

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL

Held on Monday, August 30, 2021

DISCUSSION: Update Concerning the Allocation/Spending of American Relief Plan Act Funds (Federal Aid)

Mayor Byrd started the meeting at 8:00 pm. The meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

In attendance were: Councilmembers Judith F. Davis, Leta M. Mach, Emmett V. Jordan, Silke I. Pope, Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, and Mayor Colin A. Byrd.

Staff present were: Nicole Ard, City Manager; Tim George, Assistant City Manager; Bertha Gaymon, City Treasurer; Terri Hruby, Planning and Community Development Director; Charise Liggins, Economic Development Coordinator; Greg Varda, Recreation Director; Brian Townsend, Assistant Director Public Works; Dr. Liz Park, CARES Director; Chondria Andrews, Public Information Coordinator; and Bonita Anderson, City Clerk.

Mayor Byrd started the meeting with introductions. (Time not recorded). Mr. George presented key points from the memo regarding eligible uses of funds. These included:

- supporting public health expenditures
- addressing negative economic impacts caused by Covid-19
- replacing lost public sector revenue
- providing premium pay to essential workers
- and investing in water
- sewer and broadband infrastructure.

He also noted that ineligible uses include offsetting reductions in net tax revenue resulting from changes in law effective March 3, 2021.

- funding of pension funds;
- debt service;
- legal settlements or judgments; or
- depositing to financial reserves.

Ms. Gaymon calculated that the City's lost revenue up to December 2020 amounted to \$2.2 million. This loss was primarily due to service cutbacks resulting from Covid-19 and the closure of facilities. She plans to reassess the total lost revenue in December 2021.

Mr. Putens discussed the necessity of outlining how the funds will be allocated. He emphasized that the upcoming memo would define the allocation designations and urged the City to be cautious in its spending.

Mr. Jordan mentioned that the City is considering a partnership with other municipalities and the County to hire navigators and temporary personnel to assist with rental assistance.

Ms. Pope expressed her gratitude to the staff for providing a detailed document regarding the effective use of the \$22,881,666.47 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. She noted that the Council would hold a series of work sessions to discuss the distribution of these funds.

Ms. Davis requested that staff outline the next steps for immediate funding assistance for renters and businesses, adding this topic to the agenda for the next Council action.

Mr. George noted that staff recommends the immediate use of funds, mainly around rental and business assistance. The suggested amount for each to be set aside is \$500,000, dispersed through the City and Greenbelt CARES. Additionally, \$125,000 is suggested for other immediate uses. This represents 5% of the total ARPA funding.

Ms. Liggins stated that Greenbelt businesses continue to struggle. She noted that this second round of business assistance now includes nonprofit organizations and an expanded list of expenses such as rent, utilities, advertising, employee hiring and recruitment, employee training and onboarding, personal protective equipment, and outdoor space build-out or expansion. Ms. Liggins noted that the details of the business recovery plan still await development before final council approval. However, she stated that certain ideas are being discussed by staff, like a \$20,000 grant total and the ability for businesses to apply again for city assistance.

Dr. Park explained that the rental assistance program is exclusively for Greenbelt residents who have experienced hardship due to the pandemic. She mentioned that it might be possible for residents to apply again, with a total cap of \$10,000 set for assistance. For instance, if someone received \$5,000 previously, they would be eligible for an additional \$5,000. Residents will need to decide whether to use city or county funds for assistance.

Dr. Park reported that Greenbelt CARES has distributed \$400,000.00 serving 98% of the applicants. She also indicated that the City will be providing mortgage assistance. Additionally, Dr. Park stated that the City is waiting for the guidelines from the State's Homeowner Assistance Fund to develop its program, as this will provide an effective framework. Councilmember Jordan stated that another need for residents would be help with Homeowners' Association and Condominium fees.

Mr. Putens inquired if someone owns more than one business and if there is a cap on the amount they can receive individually or as a whole. He also asked if there would be a relief for the penalties a homeowner incurs if they cannot pay their property taxes on time. Mr. Putens suggested a revolving business fund, allowing businesses to repay loans into a continuous pool. Mr. George noted that the 2024 spending deadline might make this problematic but will look into loans for the business community.

Mr. Roberts suggests the need for recreational facilities in Greenbelt West. Mayor Byrd inquired if the staff had considered increasing the hourly rate for part-time employees to minimum wage based on a request from an Aquatic and Fitness Center employee and their interaction with the public. Ms. Gaymon noted that the information had been submitted to Mr. Varda for review. Ms. Davis indicated that if the compensation study were done, it would remediate some of the pay issues. Ms. Gaymon stated that the staff is finalizing the compensation study request for proposals. There was a discussion that the next few months would involve a series of community engagement forums and work sessions, culminating in a final vote on the ARPA Implementation Plan in January. Several informational items were discussed.

The meeting ended at 10:37 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonita Anderson

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City Clerk