

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL, on Monday, December 6, 2021

**Discussion: (ARPA) American Rescue Plan Act Community Engagement Plan**

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:00 pm., held virtually via Zoom.

In attendance were Councilmembers Colin A. Byrd, Judith F. Davis, Brandon R. Gordon, Silke I. Pope, Rodney M. Roberts, Kristen L. K. Weaver, and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

City Staff were Tim George, Acting City Manager, Bertha Gaymon, City Treasurer, Rick Bowers, Police Chief, Greg Varda, Recreation Director, Charise Liggins, Economic Development Coordinator, Chondria Andrews, Public Information Coordinator, James Wisniewski, Public Information Specialist, Scott Crawford, Video Producer, Anne Marie Belton, Executive Associate, and Bonita Anderson, City Clerk.

Others present were Michelle Ferguson, Raftelis, Bill Orleans, Debbie McKinney, and others

**Introduction by Mayor Jordon**

Mayor Jordon commenced the meeting by discussing the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), focusing on the engagement plan for the \$22 million received from the federal government for relief efforts. He emphasized the importance of community input in determining how these funds will be spent.

**Community Engagement Plan**

The City staff has developed a comprehensive community engagement plan to gather public input regarding the allocation of the ARPA funds. Mayor Jordon outlined a timeline for the plan and stressed the use of a new design for community input, incorporating questions from residents.

**Zoom Security Enhancements**

To improve meeting security and eliminate disruptions, Mayor Jordon introduced new security features for Zoom sessions, addressing issues like Zoom bombing. He provided instructions for public attendees on how to participate effectively during the meeting.

**Presentation by Michelle Ferguson**

Michelle Ferguson representative of Raftelis presented the City of Greenbelt's Community Engagement Plan (GCEP), detailing the allocation of COVID-19 relief funds and the objectives set by the federal government.

**Funding Overview**

The total amount allocated to Maryland from the federal funds is \$362 million, with Greenbelt receiving \$22 million. Half of this amount has already been distributed, with specific guidelines on how funds can be used, including support for public health and economic stabilization.

**Eligible Uses of Funds**

The presentation highlighted eligible uses for the funds, including public health responses,

addressing negative economic impacts, and improving infrastructure. Specific areas like premium pay for essential workers and broadband infrastructure were also discussed.

### **Ineligible Uses of Funds**

Mayor Jordon clarified that funds cannot be used to reduce net revenue or cover debt service, stressing the importance of adhering to federal guidelines.

### **Community Engagement Goals**

The GCEP aims to provide multiple opportunities for residents to share their experiences during the pandemic, learn about ARPA, ideate on funding allocation, and submit specific proposals.

### **Decision-Making Authority**

Final decisions regarding fund allocation will be made by the City Council, ensuring that community feedback is incorporated into the decision-making process.

### **Engagement Strategies**

Raftelis recommended various engagement strategies, including virtual meetings, stakeholder focus groups, and community interviews, to ensure broad community participation.

### **Investment Framework**

The investment framework emphasizes strategic fund allocation based on community needs, industry best practices, and evaluation criteria specific to Greenbelt.

### **Recap of Previous Meetings**

Mayor Jordon recapped previous meetings, noting the collaborative effort required for a successful engagement process and the importance of a working document to guide discussions.

### **Action Items and Acknowledgments**

Tim George acknowledged the contributions of the team involved in the engagement process and highlighted the importance of collaboration among city departments.

### **Emergency Allocations Announced**

The council made emergency allocations for eviction relief and mortgage assistance, addressing urgent needs within the community.

### **City Park Construction Inquiry**

Councilmember Roberts asked if building a city park focused on creating a quality environment for children would be permissible. Tim George clarified that areas classified as qualified sensor tracks would have a higher chance of meeting the necessary criteria for funding. West Greenbelt qualifies under this classification, and other areas may also become qualified by reviewing the requirements.

### **Composition of the ARPA Project Team**

Councilmember Davis inquired whether the current ARPA project team would remain the same moving forward. Tim George explained that a senior-level team initially brainstormed ideas before his tenure. The City has since incorporated various departmental groups in project

development, with some original team members continuing to refine the project list.

#### **Use of Funds for Old Debt**

Councilmember Davis asked if ARPA funds could be allocated to cover old debt. Tim George provided clarification, stating that the City could consult with state guidance and a hired consultant to determine eligibility for various expenditures. He emphasized that the funds are primarily intended for COVID-19 relief and related projects, such as parks and playgrounds.

#### **Business Recovery Fund Allocation**

Councilmember Weaver referenced a memo about the business and improvement recovery fund, questioning the allocation of these funds. Tim George confirmed that the Council allocated \$500,000 for business recovery, with numerous applicants in the pipeline. Charise Liggins added that applications would be processed on a rolling basis, with a goal to launch by early October and disburse funds shortly thereafter.

#### **Follow-Up Reports on Fund Allocation**

Councilmember Gordon asked about the reporting process for how allocated funds would be spent. Tim George affirmed that there will be two reporting levels: one for project impact and one for quarterly financial updates. While a report wasn't initially required for October 2020, it has been pushed to April. The City must commit funds by 2024, with a spending deadline of 2022, and long-term projects may request extensions.

#### **Premium Pay for Social Workers**

Councilmember Gordon also questioned the possibility of increasing premium pay for social workers. Tim George explained that ARPA funds could address this issue, helping to cover new positions, police officers, and potential furloughs. He cautioned against using designated funds for raises or bonuses and specified that hazardous pay should be reserved for essential workers, fire departments, and public works employees.

#### **Future Considerations**

Council members discussed potential projects that could benefit from ARPA funding, including broadband infrastructure, environmental initiatives, and support for local businesses.

#### **Final Remarks from Mayor Jordon**

The Mayor concluded the meeting by reiterating the importance of community feedback in the allocation process and the need for responsible use of funds to address COVID-19 impacts.

The meeting ended at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonita Anderson,  
City Clerk