioral health counseling and substance abuse counseling and they have launched a medication assisted treatment program which is coupled with both group and individual counseling. They also wish to use peers, who are people with life experience and are in recovery from mental health disorders or substance abuse disorders, to work with patients and help supplement the counseling that their patients receive. They have also started another pilot project with a company called Marigold, similar to Facebook, and is a social

network for people in recovery from a mental health or substance abuse disorder. This platform is monitored by clinical staff who will alert someone if they believe there is an issue so they can try to reach out and offer some resources. Councilor Davis asked Ms. Croke to reiterate for the record the amount that Wood River Health Services was asking for and she indicated that because they are a community health center that serves a broad region, they have submitted identical proposals to the towns of Charlestown, Richmond and Hopkinton. Included in that estimate was a 4% bonus for front line staff; medical assistant salary with fringe benefits; and, the cost for the pilot program with Marigold for years two and three. Their total request to Hopkinton is \$196,077. Councilor Hirst asked Mr. Rosso to comment on the ARPA funds and what they can be used for. Mr. Rosso noted that the ARPA funds are federal funds which come with a lot of guidelines. He noted that the town is going to hire a consultant to assist with compliance; however, the town is going to be responsible for ongoing monitoring of the funds and any sub recipients will be federally audited and will need to follow the 2 CRF Part 200 guidelines. Councilor Hirst asked if the money could be applied to operational expenses or if it needed to be applied to a specific expense such as a vehicle. Mr. Rosso believed under revenue replacement it could be spent in the way that Ms. Croke had suggested, noting that there would have to be a contract prepared for any sub recipient and they would be given sub-awards and the town will have to do a lot of monitoring and auditing of their books which is something the consultant will assist with. Councilor Hirst asked if Charlestown had made any decisions about how they were going to spend their money and Ms. Croke replied that Charlestown had not announced any decisions yet. Mr. Rosso believed that Charlestown, Richmond and Hopkinton were going to be using the same consultant, iParametrics, who is on the State MPA. Councilor Geary wished the public to know that the town could not just hand out the money and be done with it, there were a lot of guidelines that needed to be followed and he felt maybe something should be put on the town's website to explain this to residents.

Ashaway Free Library

Gary Williams was present on behalf of the Library Director, Heather Field. Mr. Williams wished to know what was fundable. He suggested if given some money, the library would use it for summer youth programs, summer reading programs and community and adult outreach programs. There have also been instances with their

gazebo, picnic tables and lights and they wished to purchase a security camera. They have been struggling to find staff and if there was a possibility to add to salaries or personal leave that employees do not have now, that would be appreciated. There are also residents who cannot get to the library and they would like to implement a once a week delivery system as well as purchase a scanner to digitize all of the paper in their archives. They would also like to give their basement a facelift and purchase programs for newspapers, genealogy and an outdoor drive-in for movies. Councilor Hirst explained that any money they may receive would be a one-shot deal. Mr. Rosso noted that the nonprofits can use the money for whatever they wish but agreed that this money should be used for a one-time expense and that was why the town was sticking to capital improvements which have been neglected for so long. Mr. Williams noted that the library director was looking for some direction and Mr. Rosso indicated that he could assist her with that.

Maddie Potts Foundation

Dan Potts of 6 Fairway Drive, Richmond was present on behalf of the Maddie Potts Foundation. He noted that the Maddie Potts Foundation was a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that was founded in November of 2017. He noted that the organization sponsors scholarships, facility upgrades, food drives and opportunities for people with disabilities when it comes to unified athletics. Their request is for \$83,333.33 which will be used for the construction increase on the Maddie Potts Memorial Field House and specifically be used to complete carpentry work, plumbing, electrical and the fire alarm system. Mr. Potts noted that the facility may be used as a part of an EMA evacuation response but once the facility is turned over to the school district it will be used at their disposal. He stated that they have raised \$900,000; however, COVID has increased their costs by \$400,000. Councilor Hirst indicated that he did not support giving money to the Maddie Potts Foundation and felt that this should be considered in the Chariho School budget next year for this will be an asset to the Chariho School District.

