



Town of Paxton
697 Pleasant Street
Paxton, MA 01612

American Rescue Plan Act Committee Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 11, 2022

Meeting Location: John Bauer Senior Center 17 West Street, Paxton, MA 01612

Joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen

- Members present from ARPA Committee: Jeff Olson, Larissa Kennedy, Travis Thibault, Heather Munroe, Julia Pingitore.
- Members absent from ARPA Committee: Mark Savasta and Cindy Love.
- Members present from the Board of Selectmen: Julia Pingitore, Kirk Huehls, Carol Riches
- **Motion (TT) seconded (JO) to open the meeting for the ARPA Committee at 7:00pm. Unanimous, all-in favor.**
- **(JP)** Asked the following attendees to come forward for discussion - Mark Love, Neil Bagdis, Jeffrey Kent, Jeremy Richard.
- **(JP)** We received an email from Mark Love with area of discussion for tonight. We have set an hour on the agenda for this topic. Please keep comments brief. All discussion happens through the chair. Not here to second guess any decisions that were made with any particular committees we are just focusing on discussion that is productive.
- **Mark Love**, None of us are here in our official committee position but as residents of the Town. We were hearing that there were a lot of questions, rumors, misinformation, conflict etc. concerning ARPA. Here to present a list of recommendations and suggestions for things to come in the future. The ARPA committee should have been made up of members of the community at large and more sensitive of diversity. I advocated for someone on the Finance Committee to be on ARPA but was told that was not possible. A member of the Select Board is also a member of the ARPA Committee. How is that was allowed to happen. That is in conflict with Mass General Law Chapter 268A Section 21a regrading municipal members on a board.
- **(JP)** This is an advisory committee and that is why we are allowed to appoint a Select Board member to ARPA.
- **Mark Love**, The ARPA meetings are held at 10am on a weekday. Having it at that time took the working public out of play.
- **(JP)** They are held at this time to help accommodate the schedule of the current members. If there is a quorum of the committee members that can meet at night then we can attempt to do that.
- **Neil Bagdis**, Why such the rush to get things done when you have until December 2024 to earmark projects and until December 2025 to spend it.
- **(JP)** Actually I think we have until December 2023 to earmarked projects and it needs to be spent by December 2024. It was suggested that we not waste time using the money because it was intended to be a relief to the public. The intent was to spend the money so that in turn you would employ people to do the work. For example, the ramp at COA.

You have to hire someone to do the work and then you stimulate the economy. Get out and get the money spent.

- **Neil Bagdis**, Premium pay what happened to that?
- **(JP)** The ARPA Committee was conflicted with this item, so we did not discuss it and we put it to the Select Board. At the same time the Governor was looking to do something with premium pay so we waited. The premium pay was really intended for lower income individuals.
- **Mark Love**, The fire truck which went before ARPA on March 1st was only reference as a new project on the agenda which is vague when you consider its about half the funds that we received for ARPA. I think several people would have wanted to attend that.
- **(JP)** I appreciate your opinion and that decision was not made at that meeting the decision was made at the Select Board meeting and the public was invited to that. I don't think there was any prejudice there.
- **Mark Love**, The ARPA Committee did vote unanimous including yourself.
- **(JP)** I recused myself.
- **Mark Love**, The minutes said unanimous.
- **(JP)** Do any ARPA Committee members remember me recusing myself?
- All present members said yes.
- **Travis Thibault**, It was a common practice to put new projects as a topic on the agenda.
- **Mark Love**, Advocating for the fire truck when at the same time there were two other projects that went to a ballot questions. That was not a transparent exchange.
- **(HM)** The interest alone for the fire truck would have been an additional \$10.80 a year for a ten-year loan duration.
- **(JP)** The decision has been made the contract has been signed and we cannot go back.
- **Mark Love**, – we are in favor of the fire truck but disagree how the method to fund it occurred. We have tree issues, road issues, water issues. Now we do not have 750,000 to take care of these things. We have all of those that we cannot pay for but we will have a fire truck
- **(JP)** We are taking care of tree and storm water with ARPA funds as well. Smaller projects do not carry saving like the fire truck will. The hard task is how do you use that money the best way we can. We put it out to the public and we did get suggestions from the residents including yourself. We did a lot of great things with this money. Any amount under ten million could be used for capital items. When ARPA first started meeting the thought of the fire truck came up and I said no at that time but when ARPA regulations were changed and now communities could spend funds on capital items so then I changed my opinion.
- **Neil Bagdis**, There has been discussion about the security camera for the school and now it appears we will need more than the \$50,000 that was voted on.
- **(HM)** We are still currently try to work within the \$50,000.
- **(JP)** Security cameras were approved by Capital Improvement and then the town meeting voted it in. The security cameras came to ARPA and we asked for more information. We received no further information. When it went to capital so we figured that Capital had received more information than APRA did.
- **Mark Love**, In regard to the fire truck there were questions of misinformation and rumors that this may have been funded by APRA because it might have been defeated by the town residents. It was commented that the ARPA funds were the only way we would get the fire truck.
- **(JP)** That is why we moved the fire truck forward, called order to the meeting at this point, move forward with recommendations.

- **Mark Love**, Presented a list of suggestions and recommendations for the ARPA Committee moving forward.
 - Fire truck
 - ARPA committee past
 - ARPA committee future
 - ARPA committee meetings
 - Capital Improvement planning committee
 - Department of revenue, division of local services

- **(JP)** Thank you we will take it under advisement.
- **(HM)** In calculating the cost of the Fire truck and interest it would total \$928,537 which translates to \$51.45 per year to the median household for a ten-year loan.
- **(JP)** The decisions were made by a three person Select Board that was voted by the public.
- **Jeremy Richard**, Clarified the deadline for the ARPA projects is to earmark projects by December of 2024 and spent the funds by December 2026.
- **Jeffrey Kent**, Tonight, I am here not because I disagree with ARPA but because the CIPC bylaw was violated because ARPA did not include members of the public, Finance Committee or Capital Improvement Committee and was not held at a time that was conducive to the public. You need to set a path going forward to regain the trust and confidence in our elected officials.
- **Motion (JO) seconded (HM) to adjourn the ARPA Committee portion of the meeting at 8:03pm. Unanimous, all in favor.**

Respectfully submitted,

Larissa Kennedy,
on behalf of the American Rescue Plan Act Committee