

Southborough ARPA Committee
February 17, 2022
Virtual Meeting held via Zoom

Call to Order

Ms. Hamilton called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and took roll call attendance. Members Present: Andrea Hamilton (Chair), Meme Luttrell (Vice Chair), Tim Martel, Joe Palmer, Anne Rubenstein, Tony Schoener, John Wood

Announcement of Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, An Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency, signed into law on June 16, 2021. The meeting will be conducted via remote participation. No in person attendance by members of the public permitted. Meeting may be viewed/ participation optional via meeting link:
<https://www.southboroughtown.com/remotemeetings>

I. How to address ARPA funding requests that potentially impact FY23 funding for Town Meeting Articles.

The committee had previously decided not to make recommendations on use of the ARPA funds until it gathered input from town departments, committees and boards and community members. Outreach began in late January. A February 28 deadline was established for presentations and written input, allowing up to two months for review and general community comment before the making final recommendations to the Select Board prior to May 16. The ARPA Committee would need to make any early recommendations that might impact warrant items for the Select Board's March 1, 2022 meeting.

Consideration centered on the following areas:

TAX RATE: The pandemic took a toll on town revenue; tax relief is an allowable use of ARPA funding. Originally the FY23 tax rate increase was projected at 4.63 % but now might be as high as 6.75% if all capital items proposed for the warrant were to be approved. As an example, we discussed the use of up to \$800,000 of ARPA funds, which could potentially reduce the higher calculated increase to 4.99%, a potential savings of \$170 to \$200 per household.

The committee could potentially make an early recommendation to apply \$700,000 to \$800,000 amount of ARPA funds toward reducing specific capital projects or other expenditures items. Members recognized that whatever action might be taken or not taken by the ARPA Committee, the Select Board, as the town's appropriating body, could apply the ARPA funding to reduce the tax rate. Last year the tax rate was sent in November.

BOARD OF HEALTH: Discussion focused on whether it would be appropriate to recommend use of ARPA funds for an additional paid position proposed by the Board of Health, The request is pandemic-related and also addresses community needs. Several members suggested that personnel positions that will be a continuing expense would be better funded through regular town processes.

SENIOR CENTER EXPANSION: There is concern that the proposed expansion of the senior center will not be placed on the warrant if not supported by ARPA funds. This would potentially curtail and limit valuable services and activities.

Consensus: The ARPA Committee should continue to gather input from the community on how to apply ARPA funds. **DISCUSSION ONLY NO VOTES TAKEN**

II. Administrative business

- None

III. Unfinished Business

- None

IV. New Business

- Next meeting: Thursday February 24, 2022, at 7:30 p.m.

V. Public Comment

- None

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Wood at 8:52 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Martel. Roll Call Vote: Unanimous

Minutes submitted by Anne Rubenstein, Committee Member.