

Moses Grader's Email Responses to Questions from *Marblehead Beacon*

Regarding the funding process for the \$200k for mental health services:

The BOH made the original request to the ARPA Working Group (AWG), through the Director of the Health Department, Andrew Petty, who is a member of AWG. The funding involves delivery of services (as opposed to a capital outlay for infrastructure/equipment/technology more typical of the ARPA funding requests). The \$200k was based on a good level estimate from the Health Department responding to the COVID/post-COVID environment in which mental health service requirements have been dynamic and evolving.

The document shown below – “ARPA Funding Request Background Information” – was included as part of Select Board motion approving the \$200k (it was in the SB packet accompanying the motion and summarized verbally in Thatcher's recapitulation of the requests just prior to the vote on October 12th). I have assumed all the SB members knew that the \$200k motion was to allocate moneys to the BOH.

Also, allocation to the BOH makes sense given its history and given that the Town Administrator looks to the BOH as the duly elected authority overseeing health, including mental health. For at least a decade, the BOH has been responsible and accountable for overseeing the \$60k allocated from the Town to the Marblehead Counseling Center (MCC). In the same way, the BOH is expected to continue to be accountable to the Town Administrator (and, of course, ultimately Fincom and SB) for the \$200k that it is mandated to allocate for mental health services. The Board of the MCC understands this (I had a discussion with Ron Grenier) and has since made their presentation to the BOH for mental health services funding (I believe MCC has requested \$145k, which the BOH is evaluating under their authority).

Regarding the process of seating the AWG and why Erin's request was denied:

The AWG is an advisory group of the Town Administrator, who pulls in as many town professionals as he (in this case) deems necessary to ensure requests are vetted, responsibility allocated to duly authorized entities, and projects integrated into the larger capital expenditure plans and budgets of the Town (See AWG mandate, members, project list, etc: (https://www.marblehead.org/sites/g/files/vyhlif4661/f/uploads/2022-10-12_select_board_arp_a_resentation.pdf)). The Town Administrator is directly responsible to the SB for bringing projects forward for recommendation which meet the SB “Prioritization Criteria for ARPA Implementation in the Town of Marblehead” (https://www.marblehead.org/sites/g/files/vyhlif4661/f/uploads/arpa_prioritization_criteria_final.p_df) which were approved by the current SB.

I am on the AWG because Jason Silva selected me (the then Chair of the SB approving) largely because I helped in its formation as SB member – encouraging the broadest possible outreach for requests, developing the Prioritization Criteria for SB approval, and advocating for the necessity both for procedural rigor and complete transparency in ranking the projects – all of

which was informed by my long service on Fincom/SB and private consulting work in this kind of stuff too.

It is self-evident (and we knew in advance) that everyone wants to be on the AWG with so much money at stake. But it is up to the Town Administrator, who is directly accountable to the SB, to choose the working group in order to surround himself with the best advice and professional knowledge in the Town to get the work done.

I really believe that Erin thought that she was doing her job to ask for a working seat on the AWG, as others have. I have made the case to SB members individually that they do not need a seat on the AWG to advocate their priorities or advance their representation. Access to information as an SB member is almost unlimited, and Thatcher is always very eager to brief SB members in any depth that they need. So it is not difficult for any SB member to push for the specific ARPA projects (which are publicly listed) that they want to bring before the SB for a vote sooner than others – and for any SB member to be fully briefed and prepared in doing so before the Town.

Regarding the general tone of the deliberations on this matter:

I have already apologized to Erin for my tone, particularly regarding my comment that “this is embarrassing,” which is very much an inappropriate comment from the Chair – whose primary job it is to maintain a high standard of respect for all colleagues on the SB, regardless of disagreement. I am disappointed about my word choice and have promised her I will do better.

But I think that I and some other Board members were just very surprised that one of our members would suddenly advocate for a direct allocation of the \$200k to the MCC from the AWG – when we recalled our unanimous original vote to approve the \$200K to the BOH in our common understanding of its duly elected role. And we were surprised too that the same member would then also suddenly call into question the capacity of the AWG to do its work legitimately on behalf of the SB without her representation at the AWG table – when we had already unanimously voted to approve over \$1.2 million of ARPA projects selected by the AWG process and recommended by the Town Administrator.

But having said that, I am happy to look to the future, continue to do our best, and confident that we can work together with respect and understanding despite our occasional differences.

