



# ***COMMITTEE of the WHOLE***

## ***CITY COUNCIL***

**SUMMARY**  
**June 14, 2022**  
**ARPA Update**  
**5:00 P.M.**  
**Hybrid Meeting**

### **COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:**

D. Reed, J. Cepeda-Freytiz, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, C. Daubert – in person & W. Butler and M. Ventura - virtually

### **OTHERS PRESENT:**

L. Kelleher, J. Kelly, E. Moran, J. Stoudt, D. Anspach – in person & S. Smith, F. Lachat, M. Oppenheimer, Z & A reps K. Stank and C. Johnson, M. Lynch (Reading Eagle), BCTV rep – virtually & F. Denbowski – via telephone

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 pm by Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz.

### **I. Mayor's Top 3-5 Priorities**

The mayor stated that his priorities for the Federal ARPA Funding are:

1. Youth Programming & Violence Prevention
2. Infrastructure & Improvements to correct deferred maintenance
3. Residential Parking Relief – to correct parking stress within neighborhoods
4. Economic Development – façade improvements for commercial and residential properties
5. Downtown Investment – offering grants to small businesses moving to the downtown core

Mr. Moran stated that applications within these headings will be reviewed by the ARPA Review Committee appointed on June 13<sup>th</sup> via Council resolution. He added that he will also be presenting Council with a separate proposal for CollegeTowne.

### **II. Applications**

Mr. Kelly stated that 32 applications were received covering a broad range of categories from revenue loss to youth programming and infrastructure needs totaling \$11.8M. He stated that

his assistant is working to plug those applications into a spreadsheet that can be used by the Review Committee.

Mr. Kelly stated that the Z & A consultants will participate in all Review Committee meetings. He asked Mr. Butler, Ms. Reed and Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz to contact him regarding availability for the Review Committee Meetings, which will be staffed, coordinated and facilitated by his staff. Ideally meeting times around the lunch hour are preferred.

### **III. Capital Funding Needs**

Mr. Kelly referred to the Capital Needs spreadsheet distributed prior to the start of the meeting. The sheet shows projects in progress, including funding gaps and future needs.

Mr. Anspach stated that the list of projects is fluctuating based on supply chain issues, pricing, etc. Estimates were pulled from the Facility Condition Assessment reports prepared by PFM. He noted the need to continue to revisit these projects to review needs. He suggested starting with consideration of the Mineral Spring Park and Hotel and consider the preferred uses for these sites. He noted the inclusion of the possible addition of a kiddie pool at Schlegel Park.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the potential for public-private partnerships for properties with historic value.

Mr. Kelly stated that the Centre Park project is one of those partnerships. He then read down through the project list and the gaps identified. He noted that Mr. Anspach suggested repairing the Dove in City Park to avoid the additional damage that would occur if the Dove was covered and dealt with later as planned. He noted the need to identify funding to close the gaps for various City projects.

Mr. Denbowski described the need to fill the Project Administrator position to assist Mr. Anspach with the follow through on all these projects that are currently in progress.

Ms. Reed questioned if the ARPA funding transferred to the City has been invested in an interest bearing account. Mr. Johnson from Z & A stated that most municipalities have ARPA funds invested in money market funds; however, the rate of return is very low due to current economic conditions.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz inquired if the City is pairing projects to reduce the overall project costs. Mr. Anspach stated that projects are grouped in quadrants and evaluated based on the need for repairs, upgrades, cost, etc. He stated that there have been quadrant based projects that have been approved at Council meetings over the past months. After the first round has been completed work will begin to evaluate the needs in a 2<sup>nd</sup> round.

Mr. Anspach stated that the Bushong Dam removal is moving forward with a relaunched engineering project.

Ms. Reed reminded the administration about the Confluence Park master plan that was drafted which includes the Bushong area. She noted the remaining historical features at the dam and suggested retaining them with historic markers. She stated that due to its proximity to Confluence Park to Stone Cliff, the County agreed to accept Confluence Park after improvements are made.

Mr. Denbowski noted that the main goal is to remove the dam. He added that Berks Nature may also be interested in Confluence Park due to its proximity to the trail system. He offered to follow-up.

Mr. Daubert suggested that the administration seek partnerships with local environmental groups to assist with funding and grant applications.

Mr. Anspach and Mr. Kelly noted that the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the City Hall roof repair is planned. The 1<sup>st</sup> phase repaired the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and Council Chamber roof area. The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase will include the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor roof areas.

Mr. Anspach stated that the City Hall HVAC system is also being addressed. This will include a maintenance plan with scheduled maintenance and work that will prevent major breakdowns moving forward. He noted that the Downtown Fire Stations will also receive new boilers and other required upgrades.

Mr. Anspach stated that the Egelman's Dam project has a project estimate of \$675K with a \$250K gap. The City will be meeting with the community to determine the reuse of this park area and the facilities needed at the park.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she is pleased that Berks Nature and Isaac Walton are partnering with the City on this project. She noted that pulling in the right project partners will increase the City's ability to successfully apply for additional grant funding.

Mr. Anspach noted the need to add ADA upgrades to the entry doors at the Public Works building.

Mr. Anspach stated that the Willow Creek dam, located near the RAWA filtration plant, will be removed.

