

Joint Planning Commission, Finance, and ARPA Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes

July 6, 2022

Present: Via Zoom – Lynn Pancake (FAC), Michael Szostak (PC), Charlie Light (PC), Timm Harris, Sara Coffey (resident and State Rep), Rick Zamore (Resident), Julie Beet (Resident and Neighborhood Roots Food Collaborative)

Present: In person – Jeannette Tokarz (PC), Sheila Morse (FAC), Julie Holland (PC and ARPA), Jaime Durham (ARPA), Delores Clark (resident)

Jeannette called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm

List of available monies, including \$195,000 bond

1. Sheila described the source of the **\$195,000** held for Guilford in the Vermont Bond Fund account (see attached detailed description).
2. Because voters rejected a proposal to allocate this fund toward the proposed library expansion project, they are now available to finance “social and physical infrastructure for municipalities, school districts, and public bodies with affordable, innovative, and appropriate capital” per the Vermont Bond Fund website.
3. Any reallocation would need to be voted on at Town Meeting, in compliance with wording mandated by the State/VT Bond Bank.
4. The Selectboard asked the PC and the FAC to evaluate possible uses for these funds and to make recommendations to the SB for proposals to be put before the town.
5. The Planning Commission will serve as the nexus of this process as it is charged with understanding the needs and intentions of Guilford, as articulated in the 2022-2030 Town Plan. Through a collaborative process it will be possible to identify projects that will best benefit Guilford, and research the resources that can be directed toward executing those projects.
6. The ARPA Advisory Committee is, at the SB’s request, evaluating possible uses for the remaining ARPA funds available to the Town (about **\$540,000**).
7. The Town may also have access to additional State or Federal funds, so that, if we wanted to pool the \$195K with other funds, we might together be able to recommend to the SB projects that would deliver the greatest good to the community
8. Sara shared information about ARPA buckets funds, funding to municipalities to the Selectboard on 6/27 and to this group on 7/6. She noted that the legislature is also looking at the opportunities this funding provides through a wide lens, much as Guilford is attempting to do.
9. Buckets for statewide projects include
10. Municipal Energy Resilience program (PC and Energy Committee) - \$45M- by 2026
 - a. Clean Water Funding = money to help with drinking and wastewater, to support some development in town; and Regional Planning

Commissions, so they can provide additional technical assistance for programs such as drinking and wastewater - \$204M for water and sewer

- b. Broadband - money in CUDs
 - c. trails and bike lanes \$20M for expanding both (through VTrans)
 - d. Vorac (VT Rec and outdoor) - \$5M
 - e. There are also on-going community building grants that Guilford has already tapped into
 - f. Coronavirus Capital Projects fund = specifically for libraries (SB and Town could apply for smaller scale projects such as ADA accessibility or HVAC upgrades)
11. ARPA funding can be used to hire a grant writer.
 12. Sara is available to provide information regarding available resources but notes that the Town is responsible for writing the grant applications . There is a lot of money available but not for long. Guilford needs to get its act together and be first in line! Projects must be clear in their specifics and goals

Goals and Next Steps

A lengthy conversation among all participants ensued. Specific suggestions are listed below, but the general consensus was that:

1. (Jamie articulated it well): we (ARPA Adv. Comm.) must proceed via “a thorough and collaborative approach, working with the PC, the FAC, and the SB to identify best opportunities not only for use of the ARPA funds, but also for use of the \$195k bond money, and take advantage of some once-in-a-lifetime grants that are available via additional ARPA funding mechanisms. While these are separate pools of money, it's all one, big opportunity for Guilford, so we want to ensure we are working together...”
2. And Jeannette noted that “we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to be creative and visionary in working to be good stewards of Guilford’s future.”
3. *The conversation also noted that our discussions entail mission creep, but felt that it was important to continue.*
4. The Town must, in order,
 - a. Using a facilitator, understand and agree on its needs and the priorities,
 - b. identify potential projects and matching sources of funds
 - c. engage a grant writer and project administrator

Specific suggestions covered the following topics:

1. Smart Growth Principles: these will guide discussions around where we want to develop; infill development; pedestrian and bike access. Inclusion of and adherence to these principles will garner favorable reactions from grantors

2. Think in terms of integrated projects: e.g., real transportation needs from rural area to town
3. Tourism could draw money into the community
4. wastewater treatment projects: possible-municipal compost site that is dry composting + wastewater
5. housing for middle income families and seniors
6. Don't use ARPA funds for projects that could be funded by other funding sources
7. Protecting and conserving our climate; broadband (communicating mechanisms are critical); Meeting House preservation/connecting with Library
8. Climate and our children (accessing money to begin constructing facility for year-round Early Childhood Education);
9. Keep community current and resilient
10. Food security: make our residents more secure in face of climate crises, etc. by supporting farmers, etc.
11. Leverage ARPA funds with state priority funds
12. Day care, senior housing, sewer in Guilford Village Center, etc.
13. Include residents in these discussions
14. Spend this once-in-a lifetime resource on something that's self-sustainable that doesn't require Town to invest on an ongoing basis.

Moving forward

1. The PC will work with WRC to secure services of a municipal planning facilitator with an eye to reviewing our needs over a 5,10,20 -year timeline. Drill down on specifics that are currently missing in the town plan.
2. The VCRD visit process was thorough – a 5-month process that engaged 100s of residents. We can build on that work and not “reinvent the wheel.” Our process needs to be transparent, engaging residents. We should form working groups to bring depth to discussion and recommendations - Community outreach is critical
3. The joint committee needs to secure the permission of the Selectboard to move forward with the expanded mandate.

Meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm

VERMONT BOND FUND

1. Voters approved going for a bond loan in the amount of \$195,000 at Town Meeting in 2012.
2. Guilford has been paying principal and interest on this bond since April 2013. The final payment is due November 2022.
3. These funds were not used for the original designated purpose, or for any other purpose.
4. We may never learn why then or subsequent SB members, or the Town's Treasurer or Asst. Treasurer, never linked the Waterline Bond Fund payments with this unused source of funds.
5. Regardless, statute for municipal bonds requires a town to pay for bond, used or unused.
6. Yes. This is different from a loan.
7. The VT Bond Bank began investigating post-issue compliance in 2018. Guilford was advised in December 2021 that these unused funds were still available and could be reallocated for a different purpose. Any reallocation would need to be voted on, in compliance with wording mandated by the State/VT Bond Bank.
8. There is one final payment on the Bond, due November 2022.
9. To officially reallocate the funds, the VT Bond Bank will need
 - o evidence that the vote was properly warned and posted,
 - o proof that the article was worded correctly, and
 - o a certified record of the election.
10. Once those terms are met, USBank, the holder of the funds, will be advised that funds can be released to reimburse costs, with proof that those costs are for the approved project.
11. This money, as it was not approved for use for the library, can be used only for other projects approved by residents.
12. It cannot, by law, be allocated to offset general Municipal or Highway expenses (and thus possibly reducing the tax burden for FYE 2024).
13. Any resident is welcome to share ideas about potential projects with the PC and FAC, by emailing help@guilfordvt.gov.
14. A decision about using these funds cannot be taken unless the SB convenes a special Town Meeting or until the 2023 Town Meeting.