

A recording of the meeting can be found at:

[BOS /BOF/ RTM 7-19-2021 American Rescue Plan Act Allocations - YouTube](#)

**Special Joint Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and Representative Town Meeting
American Rescue Plan Act Project Funding Virtual Workshop**

Monday, July 19, 2021

5:30 pm

Fairfield, CT

Via Zoom

FINAL MINUTES

A special joint BOS, BOF and RTM workshop was held virtually via Zoom on Monday, July 19, 2021 at 5:30 pm in Fairfield, Connecticut.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

BOS: First Selectwoman Brenda Kupchick, Selectman Tom Flynn, Selectwoman Nancy Lefkowitz

BOF: Jim Brown, Jim Walsh, Lori Charlton, David Fogel, Sheila Marmion, John Mitola, Chris DeWitt, Mary LeClerc, Jack Testani

RTM: D1 – Amy Ruggiero, D2 – Bill Gerber, Karen McCormack, D3 – Alex Durrell, Matt Jacobs, Scott Nickel, Sharon Pistilli, D4 – Alice Kelly, Meredith Odinak, Marcy Spolyar, D5 – Josh Garskof, Jay Wolk, D7 – Mark McDermott, Jill Vergara, Karen Wackerman, D8 – Hank Ference, Pamela Iacono, Christine Messina, D9 – Rick Grauer, Crissy Kelly, Bill Perugini, D10 – Peter Britton, Kimberly Grant

OTHERS PRESENT: Human and Social Services Director Julie DeMarco, Plan and Zoning Director Jim Wendt, Community and Economic Development Director Mark Barnhart, Executive Director of Operations for BOE Angelus Papageorge, Parks and Recreation Director Anthony Calabrese, Engineering Manager Bill Hurley, Fire Chief Denis McCarthy, Police Chief Robert Kalamaras, Deputy Police Chief John Bucherati, Information Technology Director David Kelley, DPW Director John Marsilio, BOE Chair Christine Vitale, BOE Vice-Chair Nick Aysseh, Carla Miklos of Operation Hope, Alan Mathis and Cary Ostrow of Lifebridge Community Services, Kate Czaplinski and Michael Patota of The Child & Family Guidance Center, Mike Jehle of Fairfield Museum and History Center, Flood and Erosion Control Board Chair Becky Bunnell, FairTV and residents George Talbot and Dylan O'Connor.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

BOF: Jim Brown, Jim Walsh

RTM: D1 – Ed Bateson, Veronica Monahan, Amy O'Shea, D2 – Cynthia Perham, Jeff Steele, D4 – Laura Karson, D5 – Will Diaz, Joe Siebert, D6 – Matthew Ambrose, Tameisha Powell-Dunmore, Hannah Gale, Lisa Havey, D7 – Lauren Bishop Bove, D8 – Peter Tallman, D9 – Dru Mercer Georgiadis, D10 – Elizabeth Altobelli, Frank Petise

1. Call to Order- First Selectwoman Kupchick called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. To Hear a Presentation from Administration, Review and Discuss Projects and Funding as Related to the American Rescue Plan Act Funding Allocation for the Town of Fairfield

First Selectwoman Kupchick opened the presentation by expressing her excitement about the Town of Fairfield receiving \$24.8 million. She said she and her Administration went through the Town's Waterfall Chart and also contacted other Towns to see how they are planning to use ARPA funding. First Selectwoman Kupchick said ARPA projects need to be shovel-ready, completed within the timeline established by Federal guidelines and should touch a wide percentage of our community in different ways so the majority of residents get some benefit from this funding. She said some residents wrote in with ideas, but some ideas have not been fully vetted, nor had studies performed for them or are not shovel ready. She said funding can apply to costs incurred starting March 3, 2021, the eligible date for costs must be incurred by December 31, 2024 and funding must be spent by December 31, 2026. First Selectwoman Kupchick said based on the formula provided by the Treasury, Fairfield's revenue loss due to COVID in calendar year 2020 was \$13.6 million which will be applied to the first year of the grant. She said there will be a new calculation at the end of calendar year 2021.

