

# MINUTES

**AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING  
WEST HALL 1, CHARLESTON COLISEUM AND CONVENTION CENTER  
(THE VIDEO WAS ALSO MADE AVAILABLE AS A LIVE STREAM VIA ZOOM PER THE AGENDA)**

**5:00 P. M., APRIL 14, 2021**

Mayor Amy Goodwin, Chairperson, called the meeting of the Charleston City American Rescue Plan Act Advisory Committee to order at 5:00p.m., April 14, 2021.

**Committee Members Present:**

Mayor Amy Goodwin, Chair  
Becky Ceperley, Vice Chair  
Ben Adams (arrived at 5:14)  
John Kennedy Bailey  
Brent Burton  
Caitlin Cook  
Mary Beth Hoover  
Joe Jenkins  
Will Laird (attended virtually over Zoom)  
Bobby Reishman  
Chad Robinson

**Also Present:**

Miles Cary II, City Clerk

A roll call was taken, and it was determined that a quorum was present.

1. Overview of the American Rescue Plan Act –

Mayor Goodwin stated that the initial members of the Committee were chosen to represent Committees that would most likely be involved (Finance, Environment and Recycling and Parks and Recreation). The money from the act is an investment to change communities. The Mayor added that this money has never been placed in the City of Charleston to work on projects.

City Manager, Jonathan Storage, presented information about the Plan Act to the Committee. Highlights include:

- The ARP is one of the largest pieces of spending legislation ever passed by Congress.
- It's main focused is around economic recovery as well as infrastructure and social safety net projects.
- The City of Charleston's allocation is estimated at approximately \$38 million, and

March 25, 2021

must be used by December 31, 2024.

- The 1<sup>st</sup> distribution will be approximately \$19 million.
- The US Treasury is tasked with developing rules and guidance on how to spend the funds.
- The ARP will allow the City to spend fund in 2 areas designed to address the pandemic's health and economic consequences: respond to the public health emergency and address COVID's negative economic impacts.
- The City may offer "premium pay" to essential workers (which may include private employers who employ them) as well as reimburse itself for revenue losses.
- The City is permitted to reimburse itself for revenue losses suffered compared to the previous revenues received, however, depending on the guidance from the Treasury, this area of financial recovery may be limited.
- The Act allows for necessary investments in water, sewer or broadband infrastructure.

Mayor Goodwin added that this should be about investment money, not simply filling holes. They need to identify significant infrastructure projects. There is also an opportunity to apply for additional money separately with the federal government for "earmarked money" or different buckets that doesn't necessarily have to come out of the ARP money. The City could also partner with other authorities, such as non-profits, public benefit corporations, etc.

- Possible buckets for **economic recovery**: reimburse/replenish revenues, b&o, hotel/motel, eliminate any deficit FY 2022 and funds to offset demolition/construction permits/ business permits/ fees
- Possible buckets for **healthy and safe communities**: food insecurity, health equity, youth programs, homelessness, substance abuse disorder, low barrier and temporary shelters, additional housing options, mobile outreach
- Possible buckets for **investing for the future/infrastructure** is probably the most important piece, and will be discussed further.

## 2. Further Discussion –

Councilmember Jenkins suggested bringing broadband to everyone in the City. He also raised the question if they should act on projects such as this if they could possibly get some grant money for it in the future. Mayor Goodwin added that it will also be important to coordinate projects with the County.

Councilmember Ceperley stated that the storm water system is outdated and causes a lot of problems. Storage added that with the timelines involved, it would also be advisable to have projects that have been researched and are essentially ready to go. It would be important to start soon on completely new projects. Councilmember Bailey added that when making their list of projects, it will be important to track which projects could be potentially funded by other means (grants etc) as that becomes available.

