

ARPA Advisory Committee Recommendations to the Lincoln Selectboard

The ARPA Advisory Committee was created by the Lincoln Selectboard in May 2023 and the committee met bi-monthly from June to September 2023. The committee was charged with making a recommendation to the Selectboard for the allocation of State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). These funds are generally referred to as “ARPA funds”. Lincoln was allocated \$371,054 in ARPA funds.

Committee members appointed by the Selectboard were Barb Rainville, Bethany Dever, Betsy Graziadei (Chair), Dennis Filion (Vice-Chair), Mary Simmons, Mike Dennison, Nathan Reynolds, Jackie Weyrauch (alternate) and Paul Forlenza (facilitator and non-voting member).

The U.S. Treasury Final Rules effective April 2022 and the Interim Final Rules of 2023 provide for towns with populations less than 250,000 that were allocated less than \$10m to use the “standard allowance” category to simplified reporting to the Treasury. Under this provision, the funds can be used for “government services; generally, services traditionally provided by recipient governments are government services.” The Selectboard has responsibility of reporting the use of ARPA funds by April 30 of each year. ARPA funding must be obligated by December 31, 2024 and fully expended by December 31, 2026.

The committee meeting process adhered to Open Meeting Law and modified Roberts Rules to facilitate our meetings. Our alternate member voted when a member was absent from meetings. Bethany Hanf Devers and Barbara Rainville volunteer to take minutes as the committee voted against the use of ARPA funds for hiring a professional minute taker.

The committee’s charge as outline by the Selectboard can be found on the town website along with committee minutes and recorded committee meetings. The committee identified and addressed possible conflicts of interest by both ARPA committee members and as well as the Selectboard. The ARPA Advisory Committee has completed their work.

We have reviewed written proposals submitted to the Selectboard and proposals the committee received by July 1, 2023. Eleven organizations proposed 22 projects requesting \$525,161. When we had questions about the proposals, we asked the applicants to submit additional information. We also invited applicants to clarify their proposals by appearing before the committee. We discussed the possible needs of the Lincoln General Store, but did not allocate funds to them since the store is not a non-profit and their operation is not typically provided by government.

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We worked collaboratively to outline the values and guiding principles in creating evaluative criteria. An Excel spreadsheet was created to facilitate developing consensus for prioritizing projects and for allocating funds. (See enclosed Excel spreadsheet that will also be posted to the town website.

Our group discussed our evaluations and used individual member experience in assessing labor and material estimates, efficiency, land and expected community use as described in applicant proposals. Our group was comprised of seasoned contractors and builders, prior Selectboard members, educators, health care provider, an accountant and other professionals. . We invited applicant groups to our meetings in August to clarify essential questions in order to determine if the requesting organizations have the capacity to manage the proposed project(s). We confirmed with the organizations requesting funds that their plan to sustain the projects would have minimal impact on the town's operating budget..

The ARPA Committee voted to prioritize projects and voted for the allocation amounts for selected project proposal.

In our discussions, we also wanted to convey our feedback related to the community organizations continued efforts to work and use funds efficiently, sustainably and collaboratively. Therefore, we ask the Selectboard to consider promote the following:

1. Community organizations meet once yearly as a collective to share resources and support one another's capacity to meet community needs.
2. Our town consider town's energy needs as related to managing climate events and investing in town energy plan, for example, a town solar array project.

The committee submits these documents and the committee's recommended allocation of funds.

Summited by Betsy Graziadei (Chair)

September 15, 2023