First Selectwoman Kupchick presented a PowerPoint of proposed projects which are listed under the following areas of focus: Mental Health & Social Services; Economic Development; Public Safety; Environment; Quality of Life: Recreation, Arts and Culture; and Town Modernization & Infrastructure.

Mental Health & Social Services:

- COVID-19 Recovery Funds- \$200,000
- LifeBridge Community Services - \$150,000
- The Child Family & Guidance Center- \$150,000
- Operation Hope - \$150,000

Human and Social Services Director Julie DeMarco discussed funding for a COVID-19 Recovery Fund which would replace the current COVID-19 Relief Fund. She also reviewed funding for three local non-profits – LifeBridge, Child Family and Guidance and Operation Hope.

Economic Development:

- Plan of Conservation and Development Zoning Regulation Review - \$175,000

Community and Economic Development Director Mark Barnhart discussed performing a comprehensive review of land use policies since an update hasn't been done in 30 years.

- Downtown Resiliency Project with Permeable Surfacing - \$1,420,000

Mr. Barnhart also discussed providing infrastructure to support business growth especially given the increase in severe weather events. He stressed this could help make the downtown area more resilient. Mr. Barnhart said "green" infrastructure would be implemented to mitigate flooding by decreasing runoff and peak flows. He said "green" infrastructure will help lessen the severity and frequency of flooding.

Public Safety:

- Body Cameras, Dashboard Cameras and Tasers - \$3,700,000

Police Chief Robert Kalamaras said there are legislative changes related to police accountability, transparency and training surrounding empathy and use of force. He discussed the benefits of body and dashboard cameras which will be a one-time bundle purchased together that will last 10 years.

- Perry's Green Bulkhead - \$1 million

Engineering Manager Bill Hurley discussed the importance of the Perry's Green bulkhead which is on the capital improvements list. He said Perry's Green bulkhead is located at Perry's Green at Southport Harbor. He said the bulkhead is estimated to be 55 years old and has deteriorated beyond repair. He said a new bulkhead will improve safety for the park and for visitors.

- Town Wide Guardrail and Fence Improvements - \$200,000

Mr. Hurley also discussed guardrail and fence improvement and replacement for pedestrian safety.

- Firehouse Renovations - \$500,000

Fire Chief Denis McCarthy said the department is in year two of a multi-year plan to renovate interior spaces at the Reef Road and Jennings Road firehouses.

Environment; Quality of Life: Recreation, Arts and Culture:

- Fill Pile Remediation - \$1 million

First Selectwoman Kupchick said \$1 million should be put toward the costs of the fill pile remediation. She said the Town has already spent millions of dollars and will need to spend a lot more than that to address the numerous issues that are being worked on regarding the fill pile.

- Electric/Hybrid Vehicles - \$940,000

First Selectwoman Kupchick said there are 29 Town fleet vehicles that are old and require continual maintenance. She noted that the Sustainable Fairfield Task Force sent a letter to her of items to support and their number one item is replacing the Town's fleet with electric or hybrid vehicles and would include the installation of charging stations.

- Burr Historical Gardens - \$25,000

First Selectwoman Kupchick said the Burr Gardens are located behind the Burr Homestead and Independence Hall and need improvements. She said the Burr Gardens Advisory Committee will also fundraise to match funds.

- Rooster River Detention Area - \$3,250,000

First Selectwoman Kupchick said this has been a long-standing issue with the Town as well as Trumbull and Bridgeport. She said there was significant flooding in 2006, 2007 and 2018 that had significant impacts on homeowners. Mr. Hurley said this plan will reduce the frequency of flooding within the Rooster River Watershed. He said it will also benefit homeowners in the flood area. Mr. Hurley said the City of Bridgeport is working with Fairfield on these improvements.