Ashaway Ambulance Association

Eric Perrin, Treasurer of Ashaway Ambulance Association was present. He noted that approximately six months ago he had presented the town with a list of things that they needed. They will take anything the town is willing to give them for they need to purchase power-load stretchers which are an automatic loading system into the back of

their ambulances, one of which costs \$20,000. They also need a new Life Pack 15 heart monitor which costs \$35,000. Lastly, he noted that they could use a new ambulance which would cost \$280,000.

Hope Valley/Wyoming Fire District

Chief Justin Lee of the Hope Valley/Wyoming Fire District wished to stress that the reason the town has received these ARPA monies was due to COVID. He advised that he had prepared a presentation asking for 6% of the ARPA money to be divided among the two ambulance companies and three fire districts; noting that he also has presented the same proposal to the Town of Richmond. He indicated that he had met with Senators Reed and Whitehouse, and they, along with Congressman Cicilline, are willing to provide the town with information on how this money can be spent. He did not feel that 6% was an excessive amount and he understood that DPW needs equipment; however, their volunteers were on the front line day after day when they did not have to be. Councilor Hirst questioned how they would spend the money and Chief Lee indicated that the ambulances need refrigerators for medications, they have equipment repairs, uniforms and state mandated equipment to purchase. Councilor Hirst noted that they could not expect this money every year. Mr. Rosso acknowledged that when he put together the list of projects for the town, he added in an amount for emergency services; the town has put themselves in a hole and neglected a lot of things and now they are trying to spread the money out equitably. Chief Lee understood Mr. Rosso's explanation but noted that the town has these funds because of COVID and he did not feel that 6% was asking a lot. Councilor Geary asked if Chief Lee had appeared before Richmond to present this request and he indicated that he had.

Hope Valley Ambulance

Patrick Hawkins, Treasurer of the Hope Valley Ambulance Squad wished to add that they were first responders during COVID and still are responding to calls relating to COVID. They also need to replace a monitor and they are looking into purchasing a new truck which will cost over \$300,000. It is also a Department of Health mandate that they install a power load stretcher in their ambulances.

Ashaway Ambulance Association

Mr. Perrin asked how much money the town received from the ARPA funds and Mr. Rosso answered \$2.4 Million Dollars. Mr. Perrin asked if there was a list of how the

town was suggesting they would allocate these funds and Mr. Rosso acknowledged that there was a proposed list which he believed was on the town's website. Mr. Perrin asked what the money has been spent on and Mr. Rosso indicated that nothing has been spent yet; the funds have been earmarked. Mr. Perrin asked how much money was allocated to the Public Works Department and Mr. Caswell suggested \$672,236. Mr. Perrin questioned whether someone had donated money to the town and Mr. Rosso replied that there was a probate case but he was unsure when the town would receive any funds. Mr. Perrin asked if the town had lost revenue due to COVID and Mr. Rosso answered absolutely; the recreation department was closed for almost two years; Municipal Court was closed and all of departments lost revenue, including the police department.

Public Comment

Robert Greene of North Road asked Chief Lee if he was asking for 6% of the \$2.4 Million Dollars just for the Hope Valley emergency services and Chief Lee explained that he had included the three fire districts and two ambulance associations. Chief Lee noted that his figures suggested: Ashaway Ambulance receiving \$36,000; Ashaway Fire District receiving \$53,000; Hope Valley Ambulance receiving \$42,663; Hope Valley/Wyoming Fire District receiving \$80,969; and, Richmond Carolina Fire District receiving \$52,981 which was based on their last year's budgets. Chief Lee hoped that Richmond and Hopkinton would work together in paying these amounts.

