



Town of Paxton
697 Pleasant Street
Paxton, MA 01612

American Rescue Plan Act Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 28, 2021

Meeting Location: John Bauer Senior Center 17 West Street, Paxton, MA 01612

Members Present: Carol Riches, Julia Pingitore, Jeff Olson, Cindy Love, Mark Savasta, Larissa Kennedy

Meeting called to order at 10:02am.

- **Motion (CR) seconded (JO) to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes from September 7, 2021. Unanimous, all in favor.**

Julia Pingitore – How did we do on our outreach?

Cindy Love - St Columba's did not feel that they needed anything. The Congregational Church did receive money from CARES for the mission program but that helped a much wider population than just Paxton. Maybe some help with the food pantry. They also need an elevator.

Julia Pingitore – I spoke with Shawn Rickan at Paxton Center School. Looked at two areas. Supplies for the school. The teachers have their own pages and most of them list any supplies that they need. Outside of the school there are a couple of families that have also fallen into the need category. Secondly, we discussed a program to help catch the kids up from what they missed last year. I was told that over the summer there were 5 acceleration programs that were run and for grades 1 to 5 the cost was between \$25,000 to \$30,000. This would be difficult to do just for Paxton because the school district wants to keep every school at the same level. We would need to do something outside of the school. Perhaps run by Recreation. There are no field trips planned for this year either.

Carol Riches - I like the idea of helping the underprivileged. It seems that Paxton has fallen even further behind. I'd like to see the school supplies for PCS taken care of. We could do it as long as the program exists. We could purchase off the teacher's school list.

Julia Pingitore – We could look at putting on a program that is sponsored by the town and see if any college student would like to come and assist with tutoring. I think there is a need for something like this to catch the kids back up. Basic literacy programs.

Larissa Kennedy – Have MCAS test scores been released yet?

Julia Pingitore – I think to the teachers only at this point.

Julia Pingitore – Some additional ideas for funding for the Board of Health and Emergency Preparedness would be the addition of a nurse on the Board. The ability to hold vaccination clinics in town and get the infrastructure in place to do so. We could look at building out an area in an existing Town building. We could set up a trailer for emergency preparedness. This could be a multifunctional unit for public safety. We could also use tents as well for a quick deploy drive through area. We would need a couple of heaters to put in the tent for colder weather. I

think a trailer would be more effective. We would be able to test employees and try to limit the number of employees that are out of work. I have tests. I'm fully trained and ready to go. We just need a location to set up. The trailer is more expensive and may be better for the long term need however the tent is available now.

Carol Riches – We can get the tent now and it should go under CARES.

Jeff Olson – The trailer would be a good item to have for emergency management. Also, it would be good to see if we could get broadband into the center of town. The infrastructure in the center of town needs updating.

Mark Savasta – What types of things can we purchase with the lost revenues? We should look at what capital items the Town needs and then we would not have to bring those items to Town meeting.

Carol Riches – lost revenue can be used for any town services. I'd like to see something done with the exterior of the Town Hall. I am meeting with the Historical Committee to see if they would allow siding to be installed. This could cost upwards of \$100,000.

Mark Savasta – I feel that those are the type of things that we should be focusing on.

Cindy Love – The ramp to the side entrance needs replacing and at this time the front entrance cannot be used until it is repaired. Air purification systems for both the Town Hall and the COA.

Julia Pingitore – We could get room sized units and put them where they are needed.

Carol Riches – We can take some items out of FEMA and put them into CARES so we don't lose the CARES money.

Mark Savasta – What about an electronic sign for the Town?

Carol Riches – I am reluctant to do that because it may not get approved.

Julia Pingitore - What is the cost for the outside electric sign?

Mark Savasta – Rutland's was in the area of 30,000 to 40,000.

Carol Riches – We need to use the CARES and FEMA money and then focus on the ARPA. It's an accounting nightmare. We can put through the tent now and worry about the trailer later.

Julia Pingitore – I was looking at a 25-foot trailer. Things that it should have are a window, communication center, work station, small food and or medication prep area as well.

Carol Riches – We need to be careful about being able to maintain it later down the road when this funding is gone.