- Playground Renovations and Upgrades - \$923,000

First Selectwoman Kupchick said this would be a benefit to many children. Parks and Recreation Director Anthony Calabrese said some of the Town's playgrounds are old and outdated and shovel-ready. He said some of the most in need of fixing or replacing are ones located at Tunxis Hill, Melville Park, Lincoln Park and Dover Park.

- Jennings Beach Concession - \$100,000

Mr. Calabrese said this would be a "facelift" for the kitchen and the lifeguard office at the Town's largest and most populous beach. He said seating for guests would be improved.

- Golf Course Maintenance - \$230,000

Mr. Calabrese said there are three machines that need to be replaced because they are old and require constant fixing.

- Bigelow Senior Center - \$850,000

Ms. DeMarco said this funding for a deck patio will provide seniors with outdoor space for lunches and outdoor activities. She said repairs will be made to handicapped accessible walkways as well. First Selectwoman Kupchick said these improvements will be very beneficial to our seniors.

- ADA Consultant - \$75,000

First Selectwoman Kupchick said this is the best way to help many areas in Town with better accessibility.

- Performance Stage and Public Restrooms - \$450,000

First Selectwoman Kupchick said this funding will be for a permanent stage for performances and activities/events on the Town green for the Town and the Fairfield Museum and History Center. She said these events are currently held on the grass behind the Museum and porta potties are used.

- Sidewalks \$700,000

First Selectwoman Kupchick said this pertains to the Stratfield and Fairfield Woods Roads Four Corners. Mr. Hurley discussed streetscape and pedestrian improvements in the amount of \$450,000. Mr. Hurley also said funding would be used toward the Southport Connectivity Project-ADA-compliant sidewalks, pedestrian ramps, curbs and other pedestrian safety improvements.

Town Modernization & Infrastructure:

- Diversity and Inclusion Consultant - \$75,000

First Selectwoman Kupchick said she is working with the HR Director on this new position that was suggested by the Racial Equity and Justice Task Force.

- HVAC for public schools - \$1,000,000

First Selectwoman Kupchick said this has been an issue for a long time and far out in the Waterfall Chart. She said she spoke to the Superintendent who said the sixth grade wing of FWMS would be shovel-ready. She said the BOE will put funding toward this also. BOE Chair Christine Vitale thanked the First Selectwoman for including this in the project proposals. BOE Director of Operations Angelus Papageorge said he was asked to look at different areas that are shovel-ready and FWMS will help the school district bring this school up to the standards of the other middle schools. He said this is only a portion of the project cost.

- Town and BOE Fiber Optic Network - \$2,700,000

First Selectwoman Kupchick said current costs are \$341,673 per year and putting ARPA funding toward this would take pressure off the operating budget. IT Director Dave Kelley said the Town would buy and not lease this network.

- Paving - \$3 million

First Selectwoman Kupchick said there is already a town-wide evaluation taking place now assessing roads and sidewalks. She noted the Town is behind in paving.

- Traffic Lights - \$1 million

First Selectwoman Kupchick said the interim DPW Director said the Town's traffic lights are outdated. She said this will be the first part of a multi-phase project to update traffic lights that will help safety and traffic in Town.

- Hybrid Town Meetings - \$400,000

First Selectwoman Kupchick said she wants to upgrade live stream meetings to allow board members and public participation in person and virtually. She said she heard from other elected officials on how participating virtually was helpful when they were traveling and so forth.

At the conclusion of the presentation, First Selectwoman Kupchick said the backup shows the list of all the items, their cost, if they have been on a capital plan list and already approved by Town bodies. She encouraged the public to email members on the three boards. She said there will be a vote in September.

First Selectwoman Kupchick then opened the meeting up for questions, first from the three boards and then the public.

BOF member John Mitola asked if the \$150,000 will be one-time contribution to Operation Hope. First Selectwoman Kupchick said it was made clear to the non-profits that this is a one-time cost.

