

TOWN OF WESTFORD
ARPA COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes
February 16, 2022

Members Present: Dave Baczewski, Nanette Rogers, Bill Hill, Martha Heath, Bree Drapa

Members Absent: George Lamphere, Greg Barrows

Also Present: Callie Hamdy (Minute Clerk)

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. and was held in person and via Zoom.

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

MINUTES

Review of December 15, 2021 Minutes pushed to the next meeting.

ADMIN

The next meeting will be March 16, 2022, 7:00pm in the Library and via Zoom.

UPDATE ON SELECTBOARD DECISIONS AND GUIDANCE ON PHASE I – III, RUBRIC, AND MISC

Dave summarized the briefing to the Selectboard. The Selectboard feels positive about the work that has been done on the Phases and the Rubric.

The committee discussed if we should we seek information/guidance on joining a Communication Unification District (CUD). Mark Drapa was going to help the town see if this was a possible route for helping the town improve broadband accessibility.

DISCUSS CHANGES ON FINAL RULE

Dave went over the changes of the final rule. The major change is the option to claim loss revenue, up to \$10 million but not to exceed total ARPA allocation, without using the loss revenue calculation.

The new process would ease reporting and expand possible uses of our ARPA funds.

Bill thought that our value as a committee is as community representatives asking the “should we” question. That is still important, and he feels we can listen and do legwork for the Selectboard and make a more informed recommendation for them.

Martha discussed potentially necessary changes to the rubric. Dave wants accountability for the organizations that are asking for money and the process will help that. Bree and Martha will summarize the new process at the Selectboard’s April 14th meeting.

DISCUSS COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

Bree gave an update on the Communication Union District (CUD). The CUD is a group that would give the town broadband to any home with electrical service. CUD costs \$0 to join and the more

communities that join a CUD the more the CUD can get grants and funding for broadband. You cannot put taxpayer money into a CUD, they operate on grants and loans only, loans are repaid by usage fees. The CUD owns the fiber, but they can sell the service to a third party provider. There are two CUDs in our area, Mark Drapa will be in contact with them. Bree doesn't think this will take a lot of ARPA dollars.

Bree thinks if we use ARPA money beyond the original four categories we should start to think about what input the community has, how we rule things out, what communications are required. She thinks the best way is, as Bill termed it, "listening sessions". Bree also thought we could have an info session regarding what ARPA is, who's on the committee, and what our challenges have been so far. Dave and Martha agreed that we need to stimulate input and information from the public. Martha questions what the timing should be since there are a lot of things up in the air right now.

Bree will publish the same timeline in the March newsletter with an adjusted timeline.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m.