



COMMITTEE of the WHOLE

CITY COUNCIL

SUMMARY

March 15, 2022
ARPA Update
5:00 P.M.
Hybrid Meeting

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

D. Reed, J. Cepeda-Freytiz, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, W. Butler, M. Ventura

OTHERS PRESENT:

L. Kelleher, S. Smith, J. Kelly, E. Moran, F. Denbowski, W. Stoudt, A. Anyu (PFM), M. Rodriguez, F. Lachat, M. Oppenheimer, M. Lynch (Reading Eagle), BCTV rep

The meeting was called to order at 5:09 pm by Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz. She announced that Mr. Waltman is excused from this meeting.

I. Council Input on ARPA Documents, including Application

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz noted her hope that Councilors reviewed the documents and would provide comment.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that her biggest concern is with the rating and scoring rubric for applications. She noted the need to ensure applicants understand that this is a competitive process.

Mr. Kelly stated that the applications will be processed as grants. He stated that the rubric was included in the information provided to Council and stated that the Review Committee will use the rubric to evaluate the applications.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz suggested that the application be screen shared for all to review.

Mr. Kelly screen shared the application.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz stated that Mr. Waltman shared some comments and corrections via email.

Ms. Kelleher questioned if Mr. Waltman's suggestions will be integrated into the draft documents. Mr. Kelly stated that he has not received this information from Mr. Waltman. He stated that he will integrate them once they are received.

Mr. Denbowski stated that he will provide Mr. Waltman's suggestions to Mr. Kelly and stated that they will be integrated into the final draft.

II. Mayor's Overall Direction of the Funding

Mr. Denbowski stated that this topic will be discussed in more detail at next month's meeting. He stated that the previous spreadsheet shared with Council was a baseline and that it will be revised.

Ms. Rodriguez questioned when the application will be available on the City's website. Mr. Denbowski stated that the application will be posted once the City's guidelines are established. He stated that the application process is not yet open.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if applicants would have a time period to submit questions and receive responses before the final submission deadline. She noted the need to ensure that applicants understand the information they need to supply. Mr. Denbowski suggested holding an information session or webinar to review the application and the process and answer questions.

III. Application Process, Review Committee & Application Period

Mr. Denbowski stated that he provided a Power Point presentation at the last meeting. He stated that the application process was developed after the public meetings were held. He stated that the Mayor held informal meetings with interested stakeholders to gauge the community's needs.

Mr. Denbowski suggested a \$500,000 maximum grant but that not all applicants will receive this amount. He stated that a cap is needed to ensure there is a significant community impact. He noted his hope that funding would result in significant improvement to the community. He stated that this process will follow a process similar to the City's procurement process.

Mr. Denbowski stated that organizations that have met informally with the Mayor will also need to complete the application and go through the same process. He stated that no promises have been made and noted the need to keep the process non-political.

Mr. Denbowski stated that the Review Committee will be comprised of:

- 2 Community representatives – 1 selected by the mayor and 1 selected by Council
- 2 members of Council
- The mayor's representative

- Downtown Coordinator
- Representative from a non-profit that is not applying for funding

Mr. Denbowski stated that there will be a 45 day application window and proposed April 1 through May 15. He stated that the Review Committee will then have 60 – 90 days to review the applications and score them according to the rubric. He stated that the consultant will be vetting the agencies to ensure they have the ability to complete the proposed project within the funding timeline. He stated that projects will then come to Council for their review and final approval.

Mr. Denbowski stated that the application requires standard information. He reiterated that the rubric will be used to score the projects and Council will have final project approval. He stated that there will be a formal agreement between the City and the successful agencies to ensure there is follow through and follow up reporting. He noted the need to approve projects that will have the greatest impact on the community. He thanked Mr. Kelly for taking the lead and developing this process.

Ms. Ventura noted the maximum amount of \$500,000 and stated that there is no guaranteed amount. She questioned if funding would be appropriated based on individual projects. Mr. Kelly stated that this is correct.

Ms. Ventura questioned if proof of eligibility is required. Mr. Kelly noted the need for the agency to have the capacity to spend the funding within the timeline. He stated that Zelenkofske Axelrod will vet the applications and assist the City with the review process.

Ms. Reed noted the importance of a fair and apolitical process. She noted the need to prevent fraud and loss and expressed the belief that vetting and review of applicants and applications is very important. She stated that ARPA is providing legacy funds that cannot be squandered. She stated that she is comfortable that this will be a fair process and agreed with the need for all to use the same application process.

Ms. Rodriguez questioned the requirements to apply. Mr. Denbowski stated that an information session will be held to explain the process similar to a pre-bid meeting. He stated that the consultant will oversee the process and ensure the Treasury rules are followed. Mr. Kelly stated that some of the application requirements are applicant identification, type of business, description of the project, number of employees and financial information.

Mr. Denbowski expressed the belief that the application is very thorough. He again reiterated that the consultant will verify all application information before Council's review.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she has compared the County and City applications. She stated that the County will require a bid estimate. She questioned how the City would

verify that the amount being requested is actually needed for the project. Mr. Kelly stated that this would be explained to applicants during the information session.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for the City to understand the rationale for the amount requested.

Mr. Moran stated that the consultant will verify this information. He stated that Zelenkofske Axelrod is assisting many municipalities and has much knowledge about this process. He thanked Mr. Kelly and Mr. Denbowski for their work thus far. He stated that applications will be approved only if the agency is clean and clear and can carry out the project to completion.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz stated that the rubric currently does not include the scoring numbers. She noted the need to include these numbers for each category. Mr. Denbowski stated that the Review Committee will set these scores. He stated that not all categories will be scored the same and some will be given more weight. He stated that the scoring will be established before the reviews begin. He noted the need for projects to have long-term impacts with measurable results.

Ms. Reed noted the need to inform the public about the amount of funding that is available. She stated that some funding has already been spent or has been allocated.

Mr. Denbowski stated that Council will be receiving recommended spending levels from the Mayor. He noted the need for the City to determine how to program the funds. He stated that the number of applications will show the needs of the community.

Ms. Reed stated that some funding will be used for City projects.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz questioned the next steps needed to launch the application process. Mr. Kelly noted the need for Council to approve the process and application documents. He stated that the Administration is ready to go live on April 1.

Mr. Denbowski noted the need for Council to approve a resolution appointing the Review Committee members. Mr. Kelly agreed.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz thanked the Administration for their work. She expressed the belief that the process is at a good place and expressed the belief that the application process will go smoothly since this work has been done. She stated that the City is moving in the right direction and noted the need for due diligence during the application review process.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz announced that the next meeting is Tuesday, April 19 at 5 pm.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:39 pm.

*Respectfully Submitted by
Linda A. Kelleher, CMC, City Clerk*