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January 12, 2022

Mr. Mark Purple
Town Administrator
Town of Southborough
17 Common Street
Southborough, MA 01772

RE: **State ARPA Funding**

Dear Mr. Purple:

As requested, Capital Strategic Solutions (CSS) has reviewed the current State ARPA funding programs in an effort to highlight funding opportunities that may be beneficial for the Town of Southborough. On December 13, 2021, Governor Baker signed a \$4 billion COVID-19 pandemic recovery bill which provides much needed funding in many areas. While some of this funding is specifically earmarked for state agencies and other individual cities and towns, there are programs that might be of particular interest to Southborough.

Housing, Workforce and Economic Development

The Massachusetts Act for Immediate Covid-19 Recovery Needs includes \$600 million for housing initiatives and includes programs for homeownership/mortgage assistance, the Commonwealth Builders Program, workforce training, improvements to public housing and support for municipal efforts to address affordable housing and economic development. These funds will be distributed by the: Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency, Massachusetts Housing Partnership, and the Community Economic Assistance Corporation. Many of these programs will be limited to communities that were considered to be disproportionately impacted by the pandemic or will be targeted to specific low-income populations. However, there are some programs and services in this area that may be beneficial to the citizens of Southborough.

Most of the agencies that are tasked with directing and overseeing this portion of the pandemic funding bill have not yet released details on the specific programs or application processes for municipalities. Capital Strategic Solutions will continue to monitor information being disseminated by these particular state agencies and will notify Southborough officials if any particular programs or funding opportunities in this area would be beneficial for the community to pursue.

There is one particular program under this section of the legislation that is currently available and may be of particular interest to the Town of Southborough. The Massachusetts Homeowner Assistance Fund (MASS HAF) is available for homeowners who are behind on their mortgage payments because of the Covid-19 pandemic. This funding is intended to prevent foreclosures and displacements of homeowners and can assist with paying overdue mortgage payments, property taxes, insurance and homeowner fees. While there is an income eligibility requirement for this program, it is based on the area median income which provides a higher threshold in communities like Southborough. For example, a homeowner with 4 household members would be eligible if their total annual income is less than \$175,650. A homeowner that lives alone would be eligible for the program if their total annual income is less than \$123,000. Mass HAF has an excellent online tool that can be quickly used

by residents to determine eligibility. If this program is of interest to the community, CSS would recommend providing a link and summary information on the Town's website and can provide any sort of assistance needed.

Public Health

Funding available through State ARPA includes over \$200 million for local and regional Boards of Health. These funds will be disseminated and distributed by the Department of Public Health. While no formal instructions have yet to be issued on how municipalities can obtain this funding, the legislation directs this portion of the bill to include:

- Expansion and enhancement of shared public health services between municipalities
- Establishment of unified health data systems
- Hardware, software and training for Health Departments
- Online permitting and inspection tools for local Health Departments
- Essential health services provided by local Boards of Health

CSS will continue to monitor information and communications from the Department of Public Health so that the Town of Southborough will be able to maximize any available funding in this category. This legislation also includes funding to enhance and expand access to mental and behavioral health services statewide.

Open Space, Parks and Trails

Another category of spending under this comprehensive package provides funding for open space and to clean, enhance, improve and modernize public parks and trail facilities. While the majority of this funding will be directed specifically to urban areas and communities considered to have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, we believe Southborough may be eligible for some portions of this funding. These programs will eventually be managed and directed by the Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs and through the Mass Trails Program and we will continue to monitor their communications for eligibility specifics.

Environmental Infrastructure

\$100 million under this legislation is dedicated to environmental infrastructure investments which will be available through the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program. Since the Town of Southborough is enrolled in the MVP Program, the Community will be eligible for action grants to address environmental infrastructure issues. It is anticipated that the next round of grant funding under the MVP program will open in the Spring and CSS is available to assist the Town as needed with the grant application.

Other Potential Categories

There are a few other general categories in this legislation that relate to Infrastructure Improvements through SRF Funding, HVAC improvements in public schools, broadband and internet access through the Broadband Innovation Fund and Cybersecurity improvements for cities and towns. Although no specific guidelines or funding access instructions have been issued yet by the state agencies responsible for this funding, we will



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continue to monitor their individual websites and communication channels and will update the Town of Southborough as funding and eligibility become available.

Earmarks

As you are likely aware, the Town of Southborough also received funding for certain earmarks in this legislation; including:

- \$100,000 for HVAC upgrades in public buildings
- \$70,000 for repair of the collapsed culvert on Northboro Road

If not already in process, the Town should complete the earmark form for this funding via the state website. CSS is available to help with facilitating this paperwork on behalf of the Town, as needed.

The information provided in this correspondence remains fluid as the state and all of the individual agencies work to release information and guidelines on accessing these funds. We will continue to monitor all of the funding available through this legislation and will update the Town of Southborough with continuing updates. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Thompson

Jennifer Thompson
Project Manager/Chief Development Officer
Capital Strategic Solutions