



*Office of the Town Manager*

## TOWN OF ACTON

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### MEMORANDUM

Date: September 30, 2021

To: Select Board

From: John S. Mangiaratti, Town Manager *JSM*

RE: Updates on American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Process and Preliminary Recommendations

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In advance of your October 4<sup>th</sup> discussion of the ARPA investment priorities please find the following:

1. Update on the ARPA Process
2. Updated Town of Acton Draft Preliminary ARPA Investment Priorities
3. Report on the initial community and stakeholder feedback
4. Town Manager Preliminary Recommendations

Please let me know if there is any additional information that I may provide.

#### 1. Update on ARPA Process

The Select Board accepted on behalf of the Town of Acton the seven million seventy-two thousand seven hundred thirty-three dollars in funding allocated to our community from the Federal government to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Board also approved a community engagement process to help determine how to invest this funding. The community engagement process included multiple public meetings, a survey, and a 30-day public comment period all leading up to the October 18<sup>th</sup> public Select Board meeting where the Board will consider approving an ARPA Investment Plan.

After initial deliberations on October 4<sup>th</sup> and the closing of comment period on October 13<sup>th</sup>, we are prepared to work to develop a recommended investment plan for the Board to consider on October 18<sup>th</sup>. The proposed plan will include items recommended for allocation and items recommended for holding in reserve over the next three years. For each investment allocated in the approved plan the actual expenses will be determined through an application process. The application process will ensure that expenses are both consistent with the approved ARPA Investment Plan and eligible uses of the funds. Items held in reserve would require Select Board approval to be allocated. This provides an opportunity to review and evaluate the reserved items and potentially recapture unspent portions. On September 20<sup>th</sup> the Select Board endorsed the allocation of \$400,000 in ARPA funds to replace the shortfall in estimated local receipts revenue in the FY22 budget. The plan that the Board approves will serve as the budget for how the remaining ARPA funds will be utilized through Dec. 31, 2024.

## **2. Updated Town of Acton Draft Preliminary ARPA Investment Priorities (see Attachment 1)**

Attachment 1 to this memo is an updated list containing revised cost estimates and clarifying language for several items. On September 13<sup>th</sup> the Board reviewed a list of draft preliminary investments that were generated following a needs assessment. Since then, we have been working to refine these draft priorities and additional items have been presented to the Board for consideration. The Acton Water District has replaced its request for water mains (P12) with a request for \$2,000,000 to support PFAS mitigation measures planned for the North Acton water treatment plant (P44). The Board of the Nagog Treatment Facility has requested \$300,000 for improvements to its infrastructure (P45). The updated list also contains an additional \$200,000 reserved (P46) in case it is needed to cover revenue shortfalls for FY23 services. The Board's allocation of \$400,000 for revenue replacement leaves \$6,672,733 available for other investment priorities.

## **3. Report on the initial community and stakeholder feedback**

As part of our robust community engagement process, the Town of Acton created an [ARPA web page](#) on the Town website to summarize the opportunities for public input. This information, including a link to the survey, was also published on a Town of Acton News Flash, across our social media channels, and in the printed and online versions of the Municipal Monthly. As of today, we have received 235 responses to the survey. Preliminary results of the survey were provided to the Board on September 27<sup>th</sup> and the final results will be delivered once the survey closes on October 13<sup>th</sup>. The Board also received letters and emails from boards, committees, residents, and businesses offering support or opposition to the investment priorities.

## **4. Town Manager Preliminary Recommendations (see Attachment 2)**

As requested by the Select Board, I have collaborated with our internal working group to develop a preliminary list of Town Manager recommended priorities. It is important to note that the priorities listed focus specifically on Town requests and do not include any requests from other entities such as the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District or Water District, even though some of those requests are ideal uses for ARPA funding. Attachment 2 lists a total of \$5,315,000 in ARPA investments over the next three years comprised of \$2,225,000 to be allocated and \$3,090,000 to be reserved. In most cases, these investments include lower amounts than what was identified in the initial needs assessment. These reductions were based on updated project information and in the spirit of maximizing the overall impact of the ARPA program. Items that have a potential of being funded through other means were not included. The following factors were also considered:

- alignment with Select Board goals,
- projects from the ten-year capital improvement plan that are challenging to fund through other means, and
- projects that may leverage more grant funding.

I look forward to your feedback on this information. Please let me know if there are any questions or comments.

