

Town Forum Minutes
Monday, November 28, 2022 at 7:00pm
Brooklyn Middle School

Present: Austin Tanner, Joe Voccio, Lou Brodeur, David Lee, Ken Dykstra, Sara Deshaies, Recording Secretary
Also Present: Members of the Public, in person and online

Austin called the forum to order at 7:03pm

D. Lee narrated a presentation on the process for the ARPA funds criteria as related to the COVID19 pandemic, applications, and explanations of ARPA qualifying subjects.

Lisa Arends, resident, asked if there was any other outreach beyond the initial Online or Town Hall surveys conducted in the Spring. A. Tanner said there was advertising for the application process.

Lisa Arends then asked in NECCOG came up with the categories for the survey. D. Lee stated that the Committee came up with the categories in consolidating the data received.

Economic Development Director-\$80,000 Approved – Jeff Arends, resident, asked if the Town will be responsible for the salary after the two years. A. Tanner said it would be reevaluated at the end of the second year. Lisa Arends asked how the position would be funded after two years. A. Tanner stated that it would be up to the Town after two years. The position would really need to pay for itself.

Lisa Arends also asked if the position was to bring in business and fill the empty buildings. A. Tanner is hopeful that the position could help with that. J. Voccio stated that the EDC is a misnomer. The position is described as a liaison to help people through the process. The title may change.

South Street Park-\$300,000 Approved – Phil Coraccio, resident, asked if the contractors could be local and keep the work in Brooklyn. A. Tanner said they would have to go out to bid. So, not necessarily local.

AMVETS – Insurance & Repairs-\$50,000 Denied – A Resident asked if they could submit a revised application. The guidance was misleading. A. Tanner asked for a written resubmission.

Mortlake Fire Department – Lost Funds 2020/2021-\$70,000 Approved – Jeff Arends asked for clarification on lost funds. Sandy Brodeur stated that with many EMTs didn't want to take calls and no one wanted to go to the hospital because of COVID. J. Voccio asked for clarification on the ambulance calls. Even if the ambulance responded, if people didn't want to go, they could not bill.

East Brooklyn Fire Department – Hurst Jaws of Life Tool-\$9,700 Approved – Jeff Arends asked how many times the Jaws of life need to be replaced. A member of East Brooklyn Fire Company stated that they are used quite often. This new tool has a cutter as well. Sandy Brodeur also stated its battery operated. It's easier to handle. A Fire Company member also stated that the gas powered one has to be serviced regularly and that is expensive.

Lisa Arends asked if both departments share equipment. They do. She also asked if Mortlake has one as well. A Mortlake member stated they do and it's a benefit to the Town to have more than one.

J. Voccio made a broad statement that many of the applications were incomplete, no COVID need or also relying on surrounding communities. Largely, the Committee tried to stay within Brooklyn. A. Tanner also stated that over \$6m in requests were received. The applications also need to be very specific as each application needs justification.

Lisa Arends asked if applications to Brooklyn had to disclose if they applied in other towns. A. Tanner said he didn't think so.

Lisa Arends also asked if the number of residents assisted needed to be stated. A. Tanner stated no direct numbers were stated.

Jeff Arends asked if the Town talked to surrounding towns about food pantry funding. A. Tanner said no. J. Voccio said it's a good point. There were a couple of service agencies did apply. They applied for a very small amount, as if they were already well supported by surrounding areas. A. Tanner stated they could go back and look at applications that were not approved, but there would need to be process.

Lisa Arends asked where the details are for the applications such as broadband and tennis courts. A. Tanner stated that specifics would need to be presented prior to distribution of funds. D. Lee also stated that the application process did not require a full accounting of funds.

J. Voccio stated that the word 'approved' is inaccurate. Those projects were merely 'advanced'.

Lisa Arends asked if the sidewalk from Town Hall to Fairgrounds could be considered for ARPA since it was not approved through the grant. A. Tanner is going to reapply for the grant that was denied.

Sandy Brodeur stated that the amounts advanced are 'not to exceed' amounts. If they don't spend it all, they won't get it all.

She also stated that the Recreation Director is getting the neighborhood residents involved in planning of South Street Park.

Lisa Arends asked if the Community Center could apply. A. Tanner said the short answer is yes, but the long answer would be that the Town is not allowed to decrease their tax liability. It would require maintenance.

Lisa Arends then asked why maintenance of community center and not the park. A. Tanner stated that it's not for the Town to maintain the park.

J. Voccio stated that just to do maintenance alone of the community center probably won't pass, but the park is in an underserved community and directly fits the guidelines.

Lisa Arends said if the school is using the community center, then maybe it would qualify. A. Tanner stated there are other things that could contribute to funding.

Forum adjourned at 8:04pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Deshaies