Julia Pingitore - It would need to be wired for light and power so you would need a generator.

Carol Riches – You need to factor in the cost for generator and the maintenance every year.

Julia Pingitore – Maintenance of the trailer would fall onto Emergency Management.

Carol Riches – Since Travis could not be here, he told me that he looked into the engineering for West Street and the cost would be about \$140,000 if done in one phase. If it was done in three phases it would be \$180,000. That would make it shovel ready for the Massworks Grants. Maybe the water dept could kick in towards the cost of this project.

Mark Savasta – Due to the police reform we must send officers to the bridge academy, or they lose their job. The training is broken up by last name and I have three years to get them trained. This is an unfunded mandate. What do we think about having window help on the weekends at the Public Safety Complex? We let go two employees and now we are paying unemployment instead of having this area covered. Can we use any of this money to bring those two employees back?

Carol Riches – Has it caused any issues?

Mark Savasta – It puts more strain on the regional dispatch. What do we want as a town? I think it's a shame to have it totally closed. Other towns go without coverage, but I'm only concerned about our town. Do I try to put it back into my budget for next year?

Julia Pingitore – What do we think about street number signs? There are other communities that are doing this.

Carol Riches – There are a number of communities doing this. Some offer them for free and some charge a fee. There is a grant for it. It is a mass general law that you need to have a number sign on your property. The question is would Paxton residents have a flavor for this?

Jeff Olson – How much is the lost revenue?

Carol Riches – The lost revenue is for Town services.

Larissa Kennedy – It is around \$600,000.

Julia Pingitore – The Town common needs to be improved. Sidewalks added and no parking along the common.

Carol Riches – Sidewalks on Maple Street are a priority. The common is part of the complete streets program.

Mark Savasta – With the lost revenue can we go to each department and ask them what they need so that we can then decide what to use the money for?

Julia Pingitore – Yes, but we would need to put some parameters on the questions. We are looking at a total of \$600,000 from lost revenue.

Larissa Kennedy – There will be more than \$600,000. It's calculated every December 1st.

Carol Riches – The lost revenue is currently \$659,000.

Julia Pingitore – We should use funds towards the lost revenue first. We have the most leverage with that funding.

Carol Riches – We have to make sure we are compliant, and we need to think about the community.

Carol Riches - At this point our priorities are:

- **Town Hall (\$100,000)**
- **COA**
- **Trailer**
- **West Street (\$140,000)**
- **Permitting program (\$15,00)**
- **Supplies for PCS**
- **Food pantry at church and COA**

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Julia Pingitore - The tents and air purifiers can be purchased through CARES.

Carol Riches – We can come back at any time to recommit the money. Things are going to continue to evolve.

Julia Pingitore – The Pay Go program will be used for smaller items that can be funded on the run.

Carol Riches – Just a note, there was a problem last week with the Paxton Center School septic system. It is being looked into.

Cindy Love – We could use a new cabinet for the pantry and relocate to second floor office. There is a huge need for it and I would continue to keep it nonperishable items.

Carol Riches – Let's get the information about the pantry out to the school in the form of a flyer that can be handed out to each student.

Cindy Love – I sent country bank a letter to let them know that we are still open because they used to donate \$2,000 a year to our food pantry and we haven't seen that for a while, so I wanted them to know that we are open in case they thought we weren't.

Julia Pingitore - The last item we need to discuss is the website. The website was going to be used to solicit ideas. I'm not sure that we need to still do that. The ideas we have are varied and I'm happy with the ones we have. Also, the site is to help us be transparent to the community on how the money is being spent. We can set up a page on the town's website. We can list items that are currently being funded and other potential ones. We need to put the committee members names and the minutes. The role of the committee and eligible uses of the funds. At our next meeting we can look at voting on a few projects to go forward.

Carol Riches – The committee can prioritize the items that they would like to see funded but the Board of Selectmen will make the final decision.

Adjourned Meeting at 11:32am, Unanimous, all in favor.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 12, 2021, at 10:00am.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Graf-Parsons

Donna Graf-Parsons
Executive Assistant