

**TOWN OF LEICESTER
ARPA GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 1, 2023 - LEICESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY, COMMUNITY ROOM**

CALL TO ORDER/OPENING

Paul Fontaine called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. Paul Fontaine, Cheryl Cooney, Linda Colby, Regan Fortune, Paul McCarthy, Maureen Whitney, and Rosemary Wolanski were in attendance.

Also in attendance was Chris Vitale, Assistant Town Administrator.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

A motion was made by Regan Fortune to elect Paul Fontaine as committee chair, Cheryl Cooney as committee vice-chair, and Linda Colby as secretary; the motion was seconded by Paul McCarthy; the motion carried 6 to 0 with one abstention.

FORMAL COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST TRAINING

Paul Fontaine surveyed the committee on their status with regard to being sworn in by the town clerk and the completion of ethics training. Due to being away, one committee member has yet to be sworn in or taken the training course but will complete these tasks before the next meeting.

PROJECT PLAN DEVELOPMENT

1. Goals and Objectives

On January 10, 2023, the Leicester Select Board voted to allocate \$330,000 of ARPA funding to sponsor a new Community Grant Program, giving Leicester businesses, nonprofits, associations, and organizations the opportunity to apply for a grant.

Based on previous discussions with the Select Board, the committee understands that its fundamental goals are to administer the grant program according to the law and make recommendations to the Select Board, which will approve or disapprove the committee's recommendations for grant recipients.

The committee's objectives consist of developing grant materials, disseminating information to grant participants, town administration, and the public, meeting with grant applicants, collecting completed grants and required attachments, reviewing applications, making final recommendations to the Select Board, working with town administration to set up a payment system, and collecting final reports from grant recipients.

2. Scope of Work and Phases

Linda Colby prepared a preliminary project plan and reviewed it with the committee. Committee members revised the project plan activities as needed and volunteered to start working on different sections of the plan. Until more information is gathered, no definitive dates were set for completion.

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Paul Fontaine raised the idea of using phases for the grant program. This would allow organizations to apply in a second phase if they needed more time or if funds remained after the first phase. The discussion was tabled until the grant description and process are better defined.

3. Deliverables

Grant Description

Rose Wolanski and Linda Colby did some preliminary work to develop the grant description. Linda referenced wording used in the Greater Worcester Community Foundation, citing its ease of use. The committee will review their work and discuss it at the next meeting.

Grant Application

Rose Wolanski did some preliminary work on the grant application based on information from other town websites. The committee will review her work and discuss it at the next meeting.

Rose Wolanski raised the question of having grantees provide detailed financial information, especially for businesses and 501(3)(c) organizations. She also suggested that we require grantees to provide a form W-9 as part of the grant requirements. The committee did not make a decision on these topics, but Linda Colby invited everyone to review the financial exhibits required by the Greater Worcester Community Foundation since they seem to work very well and are not too difficult to complete.

Rose Wolanski raised the question of asking participants to meet with the committee if more detailed information is needed prior to making award recommendations to the Select Board.

Chris Vitale indicated that the committee should familiarize itself with Federal reporting requirements to make sure that the information gathered in the grant applications enables the committee to perform its reporting duties correctly. Regan Fortune and Maureen Whitney will review the reporting rules and bring them up for discussion as the grant application process progresses.

Evaluation Criteria

Linda Colby prepared a preliminary rubric for evaluating the grants. Regan Fortune suggested a more detailed scoring mechanism to make the rubric more objective. The committee agreed in unison about the scoring and the fact that the rubric must be strictly based on the questions in the grant application.

Interim Progress Report and Final Report

The committee determined that an interim progress report would probably not be needed, but a final report is essential. When more information on the grant is complete, the committee will start work on this aspect of the project.

Payment Process

Paul Fontaine raised the question of pre-payment or reimbursement of the grant funds. Although a final decision was not made, the committee agreed that if pre-payments are made to grant recipients, a "contract" between the town and the recipient would be useful for outlining the rules

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regarding the receipt of grant funds. Once this decision is made, the committee will work with Chris Vitale to determine the payment process.

Paul Fontaine raised the question of prevailing wages for projects proposed by town departments, boards, and committees. The committee asked Chris Vitale to look into prevailing wage requirements for grant recipients.

4. Communication

Email and Google Drive

Linda Colby has created a Google email account for the ARPA Grant Committee. The address is arpagrantcommittee@gmail.com. It will be used to send out and collect information and documents. Google Drive will be used to store documents. Linda Colby will share documents with the committee and Chris Vitale.

Public Forum

The committee agreed to conduct one or more public forums to answer questions regarding the grant application and the process. In addition, the committee will meet with applicants individually if necessary. No dates were set for the public forum(s).

Website

Linda Colby has created a preliminary website that will be used to share grant information, the grant application, the evaluation rubric, and the final reports. As the committee fine-tunes the grant application and application processes, the website will be updated to reflect final decisions. Chris Vitale indicated that the ARPA website could be accessed from the Town Hall website via a "landing page" or a department link. Linda Colby and Chris Vitale will work together to create this page.

Linda Colby raised the question of using online applications or paper applications for the grant program. The committee determined that both will probably be needed.

Chris Vitale indicated that the town uses a program to build and store online applications and attachments. Chris Vitale will give Linda Colby some training on how to use this program.

Other Communication Methods

The committee will use other media such as newspaper articles, LCAC, the sign at the center of town, and flyers. The Town Hall Facebook page will be used to post information about the program

5. Due Dates

The committee did not identify any due dates, but Paul Fontaine and Cheryl Cooney indicated that we should try to maintain a tight schedule so that the process does not go into the summer.

6. Responsibilities

Committee members volunteered to sign up for activities listed on the project plan.

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COMMITTEE COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Paul Fontaine asked each member of the committee for comments and suggestions. Cheryl Cooney suggested that the committee meet once a week for the foreseeable future. Paul Fontaine requested that the meetings take place on Thursdays since the Public Library is open late that day.

To remain in compliance with public meeting laws, Chris Vitale advised the group to send agendas to him no later than Tuesdays by 4:30 PM each week for posting on the town website.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Chris Vitale requested that we keep him updated on a regular basis and share important documents with him. He said that we should be prepared to provide an update to the Select Board on Monday, March 20.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the ARPA Grant Review Committee is scheduled for Thursday, March 9 from 4:30 to 6:30 PM in the Trustees' Room (2nd floor) at the Public Library.

ADJOURNMENT

Paul McCarthy left the meeting at 6:15 PM. A motion was made by Linda Colby to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Maureen Whitney; the motion carried 6 to 0 with one abstention.