

Special Meeting of the American Rescue Plan Task Force
May 26, 2021 – 4:30 p.m.
City Hall Council Chambers, 111 North Main Street Bristol CT 06010

Members Present: Cindy Bombard, Orlando Calfe, Eric Clemons, Michael Dumas, Mickey Goldwasser, Malcom Huckaby, David Maikowski, Thomas O'Brien, Donna Osuch, David Preleski, Susan Sadecki, Howard Schmelder, John Smith and Mayor Ellen Zoppo Sassu.

Also present: Ray Rogozinski, Josh Medeiros, Diane Waldron, Scott Smith, Justin Malley, Catherine Carbone, Councilman Kelley, Rob Longo and Dale Clift.

1. Call to Order & Introductions

Mayor Zoppo Sassu called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Members of the Task Force introduced themselves.

2. Discussion of background materials, priority areas, and timelines for the Task Force and to take any action as necessary

Mayor Zoppo Sassu provided an introduction of the Task Force, this first meeting is an organizational meeting. Materials and background information have been distributed and will continue to be as received. The Mayor feels this Task Force will have really great ideas based on the guidelines the Department of Treasury put together in the last 60 days. However, things are constantly changing, for example broadband has changed so much in the last year and is being taken up significantly within the American Rescue Plan. On Monday, Scott Smith the City's IT Director and the Mayor attended a call with the White House where they were talking about refining the parameter as it related to broadband.

Department Heads have their professional organizations tracking this as well as CCM, and the information will be passed on to the Task Force. \$28 million will be passed on to the City, and the City has received \$8 million already. Ancillary to this, not subject to this Task Force, but of interest with leveraging resources is \$18 million to the Board of Education, while not of our purview will have some interest of this Task Force to work together. The City has already made a lot of new friends, and started to take down ideas.

Members of the Task Force shared their initial thoughts and ideas, along with discussion on these topics.

Commissioner Goldwasser expressed interest in helping nonprofit organizations who shut down for a year, such as Bristol Midget Football who could not operate.

Commissioner Schmedler would like to see funds used towards job creation.

Commissioner Bombard discussed the workforce, jobs, and matching education to what's happening in the workforce, as well as the lack of equipment in the tech schools to help some of the local manufacturers for job growth.

Commissioner Huckaby discussed youth sports and after school programs which were nonexistent as well as how children were impacted mentally and physically. Organizations such as the Boys & Girls Club afterschool, youth programs and summer job programs could benefit.

Commissioner Heiser discussed looking at the return on the investment wherever the dollars are spent as this pandemic is offering opportunities the City may never see again. This Task Force should look at how they can lift up the underserved community and value the risk. If funds are given to a particular organization what happens to them and can they survive on their own. Previous or other funding sources should also be considered, as there needs to be rationale as to why dollars are being spent somewhere and not somewhere else.

Commissioner Sadecki discussed mental health as a huge concern, and the great outdoors has become attractive again, and should be made available to all residents.

Commissioner Smith discussed the Task Force's need to be careful giving money to nonprofits, and supporting program that will only run because of these funds.

Economic and Community Development Director, Justin Malley, spoke regarding the existing CDBG process, application and guidelines. The Economic and Community Development reports to State/Federal government for many of their programs and follows established guidelines.

The Mayor state this Task Force is going to look for the most effective ways to use the money as there are other opportunities besides the ARPA funds. PRYCS just received a grant, which Superintendent Medeiros spoke about, AccelerateCT, which will support access to summer camp for local children for summer enrichment in the amount of \$75,000 for all three camp sites. The grant provides for before and after care for camp, transportation, scholarships, support and enhancement work. Josh agrees these funds should support infrastructure and deferred maintenance to beautify the City.

Justin explained the HUD designated census tracts for Bristol, which are preferred areas, but the City is not limited to just those areas for the funds. Zone 4061 Opportunity Zone includes Downtown and Riverside Avenue as well as Zone 4057 which are low and moderate income that CDBG funds citizens or organizations in those areas. Justin provided more details on the CDBG grants, providing funding to nonprofit organizations low and moderate income residents following HUD guidelines through HUD through an application process.

Comptroller Diane Waldron stated the Board of Finance created a separate fund to track these funds, and the City's process will need to be followed with the funds allocated through the Board of Finance and City Council, following any State/Federal guidelines for reporting and auditing. As these funds and the Distressed Municipalities fund will be audited in accordance with the Federal Single Audit as part of our regular audit.

Commissioner Smith questioned the City's Staff being able to accommodate all the reporting and ongoing work with existing Staff as provisions allow for consulting or additional staff.

Diane stated the FEMA reports and CARES reporting was a tremendous amount of work for Staff. This is an areas that will be pursued further.

Dr. Carbone discussed some of the proposals for the Board of Education ESSER I, II, and ARP monies. There are five allowable categories for use of these funds. The BOE has been collaborating with local organizations for the best use of the funds. Dr. Carbone discussed various programs which are in place for education pathways and job placement, such as the CNA program with Tunxis.

Commissioner Ousch stated income is not the only definition, the Task Force should be open minded, thoughtful and planful, with a set of strategies, guidelines and parameters to follow.

3. Discuss the potential of sub-committees to focus on the priority areas and to take any action as necessary
4. Establish meeting schedule and to take any action as necessary

The Committee agreed to meet again on Wednesday June 9 at 4pm and Thursday, June 24 at 4 pm in the Council Chambers.

Mayor Zoppo Sassu stated the City will obtain information for the Committee on the census tracts, the use of staffing, definition of Title 1, a communications plan and explore some of the options discussed tonight if they qualify for funding. The Mayor has some lists that she will have typed up to show how the budget committed some of the funding to circulate to the Committee as well.

5. Adjournment

The Task Force adjourned at 5:41 p.m.