## Town of Acton Draft Preliminary ARPA Investment Priorities

The following projects and programs were identified as preliminary investment priorities following a needs assessment, stakeholder input, and community engagement. The cost to implement these items is estimated at nearly \$14M.

### Revenue Replacement *\$4,095,000 in needs identified*

- P1** Replace revenue related to FY21 local receipt shortfall to deliver services in FY22 *\$400,000*
- P2** Convert the historic Asa Parlin House and surrounding infrastructure into an ADA compliant Community/Cultural center *\$1,000,000*
- P3** Telephone system upgrade to integrate with new school (ABRSD Request) *\$595,000*
- P4** Replace revenue related to FY21 Kindergarten/Extended Day revenue shortfalls (ABRSD Request) *\$425,000*
- P5** NARA accessibility improvements such as replacing the damaged boardwalk at NARA park with an ADA compliant and new ADA compliant walkways *\$400,000*
- P6** Funding to acquire new open spaces and improve existing open spaces *\$250,000*
- P7** Town wide Sustainability initiatives such as an electric vehicle pilot program for public safety, constructing solar arrays, and energy efficiency improvements to public facilities to advance efforts towards achieving net zero carbon emissions *\$200,000*
- P8** Virtual and hybrid meeting technology support *\$25,000*
- P46** Replace revenue related to revenue shortfall to deliver services in FY23 *\$200,000*

### Water, Sewer, Broadband Infrastructure *\$4,820,000 in needs identified*

- P9** Construct a sewer main extension to the Acton Housing Authority site at 364 Main Street *\$1,500,000*
- P10** Stormwater improvements at Fort Pond Brook related to the River Street dam *\$600,000*
- P11** Conduct a sewer feasibility study along the Great Road Corridor to support existing businesses and create new economic development opportunities in this commercial district *\$400,000*
- P12** Acton Water District water main upgrades in Kelley's Corner (AWD Request) *\$100,000* **withdrawn**
- P13** Extend broadband and utility service along Quarry Road *\$70,000*
- P44** PFAS Mitigation measures for the North Acton Treatment Plant (AWD Request) *\$2,000,000*
- P45** Improvements to the Nagog Treatment Waste Water Treatment System (Nagog Request) *\$300,000*

### Address Negative Economic Impacts *\$1,150,000 in needs identified*

- P14** A new online permitting system to streamline the building, health, conservation and planning permits to improve services and transparency *\$150,000*
- P15** Streetscape and parking improvements along Massachusetts Avenue and improvements to the Gardner Field in West Acton Center to help small businesses attract and retain customers *\$400,000*
- P16** Design and construct community recreation facilities including a dog park at 362 Main Street *\$200,000*
- P17** Forgivable loan programs to make it easier and more cost effective for residents and businesses to implement energy efficiency upgrades and reduce carbon emissions *\$100,000*
- P18** Implement recommendations from the Local Rapid Recovery Program to support businesses along the Great Road Corridor, including wayfinding signage and shared marketing services *\$100,000*
- P19** Provide financial incentives for businesses to install EV chargers in locations that would attract customers to frequent local businesses *\$40,000*

## Attachment 1

# Town of Acton Draft Preliminary ARPA Investment Priorities

**P20** Update the existing Complete Street Plan to improve infrastructure for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists \$35,000

**P21** Develop a public art plan and include public art in community spaces to help encourage pedestrian activity in business districts \$25,000

## Support Public Health Response *\$1,575,750 in needs identified*

**P22** Improve air quality in public facilities by improving HVAC systems \$500,000

**P23** A new full-time licensed social worker position to support Acton residents and help oversee social service programs \$300,000

**P24** Permanent Outdoor Learning Spaces for 6 schools (ABRSD Request) \$255,000

**P25** Public health services and supplies in response to the Covid19 pandemic (vaccine, PPE, testing, contact tracing, etc.) \$200,000

**P26** Covid Mitigation Measures such as Graduation, AP Exams, Tents, Tables, Chairs for April 2021 Return to School (ABRSD Request) \$102,000

**P27** Social Emotional Screener & Curriculum (ABRSD Request) \$63,750

**P28** Expand and improve outreach to increase access to public health information and services \$50,000

**P29** Expand curbside services at the Memorial Library and West Acton Citizen's Library to enhance literacy opportunities \$40,000

