

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
ARPA COMMITTEE MEETING
Draft Minutes
November 2, 2022**

Members Present: Dave Baczewski, Nanette Rogers, Bill Hill, George Lamphere, Greg Barrows, Martha Heath, Bree Drapa,

Also Present: Callie Hamdy (Minute Clerk), Caroline Brown, Glen Rogers, Maura O'Brien, Heather Armata, Pat Haller, Amber Haller, John Doane, Andy Fulton, Ben Bornstein, Seth Jensen

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

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

MINUTES

Martha Heath made a motion to approve the October 20th, 2022 minutes as amended. Greg seconded. Motion passed 7-0.

ADMIN

The next meeting will be November 2nd at 7:00pm at the Town Office.

REVIEW/SCORE/DETERMINE RECOMMENDATION TO THE SELECTBOARD FOR PHASE 2 APPLICATIONS:

Dave went over the process for the presentation of the Phase 2 applications. First the project representative will present and then the Committee members will score the project individually before going over their scoring.

Westford Historical Society

Caroline Brown and Glen Rogers from the Westford Historical Society were present. The project is shovel ready and they have all needed permits. There is some risk. They need to finish their interior work on the upstairs of their new building. They had planned on the Essex Tech Center participating to design space and do cutting signage for the building, but the Historical Society did not feel it was big enough, so they had gone a different direction.

The Town Hall Curtain is from the early 1900's. The Westford Curtain was hanging until the 1980's and was subsequently rolled up and put in the basement of the library. The Historical Society had worked with conservators to re-pad and patch the curtain and it is now stored properly, although is fragile. With the new building they would love a new area set aside to be able to stabilize the curtain which is being done next year.

There needs to be stabilization on the back of the building as well as along Common Road. A lot of water comes down the road and into the property. They need to raise up the level of the landscaping for which they have a permit. They want to install a security camera and alarm system. Their main goal is to be self-sustaining.

George asked about the grants, did they have sufficient information to support that they are formal grants applied for and received? That was correct. They have all receipts and records of where various project grants have gone such as the one to the Brick Meeting House. George asked if the Grants were given with the expectation that the money would have to be paid back? Caroline replied that no, not at the time.

Dave thought there was a legal project with the bridge fund request. ARPA money is not allowed to be spent. It cannot go into a rainy day preservation fund, cannot pay debt, reduce taxes etc. His concern is that some parts of the application hit on the rainy day fund and paying back loans.

Martha feels the fund does not meet the requirement of the one-time purchases the ARPA funds are to be used for. Bill thanked Glen and Caroline for the work they did with their great depth of detail. Dave feels other than the phrasing for the debt and loan language, the application is solid.

Glen and Caroline had a more specific project in mind, cleaning the interior of the covered bridge which had been recently vandalized. They also wanted to look at the Civil War monument and there are a lot of veterans in Westford, and they would like to put up another veteran's monument. Dave would like an estimate of the bridge work before their application goes to the Selectboard.

They have determined that F or 6 is not valid for ARPA funds understanding that there were meaning to use that on specific projects. If those projects are amended they can go forward.

The Committee Scored as below (out of a total potential score of 36):

Dave: 25

Bree: 17

Nanette: 26

George: 25

Greg: 27

Martha: 25

Bill: 27

The Committee voted 77 to conditionally approve the application pending some line items to be more specific in F.

Westford Common Hall

Amber Haller was present from the Westford Common Hall. Their request for the ARPA funding is to make critical upgrades that would help them come a self-sustaining entity. Their aim is to improve the building so it can be of greater use and value to the community.

They are looking to do weatherizing, insulation, storm windows, heat pump system, roof mounted solar panels, new emergency exit, fire alarm system, and video conferencing capability. A large part of their goals include not having to ask for a budget request from the town and become a self-sustaining entity, although supply chain issues to provide some risk to their projects.

Dave commended the WCH from the work they had put in, but a quarter of the operational budget is the heating costs, and he appreciates their honesty about the expense. The arts had helped people a lot through the pandemic. Pat Haller explained that the WCH is more plugged in now. They are involved with the Winter Wear Share, the Westford Halloween Walk, Mittens Across Westford, Turkey Trot, Food Shelf etc. and it speaks to the upcoming transformation of the Hall to becoming a huge asset for the community.

Bill asked if they would consider executing this project and not executing the ADA compliance or are they a packaged deal? They were separate proposals. Dave feels they are linked. Bill was concerned that we have two duplicate purposed buildings asking for a significant chunk of the ARPA money, \$210,000 combined, and he does not understand how they overlap, underlap, fit together, etc. Do we need two of these facilities in town?

John Doane explained that there is a lot of pressure to use the building right now, but right now it needs adequate exiting to support the safety of the occupants. The current doors are not an acceptable public egress.

