

**MINUTES PUBLIC HEARING
ARPA
5:30 P.M. Thursday, April 21, 2022
HARDWICK MEMORIAL BUILDING
3RD FLOOR MEETING ROOM AND VIA ZOOM**

Select Board

Eric Remick, Chair
Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Vice Chair-*Absent*
Elizabeth Dow
Shari Cornish
Danny Hale

Others Present

Amanda Fecteau, Payroll Administrator

Others Present

Gary Michaels
Paul Fixx
Norma Spaulding
Jodi Lew-Smith
Sally Anstey
Mike Lance (Zoom)

5:37 P.M. Select Board Chair, Eric Remick, called the ARPA Public Hearing to order.

5:37 P.M. Eric explained that ARPA stands for The American Rescue Plan Act which was established in 2021 and provides \$350 billion to state and local governments across the nation from the response and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Vermont received \$1.25 billion, and over \$200 million of that is being allocated to municipalities. ARPA can be spent on any “Government Services” which can include, but are not limited to, maintenance of infrastructure or pay-go spending for building new infrastructure. Please see the attached documents for more detail. Eric then explained existing projects that the Town is actively working on in which the fund that Hardwick has received could go towards. The Select Board is encouraging input from residents.

The current list includes: Sewer Plant upgrades, new Town Highway Garage, Jeudevine Library expansion, Yellow Barn Business Accelerator, Swinging Bridge replacement, Fiber Internet expansion, Memorial Building roof renovations, and Town House roof replacement.

Jodi Lew-Smith, Chair of the Library Trustees, explained that the library staff and trustees have been working on this expansion for many years. They believe they have all of the funding; however, they have to put the project back out to bid. With the current economic, she suspects the bid will come in over budget. She is asking the board for some ARPA funds as a “bridge funding.” Jodi mentioned that bids are due in the middle of June, and they are hoping to sign a contract in the middle of July. The library will know at that time how much more money, if any, they will need to start this project.

Paul Fixx asked the Select Board what the Town has in mind as far as evaluating and prioritizing projects and how will the money be distributed. Eric mentioned that the first step is hearing from the public and coming up with a final list of projects. The Select Board will make the final determination as far as what funds go to what projects. Unfortunately, not all funds will fill all of the gaps, and as of right now the Select Board doesn’t know the exact price of the projects. This will be a continued conversation between the public and the Select Board. Norma Spaulding asked about a timeline. The Town has to elect the standard allowance for revenue loss by

April 30, 2021, which allows the Town to spend its ARPA funds on government services. They will have until December 31, 2026 to spend the funds. There will be an annual report that the Town has to complete.

Norma then asked about upgrading the heat in the Memorial Building and possibly adding solar, and Paul mentioned the heaters on the third floor don't work. Amanda stated that the Town Manager's office has already talked to a heating specialist about the heaters on the third floor. Eric mentioned that the Town has worked with Vermont Efficiency in the past, however it's a stone building with large windows throughout, but it's certainly an option.

Paul Fixx brought up concerns about ARPA funds going towards the Sewer plant. He feels that the upgrades to the Sewer Plant would only benefit the residents that live in the village, not everyone. Danny mentioned that Hardwick would not exist without the Sewer Plant. Jodi asked if the Town has looked into other funding. Eric mentioned that engineers for the project, Aldrich & Elliot, have looked into other funding, but the funding hasn't been well defined yet, so A&E isn't sure if the Town would qualify from it. Sewer bids also need to go out to bid again.

Norma asked for more details on the Swinging Bridge, and Eric mentioned that the Town hired an architect, there was funding lined up, and then there was lot of unfortunate events that happened such as there needed to be a new contract, the funder didn't agree to sign with the design, and then the architect passed away. The Town Manager has reached out to another company and is working on getting all the details lined up again so that the Town can go out to bid. Paul mentioned that there are different opinions on the design on the bridge. Shari stated that a contract has not been signed and that there will be a public hearing before this happens.

Gary Michaels asked if these funds could go towards non-profits. He believes the Craftsbury Community Care Center could benefit from the funding as a lot of Hardwick residents live there. Eric stated that he would have to check into the rules about non-profits.

6:06 P.M. With no further comments from anyone, Select Board Chair, Eric Remick, adjourned the Public Hearing

Minutes approved by: _____
Eric Remick, Select Board Chair

Minutes taken by: _____
Amanda Fecteau, Payroll Administrator