**P30** Create an outdoor meeting space next to Town Hall to facilitate outdoor customer service interactions and staff meetings \$40,000

**P31** Study to analyze the Town's COVID-19 response and create a best practices manual for emergency management response \$25,000

## Equity Focused Services *\$2,283,200 in needs identified*

**P32** Construct and rehabilitate affordable housing units in Acton for individuals and families \$500,000

**P33** Qualifying grants for tuition free ADK based on income level over 3 years (ABRSD Request) \$510,000

**P34** Qualifying grants for tuition free Extended Day Programming based on income level over 3 years (ABRSD Request) \$510,000

**P35** Emergency Rental Assistance program to assist households that are unable to pay rent \$300,000

**P36** Provide free After School Tutoring Program over 2 years (ABRSD Request) \$85,000

**P37** Community Food Program Mar-Jun 2021 (ABRSD Request) \$78,200

**P38** Childcare subsidy program to assist qualified families at or below 80% of the Area Median Income \$75,000

**P39** Workshops and programs related to mental health, equity and empathy \$25,000

**P40** Develop a youth council program to facilitate youth engagement in local government and provide expanded opportunities for participation in decisions being made at the local level \$25,000

**P41** Pilot program to provide a universal access program that ensures equal access to public recreational facilities by providing specialized equipment, programs and techniques \$25,000

## Premium Pay No proposals for this category

## Administration *\$300,000 in needs identified*

**P42** Grant Administrator/Procurement Officer to support the management of the ARPA funding and other federal and state grant programs for three years \$275,000

**P43** financial consulting and audit services to ensure compliance \$25,000

## ATTACHMENT 2

P#	For Allocation	For reserve	Town Manager Preliminary Recommendations (9/30)
P1	\$400,000		Replace revenue related to FY21 local receipt shortfall that to deliver services in FY22 (*already allocated)
P46		\$200,000	Replace revenue to deliver services in FY23
P25	\$50,000	\$50,000	Public health services and supplies in response to the Covid19 pandemic (vaccine, PPE, testing, contact tracing, etc.)
P2	\$400,000	\$600,000	Funding to support rehabilitation of the historic Asa Parlin House and surrounding grounds for reuse as Community/Cultural center for programming and meeting space.
P9		\$1,000,000	Funding to support the construction a sewer main extension to the Acton Housing Authority site at 364 Main Street and provide opportunities to connect nearby commercial properties
P11	\$50,000	\$300,000	Conduct a feasibility study and initial design for improving waste water infrastructure for the Great Road to support existing businesses and create new economic development opportunities in this commercial district
P14	\$100,000	\$50,000	A new online permitting system to streamline the building, health, conservation and planning permits to improve services and transparency
P15	\$400,000		Streetscape and parking improvements along Massachusetts Avenue and improvements to the Gardner Field in West Acton Center to help attract and retain small businesses
P22	\$350,000	\$150,000	Improve air quality in public facilities by improving HVAC systems
P10	\$100,000	\$400,000	Stormwater improvements at Fort Pond Brook related to the River Street dam
P30	\$40,000		Create an outdoor meeting space next to Town Hall to facilitate outdoor customer service interactions and staff meetings
P16	\$45,000		Design a community recreation amenity as part of a cohesive design for the Main Street property that will also have AHA Senior Housing and a Dog Park
P35	\$100,000	\$200,000	Emergency Rental Assistance program to assist households that are unable to pay rent over three years
P5		\$50,000	Funding to serve as match for grant applications to complete NARA accessibility improvements such as replacing the damaged boardwalk at NARA park with an ADA compliant and new ADA compliant walkways
P41	\$20,000		Pilot program to provide a universal access program that ensures equal access to public recreational facilities by providing specialized equipment, programs and techniques
P38	\$80,000		Childcare subsidy program to assist qualified families at or below 80% of the Area Median Income
P17	\$30,000	\$30,000	Forgivable loan programs to make it easier and more cost effective for residents and businesses to implement energy efficiency upgrades and reduce carbon emissions
P7	\$50,000	\$50,000	Town wide Sustainability initiatives such as an EV pilot program for public safety and public transportation, constructing solar arrays, and energy efficiency improvements to public facilities to advance efforts towards achieving net zero carbon emissions
P43	\$10,000	\$10,000	Financial consulting and audit services to ensure compliance with federal guidelines