Councilmember Adams stated that, in terms of community involvement, here-to-serve type meetings would be invaluable. Mayor Goodwin added that the intention is to reach every community. Councilmember Cook stated there should be a structure in which community members could voice their opinions on the City's website, such as an online survey/drop-down box for public engagement. Councilmember Ceperley suggested they should provide structure for the community engagement as there are many guidelines and restrictions to the ARP money. Councilmember Reishman suggested projects that will provide funding for future projects. The Mayor suggested keeping some sort of file for all of the suggestions etc. that the Committee could access.

Councilmember Jenkins suggested that the economic recovery bucket be given first priority (hotel/motel tax recovery, replace lost revenue, etc.), then they could look at how to use the rest of the money. He added that the main goal would be to essentially balance the books. Then, other aspects of economic recovery, such as small businesses could be looked into.

Councilmember Cook asked what have they been able to learn from other cities. Mayor Goodwin replied that the plans/responses from other cities have been extremely varied, adding that some involved public input and some didn't. Councilmember Reishman stated that they should receive some sort of formal plan or application when looking at specific programs/non-profits/etc. to fund. Mayor Goodwin suggested taking chunks of the fund to dedicate to certain buckets (for example, \$2 million for community projects).

Councilmember Ceperley suggested having a visual board at the listening sessions that citizens can place suggestions on based on the buckets. Councilmember Burton suggested getting the Youth Council involved. Councilmember Bailey added that he would like to see the estimated costs of the projects that have already been discussed or studied (turfing the fields, fixing bridges, etc.). Storage added that the ARP funds could potentially free up money from the General Fund that would have otherwise been used for those things. He added that the ARP funds can be used as matching money for grants. Councilmember Hoover added that there are gaps in the kids/youth programs. City Clerk, Miles Cary, added that he would like to see a program directed at felon re-entry.

Councilmember Ceperley cautioned against focusing on specific projects at this time. Councilmember Jenkins agreed, adding that useful public feedback wouldn't be for specific things, but rather what their preferred focus would be. He added that it would be helpful for the Committee to determine if they want to do 1 or 3 large projects or spread it over many smaller, etc. They could then determine the range of money spent over each category to get public input.

### 3. Next Steps –

Mayor Goodwin summarized that the number 1 focus of the ARP is the recovery of lost

funds to cities, so the Administration could present their findings on how to best achieve that to the Committee. The Committee can then decide what other buckets on which to focus. Councilmember Ceperley stated they should keep the buckets as they have been presented, and to give general ideas as to what would fall under those categories (not particular projects). Councilmember Jenkins suggested they reference the projects that the City already has plans for (the bike and trail plan, for example). Councilmember Bailey suggested having another Committee meeting before the community meetings.

Mayor Goodwin stated that the easiest thing they could do would be to create the online forum and host the community meetings. They will get the information from citizens that want to be engaged in the process. Councilmember Adams felt they had an obligation to at least review all suggestions submitted to the City. Mayor Goodwin stated that they also needed to include representatives from groups (LGBTQ+, homeless outreach, the Partnership for African American Churches, etc.) in the discussion so that they can act with intention. Councilmember Hoover suggested having smaller round-table discussions with those community/group leaders. Mayor Goodwin suggested that each Member submit 2 names for that.

Councilmember Jenkins asked if it would be more effective to spread out the money over many projects, or stick to a large impact project. He expressed concern that they were going to get bogged down by hundreds of ideas. Councilmember Ceperley added that she did not believe they should have organizations apply for the money, adding that once the Committee has set its goals then can request further information from the various groups. Mayor Goodwin agreed that there should be a return on investment. Storage added that the purpose of the money is to create economic recovery in whatever way is most impactful to the City. Councilmember Cook added that they also need to know when they will start to spend the first round of funding. Councilmembers Robinson and Jenkins agreed with Councilmember Ceperley, adding that they should gather the interested issues as opposed to specific projects. Chief of Staff, Matt Sutton, added that they could also help organizations identify where else (grants etc.) they can obtain additional funding.

Councilmember Reishman motioned to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Ceperley seconded.

Meeting adjourned.