

Meeting Minutes

American Rescue Plan Submission Review Committee Meeting Friday, March 25, 2022 | 2:00 PM Remote Participation

[Watch recording here](#)

Meeting Materials Included:

[Committee ARPA Selection Criteria Tool](#)

[Staff ARPA Selection Criteria Tool](#)

[ARPA Summary Sheet](#)

[First Round of ARPA Proposals](#)

[ARPA Proposal Attachments](#)

Committee Members Present:

Miriam Aschkenasy (Co-Chair), John VanScoyoc (Co-Chair), Arthur Conquest, Jennifer Raitt, Brian Kane

Staff Present:

Melissa Goff, Tyler Belisle-Toler

Vote on Minutes from March 18th, 2022 Meeting:

On motion, it was voted to approve the meeting minutes from March 18, 2022.

Aye: Miriam Aschkenasy, John VanScoyoc, Arthur Conquest, Jennifer Raitt, Brian Kane

Review Total Requests by Town Spending Categories (Buckets):

- Tyler Belisle-Toler, the budget analyst and grant administrator, presented an executive summary of the total ARPA requests received and the breakdown of requests into the four buckets. He also mentioned there are some overlaps in buckets depending on the proposal. The town received 86 proposals totaling \$164,112,339. The breakdown is:
 - **Government Operations/Capital:** 40 proposals totaling \$80,403,799 (49 percent of all requested funding)
 - **Vulnerable Populations:** 23 proposals totaling \$60,502,198 (37 percent of all requested funding)
 - **Economic Recovery:** 17 proposals totaling \$11,437,387 (7 percent of all requested funding)
 - **Technology and Infrastructure:** 6 proposals totaling \$11,768,955 (7 percent of all requested funding)

Review Scoring Sheets:

- Each committee member individually shared their thoughts/concerns on the scoring process so far:
 - Co-Chair Miriam Aschkenasy stated the value of the scores to narrow down the list of 80+ proposals into a more manageable size for further review. The process helped elevate proposals she saw as valuable and highlighted other proposals that needed more time for planning that could be more viable in the second round. She also pointed out town department proposals can only get a maximum score of 85 based on how the committee's scoring is done while non-town department proposals could still get a maximum of 100.
 - Jennifer Raitt spoke with the town's Planning & Community Development department to get a better sense of their funding priorities.
 - Arthur Conquest was concerned with some of the community-based proposals. He also agreed with co-chair Aschkenasy on current proposals having an opportunity to improve to be stronger contenders for the second round of funding.
 - Co-chair John VanScoyoc stated it was a valuable exercise to be introduced to the proposals, but most of the scores were in a narrow range.
 - Brian Kane spoke with the town's Department of Public Works to get a better sense of their funding priorities.

Proposal Discussion:

- Melissa Goff, the deputy town administrator, discussed the topic of several ARPA proposals including vehicle requests. Due to the loss in revenue from the pandemic, the town focused on cutting equipment costs from departmental budgets rather than payroll.
- Co-chair Aschkenasy explained that proposals that are low cost with a far reach, do not add personnel to the town's operating budget, and can leverage other funding sources are more preferred.
- Brian Kane mentioned the premium pay program being implemented by the state and asked if the town has considered supporting a similar program. Melissa Goff replied that the Select Board would first need to determine whether they want a premium pay program before the town explores how implementation would be carried out.
 - The committee decided to remove any premium pay proposals from the discussion.

Highlight Initial Top 5-8 Proposals from Each Committee Member:

- Committee members will bring a list of their top 10 proposals/priorities to the next meeting on Friday, April 1st.

Public Comments:

- Mary Sabolsi asked for clarification on the intent of ARPA, specifically whether it is to fix the town's budget shortfalls or to help individuals and communities that have been impacted by COVID-19.
 - Co-chair Aschkenasy clarified ARPA is intended to address both issues with an emphasis on the community.
- Judy Katz spoke on the differences between the staff and committee scoring criteria. Judy was concerned about averaging the scores since both weigh different criteria.
 - Co-chair Aschkenasy clarified the average calculated during the meeting was just to easily sort the proposals for viewing. She added the scores are still being looked at individually.

Announcements:

- The committee is not going to consider premium pay for the first round given the timing of the state's announcement on a premium pay program. Depending on the outcomes of that program, the town administrator and Select Board will reevaluate a town-wide premium pay program in the second round.
- Co-chair Aschkenasy asked the public to not email committee members to change the scores. She reiterated the fact that scores are just a guide to start a conversation on the proposals.
- The public hearing is scheduled for Monday, April 11th from 7 PM to 9 PM. Each speaker will have 90 seconds. Anybody who is unable to attend may submit their comment to the ARPAREview@brooklinema.gov email to be read aloud during the hearing.