

FARMINGTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Tuesday, January 11, 2022

6:30 P.M.

The conduct of the meeting will include remote access by telephonic, video, and electronic means. The public may attend in person or by viewing the live stream at <http://mtbluetv.org/program-live-stream-farmington-selectmen.html> or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/MBTV11/> or by calling 778-5874

Chairman Matthew Smith called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. with the following members present: Stephan Bunker, Michael Fogg, Joshua Bell, and Scott Landry. Town Manager Christian Waller, Executive Assistant Nancy Martin, Budget Committee Chair Clyde Ross, Budget Committee Member Judith Murphy, High Peaks Alliance Executive Director Brent West, Mt. Blue TV camera operator Tom Martin, and members of the press and public were also present. Members of the media and public participated remotely.

ITEM 1: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

ITEM 2: To Discuss the American Rescue Plan Act Funds (ARPA)

Christian Waller reported that the federal government issued a final rule regarding the Compliance with Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF). Mr. Waller provided a copy of the four-page statement from the U.S. Department of Treasury regarding the final ruling dated January 6, 2022. Mr. Waller stated that upon looking at the final rule, it does not expand the potential uses of ARPA funds. The final decision minimizes and streamlines the process of applying for the funds and what type of justification is needed. As requested by Michael Fogg in a previous meeting, Mr. Waller reported that he did take the opportunity to scale down some of the Selectboard's thoughts and created a list of potential uses:

1. Public Engagement - education/notice to the public, public input, forms, process, awards-percentage of funds/dollar amount
2. Potential ARPA Projects – behavioral health/Tri-County Mental Health, Negative public health, or related impacts, addressing negative economic impacts from COVID, addressing learning gaps, premium pay for essential workers, economic challenges, domestic violence, necessary investments (water, sewer, and broadband), actions to decrease the spread of COVID, flexibility on fund use to best meet the needs of our community (tailored to Town of Farmington needs), homelessness and affordable housing.

Mr. Waller confirmed that he met with Franklin County ARPA Coordinator Sue Pratt who offered insight and is willing to share information with the Town. From a process perspective, the Town has some things to consider. Ms. Pratt is going to share copies of the forms she created and the research that she has gathered for the County. We can review her efforts and decide what we want to use. Mr. Waller stated that the Town should receive the broadband study from Casco Bay Advisors, LLC within the next two weeks. Franklin County Commissioners are welcoming suggestions from the public and then making decisions, would the Board like to do the same? Keep in mind that Franklin County's ARPA funds are much higher than the Towns. He asked the Board for their thoughts on determining the projects, and how they would like to decide on a list. Joshua Bell stated that the Community Center needs a new air exchange system and roof. Mr. Waller stated that the air exchange system probably qualifies for ARPA funding. Mr. Waller stated that air exchange issues in the Municipal Building could also be addressed. Mr. Waller reported that the final rule included examples of broadening the scope of the infrastructure, to improve better public health services. In response to Mr. Bell's question, Mr. Waller stated that confirmation of project eligibility could be obtained by reaching out to SLRP@treasury.gov. Stephan Bunker reminded the Selectmen that the Community Center is an emergency shelter, and

ITEM 3: To Discuss Mask requirements in all Town buildings/locations (continued)

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 4: The Rail Trail Bridge Project Update

High Peaks Alliance Executive Director Brent West provided an update on the Rail Trail Bridge Project. Calderwood Engineering completed the preliminary design report for the multi-use bridge over Sandy River. The original cost of the project was estimated at \$2.8 million, however, the revised estimated costs came in at \$2.5 million. If we are successful in building it, the 336' bridge will be the longest pedestrian bridge and the longest single-span snowmobile bridge in the State of Maine. Six feet longer than the current longest bridge. The proposed bridge is a cable-stayed design, with seven (7) 48-foot long steel truss, welded together and suspended by cables. The steel structures are to be hot-dip galvanized to protect them from the elements and ensure a long-lasting structure. To protect the structure deck below from snowmobile traffic, a sacrificial timber wearing surface will be employed. The State Bureau of Parks and Lands Joe Higgins at the snowmobile department reviewed the design and it is up to his standards. The new budget requires \$380,000 overall to finish the project; this includes the remaining \$200,000 match for the grant, project management costs, and the long-term maintenance fund. Mr. West asked the Selectboard to vote in support of a \$200,000 gift from the Town. A vote to approve the \$200,000 gift would allow High Peaks Alliance (HPA) to move forward with the grant request. He reported that HPA is receiving a lot of regional support for the Sandy River Bridge. Ten local snowmobile clubs have written letters of support, and he hopes to obtain a letter of support from the Wilton Selectboard next week. Mr. West reminded the Selectboard that the University of Southern Maine (USM), conducted an economic impact study on the proposed bridge, and they estimated that the project would create twenty-five new construction phase jobs; \$1.5 million in regional spending during the construction phase; tourism (trail traffic) would bring an estimated \$861,000 annually to the local economy; and thirteen new permanent jobs to the area. Mr. West stated that if USM's figures are accurate, the \$200,000 gift is a good economic development investment for the downtown region. He reviewed the Town's Downtown Development Plan from eight years ago, and the Town was considering a \$330,000 match requirement, the \$200,000 match is much lower. The State will be responsible for the long-term maintenance costs; the Town will not be responsible for future maintenance and repairs. Mr. West answered the Selectboards questions. A lengthy discussion included County support, ATV access, parking, trail width, and public safety.

Scott Landry moved to authorize the use of \$200,000 to match for the Rail Trail Bridge project; Joshua Bell seconded.

Roll Call Vote – Matthew Smith: Yes, Stephan Bunker: Yes, Michael Fogg: Yes, Joshua Bell: Yes, Scott Landry: Yes

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Mr. West thanked the Selectboard for their vote of confidence and encouraged the Selectboard to call him with any questions.

ITEM 5: *To Approve the Minutes of December 28, 2021

The minutes were not available; Item 5 was tabled.