RTM member Sharon Pistilli thanked First Selectwoman Kupchick for her presentation. She asked Mr. Papageorge and Ms. Vitale if there are additional HVAC projects ready to go because of the rising temperatures and she said ventilation in schools where there isn't air conditioning is grossly inadequate. Mr. Papageorge said the BOE is currently working with an engineering firm to evaluate all schools regarding indoor air quality so priorities can be established and costs can be put on the Waterfall Chart.

RTM Moderator Karen Wackerman thanked the First Selectwoman and Administration noting she could tell a lot of work and thought went into this. She asked how the amount for the body and dashboard cameras and Tasers was derived. Deputy Chief John Bucherati said there's a package with funding being spent over ten years. Chief Kalamaras said this is a one-time cost because it's being bought in a bundle and this would replace Tasers requested in the budget. He said the company will provide an ongoing contract with services for 10 years.

RTM member Meredith Odinak asked where the \$75,000 number came from for the proposed Diversity and Inclusion Consultant. She asked if there is any consideration of adding a full-time position in HR and creating a budget for this person to use. First Selectwoman Kupchick said this is a typical and best estimate for a consultant and a good place to start. She said regarding this being more long-term, this is about recovery funding and she hasn't received recommendations from the Racial Justice and Equity Task Force yet and will be building the budget late fall for next year.

RTM member Jay Wolk asked how the Town will use the proposed funding for the Rooster River flooding. First Selectwoman Kupchick said alleviating flooding from the Rooster River has been on the Waterfall and this is the first phase. Mr. Hurley further explained how funding would be used to alleviate funding. Mr. Wolk asked Mr. Hurley how the Town will make sure the drains are kept clean. Mr. Hurley said the Town has been conducting a public awareness campaign.

BOF member Lori Charlton thanked the First Selectwoman and team for presentation and all work that went into it. She asked if the proposed amount for paving is meant to be incremental to a normal amount of a paving budget that will be included in an operating budget or will this reduce operating costs and therefore result in a cliff in future budgets. First Selectwoman Kupchick said this is a catch-up and cliffs shouldn't be included in the budget. Ms. Charlton asked about the electric vehicles and if there was an analysis performed to see if the Town needs this many vehicles. She said she would like to see a more wholesome analysis of needs. First Selectwoman Kupchick said an analysis was performed.

RTM member Bill Gerber asked if funding for three of the non-profits will be placed in the budget book for annual funding. First Selectwoman Kupchick said it is a one-time funding cost. He asked who will administer the COVID Recovery Fund and how guidelines are set up for this. Ms. DeMarco said it would be set up like the existing COVID Relief Fund. Mr. Gerber also said a lot more needs to be done about installing HVAC in all the schools.

First Selectwoman Kupchick said she knows parents have had concerns for a long time with HVAC and that is why she put this on this list. Mr. Gerber said the school administration should have put in more funding for HVAC.

RTM member Jill Vergara said she agrees with Ms. Pistilli and Mr. Gerber on how important HVAC is in schools. Mr. Papageorge said he would obtain the percentage of air conditioning schools have and send that information to the Town boards. Ms. Vergara asked for an audit on the Town's facilities. First Selectwoman Kupchick said any projects not approved on this list can be considered at the Capital Plan Workshop. Ms. Vergara said she'd like to see \$1 million added to the list for the Coast Resiliency Fund. First Selectwoman Kupchick said she spoke to Mr. Hurley extensively and this is not shovel-ready and it wouldn't meet the criteria.

RTM member Marcy Spolyar asked how the Town delineates what project gets funding for the first year of federal funding it will get versus the second year of funding it will get. First Selectwoman Kupchick said none of these projects were broken up by which year. She said some projects will be ready to go in the first year and others will take a bit more time. Ms. Spolyar asked if the proposed ARPA funding is in addition to the \$100,000 the Town had previously committed to for the Stratfield Four Corners project. First Selectwoman said this funding is in addition to the \$100,000 the Town had committed. Ms. Spolyar also asked if sidewalk evaluations will be performed for only current sidewalks or for possible new ones too. First Selectwoman Kupchick said everything will be evaluated – current and possible new sidewalks.