To address the compatibility between the BMH and the WCH, the WCH is a gathering space for 200 people seated for a presentation at a singular visual point with good acoustics. The BMH is good for 65 people seated without wonderful acoustics but does have a full industrial kitchen. The WCH as a gathering hall as special celebrations or gathering around a singular idea, a singular purpose and it is supported by the functional purpose the BMH provides, food water etc. it also currently has an ADA bathroom.

George asked the solar production, is that sized to match the use or demand? Or is there going to be excess? Pat confirmed there would be excess by 200%. If the town office wanted to net meter with the WCH it would cover 75% of the Town Office electric use in a year.

Bree commended the applications, there is a passion for the iconic buildings in town and she wants to stress the WCH's status is iconic even if you never enter it. She asked about the video conferencing aspect. A lot of their request is capital expenditures. The conferencing aspect seems out of sync with the rest of the application.

George (WCH) mentioned it would have a mounted camera that could see the stage and 85" TV screen. The sound system, which they do a lot of concerts there, would include powered speakers and an audio mixer. It would all be very easy to use for events such as weddings etc. It would allow people to come and give presentations and allow larger meetings than the town office allows to stream live.

Seth Jensen was present. He wanted to say to the question of the two buildings is he thinks there is a possibility of the buildings being complimentary instead of competing. One of the benefits of the WCH compared to the BMH is the set up for presentations as opposed to small group discussions. As somebody that tries to organize public spaces for public meetings having two for one setting could be beneficial. The biggest barrier to the WCH is appropriate indoor heating conditions and presentation ability. It is also difficult to fund those things through historical preservation grants.

The Committee Scored as below (out of a total potential score of 36):

George: 25

Greg: 27

Martha: 25

Dave: 29

Bill: 26

Bree: 25

Nanette: 26

The Committee Voted 6/7 to approve the application as is. Bill was the odd vote out because of the conflict between having two community centers in one small space which conflicted with the Town Plan.

The Westford Common Hall was also looking for funds that would help them begin to increase their ADA Compliance. The building does not currently meet ADA standards. They are hoping the ARPA Funding can help them achieve an interim solution while they work on a permanent solution. This would include a temporary accessible ramp system leading to a covered platform and an emergency exit door which was part of the last proposal. Also included is an ADA portable toilet and the ARPA funds account for renting the bathroom for two years. Also included is designs for a new addition to the building.

Ben Bornstein was present and thought Bill's concerns regarding the two historic buildings was null. He feels Westford is beating itself up for having multiple wonderful historical buildings to use. There is a huge amount of support to maintain the Common and sustain the beauty there. He is hearing a very thought out coverage of the buildings to achieve the town's goal of getting them out the budget. If they can both do that that will be great.

Seth Jensen was present. He wanted to add that accessibility is not just a benefit to those that need specific accessibility improvements because it means every member of the community can participate in community life and we all benefit when that is the case. He encourages to think about other barriers in other physical spaces in the town and work to make them more accessible as well.

The Committee Scored as below (out of a total potential score of 36):

George: 26

Greg: 27

Martha: 27

Dave: 23

Bill: 23

Bree: 28

Nanette: 25

The Committee Voted 7/7 to approve the application as is.

Brick Meeting House Society

The BMHS was requesting ARPA monies for front and rear entrance improvements. The two entrances need some attention to be a fully functioning exit for gatherings of people. The front entry is where the ramp comes up and the floor inside the vestibule needs some help to remain fully functional for wheelchairs etc. That functions with both doors open it is a combination of historic concerns as well as ADA concerns. They would also restore a 1912 entry porch to the back door. This would increase the building use as well as town center vitality.

Bill asked if there were any specific issues with the back door other than getting back into historical standards? Yes they were in violations of safety standards. George asked if the porch would increase revenue? It would help with events where food production is occurring.

The Committee Scored as below (out of a total potential score of 36):

George: 23

Greg: 27

Martha: 27

Dave: 26

Bill: 27

Bree: 24

Nanette: 26

The Committee Voted 7/7 to approve the application as is.

There was a second request for funds from the BMHS. This would provide the BMH opportunity to complete various projects to upgrade the building and make the experience in the BMH more pleasant such as better

heating and cooling. Risks would include supply chain issues. Bill wanted insight on installation and labor costs. Greg could not predict those at the time. Bree thought a lot of the items seemed more an idea versus more project maturity items. George thought they were easy and simple items. It is not quite as involved as some of the other projects put forth. The BMH also explained they have worked on the compatibility of the two buildings on the Common and are confident in its different type of use.

The Committee Scored as below (out of a total potential score of 36):

George: 25

Greg: Recused

Martha: 26

Dave: 25

Bill: 24

Bree: 24

Nanette: 26

The Committee Voted 5/7 to approve the application as is. Greg Recused himself. Bill did not vote to approve for the same reasoning as the Westford Common Hall.

Adjourn: 9:56