ARPA Project Request Background

October 12, 2022

Information Booth Supplemental Funding (\$6,311)

This is additional funding needed for the Destination tourism grant funded project that included rebuilding the Tourist booth island at Samuel Snow square.

Samuel Snow Square serves an important function in orienting visitors to all that Marblehead has to offer. The square looked unappealing. It was redone with brick and concrete accents and granite curbing which greatly enhanced its appearance to encourage many more visitors to stop, look at the displays and maps, and pick up visitor information. This, in turn, will not only assist visitors to have a better experience in the town but will also encourage them to get information and result in more economic benefits. The additional funds are specifically for a new bench and work to the booth itself.

Equip Meeting Spaces with Hybrid Technology-Schools (\$5,700)

The School Department's request is for the technology hardware required to continue to allow for remote participation for School Committee meetings. The figure is \$5,690.26 for a Poly-Studio X70 - video conferencing kit - with Poly TC8 and Poly-stand. This particular technology allows for the School Committee to continue to meet at MHS where MHTV already has systems or broadcasting installed.

Mental health treatment, resources, supports (\$2000,000)

The Marblehead Board of Health, working in consultation with the Marblehead Mental Health Task Force requests \$200,000 of ARPA funds to address the mental health needs of the Marblehead community. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 crisis has led to new and increased mental health stressors for families, seniors, teachers and students, first responders, and almost any other group you could name. Instances of isolation, depression, anxiety, and grief have grown faster than they can be treated and impacted every level of society. Working with agencies like the Marblehead Counseling Center we can begin to provide a link between those struggling with mental health or substance abuse issues and clinicians who are trained to help. We have seen a significant increase in demand for mental health and substance use services over the COVID-19 period and we look forward to partnering with local provider agencies to improve the behavior health and well-being of the residents of Marblehead. These funds will greatly advance the priorities of the Marblehead Board of Health and the Marblehead Mental Health Task Force.

Reduction in Revenue Amount Funding (\$584,142)

The state created a formula for cities and towns to follow to calculate the revenue loss due to the impact of COVID. The formula uses prior year revenue amounts compared to a calculated counterfactual revenue collection scenario based on a set of assumptions described by Treasury. The result of this calculation is the amount being requested to be returned to the General Fund from ARPA funding.

Administrative ARPA Implementation Staffing Support (\$150,000)

Hire a Town coordinator (temporary, 2-year position) to help with management of projects related to the Local Rapid Recovery Planning (LRRP) program, including coordination of American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds to meet Town goals for COVID recovery.

- Staff member should have expertise in economic development and grant management.
- Staff member should become a single point of contact for local businesses within the Town.
- Future duties could include applying for additional grants to supplement ARPA funds and support implementation of this plan.

Below is language from the LRRP:

Hire a Town coordinator to help with management of projects related to the LRRP program, including distribution of American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds to meet Town goals for COVID recovery.

- Staff member should have expertise in economic development and grant management.
- Staff member should become a single point of contact for local businesses within the Town.
- Future duties could include applying for additional grants to supplement ARPA funds and support implementation of this plan.
- This position could help implement the following recommendations: Support a business-led organization for the Historic Business District and Atlantic/Pleasant District and/or help strengthen the existing Marblehead Chamber of Commerce with a renewed focus on these two business districts.
- Support the efforts of the Marblehead Chamber of Commerce and other businesses in working with the wider business community.
- Develop program to educate store owners about an effective online presence.
- Develop a coordinated, regular program for marketing the districts, including events.
- Engage regional partners in strengthening tourist links, especially those dedicated to arts, culture, and history.

Diagnostic

The Town does not have designated economic development staff to act as a liaison to the business community. Addressing the existing conditions will require someone who can coordinate the projects and work with businesses on a daily basis to increase communication.

Existing Town staff spent a lot of time reaching out to businesses during this process, but small business owners rarely have additional time. A dedicated staff member should be a liaison to the business community to support the development of a business-led association and act as a single point of contact for all business communication with the Town.

The pandemic created a retreat from indoor public gatherings in many communities. Should these conditions reoccur, or a series of lockdowns and reopening's become a normal pattern, consistent communication with Town Hall will be critical to the continued success of the businesses within Historic Business District and the Atlantic/Pleasant District.