BOF member Jack Testani thanked the Administration for all its efforts on this list as well as the good work of the police and first responders. He asked if some of the body cams or Tasers are eligible for grants because if they are, the reimbursed funds could be used for other police department needs. Deputy Police Chief Bucherati said the department has used grants in the past for this equipment, but it's less expensive to use ARPA funds. He said he doesn't believe the department would be eligible for a second grant.

RTM member Rick Grauer asked what material is being proposed for the new Perry Green bulkhead. First Selectwoman Kupchick said this has to be determined by a consultant. Mr. Grauer also asked if the Town will still pass down old police cars for other town employees to use. First Selectwoman Kupchick said the Town will replace those vehicles that are really needed with energy efficient vehicles. Mr. Grauer also asked if the Jennings Beach concession will be FEMA compliant. First Selectwoman Kupchick said just a facelift for the outside of the concession will be performed along with lifeguard office improvements and sunshade for people. Mr. Calabrese believes the Town is under the number. Mr. Grauer asked about maintenance of the fiber optic network. First Selectwoman Kupchick said there's a maintenance contract with this.

RTM member Hank Ference thanked First Selectwoman Kupchick, her staff and Department Heads for this comprehensive list of projects which he said will benefit citizens.

RTM member Bill Perugini said he's a huge proponent of the Flood and Erosion Control Board's Coast Resiliency Fund. He said the flood plain, some town infrastructure and homes still remain very vulnerable. He asked what other projects are currently in the works to potentially qualify for funding to mitigate funding. Mr. Hurley said the Town is always looking for grant money. He said he has been working with the Flood and Erosion Control Board and is aware of its list.

Mr. Hurley discussed capital projects to alleviate flooding. He noted some of the projects he mentioned aren't on the proposed ARPA list because of their timeline. First Selectwoman Kupchick told Mr. Perugini the Town can look into other funding sources to help alleviate flooding.

4. Public Comment

Resident George Talbot said he sent town bodies an email about a South Benson pumping station project. He said he spoke to neighbors who lived in the beach area during Superstorm Sandy and they told him the bowl that doesn't have an outlet at Fairfield Beach Road to the Sound anymore caused extreme flooding and residents couldn't get to their homes for 10 days. Mr. Talbot said he is concerned when water will come over the beach dunes. He referenced the implementation of drainage plans that was recommended in a study performed after Superstorm Sandy that was completed in 2018 and said he hopes the Town will study this so the water won't just sit. First Selectwoman Kupchick highly suggested Mr. Talbot speak to Mr. Hurley more about this.

Resident Dylan O'Connor said he is the Co-President of the Stratfield Village Association (SVA). He said the SVA is asking that \$300,000 be spent on a streetscape project the SVA has been working on for years with the Town to make improvements at the intersection of Fairfield Woods and Stratfield Roads. He mentioned ornamental lighting and making this area consistent with the downtown area.

Resident Becky Bunnell spoke as Chair of the Flood and Erosion Control Board. She said she understands that a Coast Resiliency Fund is not applicable for ARPA funding, but she encourage \$1 million of ARPA funding be used for studies so the Town can apply for federal disaster relief grants to become more resilient. She offered to work with the engineering department. Speaking as a member of the Sustainable Fairfield Task Force, Ms. Bunnell said she'd like to see the Town match funds for a home energy audit program especially for lower income and senior residents to help reduce their energy bills and be more energy efficient.

First Selectwoman Kupchick said this is not the end of the discussion. She said she wants feedback from elected officials and the public. She said she is happy to discuss the items on the list and to hear from the community on what items they would like to see added or removed. She concluded by saying the Administration and department heads are here to listen.

5. Adjournment

First Selectwoman Kupchick thanked everyone for their participation and ended the meeting at 7:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Pru O'Brien
Recording Secretary