Councilor Davis noted that they should schedule this matter for a decision at a future meeting and Councilor Geary indicated that first Mr. Rosso was to contact a consultant. Councilor Hirst asked to what extent the consultant would take input from elected officials, were they just going to make a report, for he was not inclined to support the Maddie Potts Foundation. Mr. Rosso indicated that they would not be involved in the project selection process at all; they will make sure that when the town spends its money the RFPs are put together properly, the expenses are being tracked properly, and we are compliant with the regulations. They will also try to find other funding that might be available. Chief Lee suggested that his recommendation would be that the Council put together whatever it was they wished to do and reach out to both our Senators and Congressmen who have many resources. He felt the money spent on a consultant could go to something for the town. Mr. Rosso felt that the Senators would not be providing

auditors to audit sub recipients or be involved with compliance, such as writing RFPs that are compliant with federal spending. Councilor Geary noted that he did not want to wait another six months before the money is spent; he wished to wrap this up so that the next Council did not have to deal with it. Councilor Davis agreed with Councilor Geary. Mr. Rosso felt they could get the consultants going once they agree to that spending and there could be a pretty quick turn-around; however, the RFP process alone takes approximately two months. He also noted that there is a delay of a year or more for purchasing equipment. Councilor Davis felt they all agreed with the proposed list that Mr. Rosso had prepared at their last meeting and she was ready to vote on that. Councilor Hirst wished everyone to realize that this was a one-time gift and they would not be receiving the same next year. Councilor Marvel believed they should take another look at the full list and prioritize that list with: (1) services for items that ensure the health and safety of the residents; (2) direct services; and, (3) indirect services, which Councilor Geary agreed with. Councilor Hirst hoped to do a little more with the police, Department of Public Works and other town agencies. Town government has taken a hit and we have a chance to take a stand for the Town of Hopkinton and he would like to see the town be taken care of.

Nick Vetelino, Chief of the Ashaway Ambulance asked Mr. Rosso if he knew how much ARPA money the Town of Charlestown received and Mr. Rosso guessed that it was approximately the same. Mr. Rosso noted that he had spoken with Charlestown who is in a different position financially with their mill rate being half of what Richmond and Hopkinton is and he was made aware that they were going to give a majority of their ARPA funds to nonprofits because their CIP budget is higher than a Million Dollars. They are not under the same financial constraints as Richmond and Hopkinton. Mr. Vetelino asked the Council to look and see if there was any more funding that could go towards public safety. Councilor Geary asked if there was any grant money or federal funding to assist the ambulance associations with purchasing the required power load stretchers and Mr. Vetelino indicated there was a countrywide AFG grant which receives thousands of applications. Mr. Vetelino explained the two types of power load stretchers with one costing more than \$50,000 and the other costing \$20,000. Chief Lee wished to reiterate that he believed the 6% he was asking for was very reasonable. Councilor Davis

asked if they could put a discussion of the ARPA funds on the agenda for the next meeting of June 6, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

Robert Greene of North Road asked if the State of Rhode Island mandates that an ambulance must have a piece of equipment, is the State obligated to provide funds for that purchase. The Council responded no, it was an unfunded mandate. Mr. Greene also wished to clarify with Chief Lee that he was asking for \$261,000 split two ways or \$130,000 from each town, which he acknowledged was correct. Mr. Greene felt that amount would not be sufficient and indicated that if he had his way he would double that. He felt the addition to the Town Hall and the recreation area were two things he would look at again because he felt the emergency services should receive more than they were asking for. Holly Greene of North Road agreed with Chief Lee that the \$30,000 needed for a consultant could be used elsewhere but she also agreed with Mr. Rosso that a consultant was needed for the compliance aspect and she did not wish the town to be penalized or have to give any money back; this was like insurance. Mrs. Greene stated that this was a one-time windfall and we do not wish it to turn into a major liability.

The workshop was closed at 7:50 PM.

Marita D. Murray

Deputy Town Clerk