Mr. Anspach stated that the City dewatered the lake at Bernhart's Park at the DEP's request by removing the dam spillway to allow the DEP to inspect the dam breast. However, now the DEP is refusing to perform the inspection, advising that the City must either rebuild the dam up to current specs or allow the park to return to a natural setting. The DEP is not considering the two areas of the park with high levels of lead contamination that were not remediated – the island area and the steep slope area – as these areas were inaccessible to the public prior to

the removal of the spillway and the dewatering of the lake. The City will be working with a consultant to evaluate options and prepare recommendations that will be presented to Council in late July.

Mr. Anspach described the project to build a police training center on the WWTP site. In addition to training for the Police Department and the Academy, the facility will also be used to centralize the storage of various police equipment. He noted that the Reading Police Academy is only one of (3) site in all of Pennsylvania. Also under consideration is moving the Shooting Range to the training center site.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz inquired about the timeline to complete the review process and award funding. Mr. Kelly stated that the Review Committee approved last night will begin meeting. He asked Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, Ms. Reed and Mr. Butler to contact him regarding their availability. He noted that he prefers meeting times around the lunch hour. He stated that his staff will organize the meetings and staff the meetings. He added that some of the project applications are seeking funding for summer programs so time is of the essence.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz and Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz inquired about the monitoring of the funding allocated and holding those who receive funding accountable.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested having a scored review category for outcomes included in the review process to ease monitoring. Mr. Kelly stated that the funding regulations are not "cookie-cutter" so compliance with the Federal regulations will be included.

Mr. Moran stated that the City does not have a sufficient amount of staff to engage in the grant monitoring process.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested utilizing the reimbursement style of funding to ease the monitoring that would be required if a lump sum allocation was made. Mr. Johnson from Z & A agreed, depending on the type of project or purpose. Mr. Kelly stated that Z & A will be responsible for monitoring the funding awarded.

Ms. Kelleher noted that the next ARPA Update meeting on July 12<sup>th</sup> falls while the Review Committee is still meeting and she suggested delaying the meeting until the Review Committee completes its work.

Mr. Kelly disagreed, noting that the administration plans to have the three (3) colleges make presentations to Council at the July 12<sup>th</sup> ARPA meeting. He stated that these proposals fit within the Downtown priority mentioned earlier by the Mr. Moran, noting that CollegeTowne wishes to expand their downtown footprint and that Albright and RACC have also submitted applications. He stated that these applications exceed the \$500,000 cap established so special consideration is required.

Ms. Reed questioned allowing separate presentations from the three colleges and not the other applicants. Mr. Kelly stated that these anchor institutions fall under the economic investments priority.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz and Ms. Reed expressed concern noting that presentations should occur at the Review Committee meeting, if the Committee decides that step is required. They expressed the belief that if Council allows these groups to make presentations, then all applicants should be afforded with that opportunity.

Mr. Moran stated that separate presentations would not constitute special consideration for the colleges.

Ms. Reed expressed the belief that an application for \$250,000 from a small non-profit is just as important to that organization, as the millions requested for by Alvernia. She expressed concern with the separate presentations suggested, as all dollars being awarded are tax dollars.

Mr. Kelly stated that the process for the colleges would follow the same process as that used for the Santander and Performing Arts Center. Ms. Kelleher disagreed, noting that the arena and First Energy Stadium are City organizations and facilities.

Ms. Reed agreed with Ms. Kelleher, noting that the allocations to the arena and stadium were made prior to the start of this application period and the appointment of a Review Committee.

Ms. Kelleher noted that Council had the assumption that all applications submitted during the application period would be considered by the Review Committee and that the Committee would make send City Council a recommendation on the amount of funding for each submission approved by the Review Committee. Ms. Reed agreed.

Mr. Moran stated that the three colleges requested an opportunity to make presentations about their projects to Council and the administration supports those requests. Mr. Kelly added that all three college projects are also dependent on State and Federal funding and he supported allowing the presentations.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed with the concerns expressed about presentations from the colleges as all other applicants are not being afforded equal footing. Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz agreed with the need for a fair process for all applicants.

Mr. Moran expressed the belief that funding requests this large should be considered by Council.

Mr. Kelly stated that having in person presentations is up to the Review Committee, noting that allowing presentations could take a considerable amount of time. He noted that if Council

wants to give the Review Committee the ability to independently approve projects that can certainly happen.

Mr. Daubert corrected Mr. Kelly, noting that the Review Committee will make recommendations for projects and funding amounts and the body of Council will consider those recommendations and vote to approve or reject the recommendation submitted to the body.

Mr. Kelly stated that the college projects were separated out from the other applications because it would be difficult for a new non-profit organization to compete with 100 year old institutions like colleges.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz inquired how City Council would like to proceed with the process used by the Review Committee.

Mr. Daubert suggested allowing the Review Committee to determine how they will undertake the review process prior to making a recommendation to be approved/rejected by Council.

Mr. Moran suggested having Council establish boundaries based on the amount of funding requested.

Mr. Daubert again suggested allowing the Review Committee to determine the process used to review submissions.

Council agreed with the suggestion made by Mr. Daubert – the Review Committee shall determine the process used to review all applications submitted and the Committee will submit recommendations for project and funding amounts to Council for approval or rejection.

All Council members present agreed.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz thanked Mr. Anspach for his presentation.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.

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