

Southborough ARPA Committee Report Out

May 17, 2022

Overview

- Review of committee, charge and ARPA allowances and restrictions
- Committee timeline and approach
- Survey results
- Proposal recommendations

Southborough ARPA Committee Composition

Andrea Hamilton, Chair

Meme Luttrell, Co-Chair (Planning Board)

Tim Martel (Advisory)

Tony Schoener (Capital Planning)

Joe Palmer (Capital Planning)

John Wood (EDC)

Anne Rubenstein

Meeting weekly Tuesday or Thursday since late January. Meetings agendas and minutes can be found at: <https://www.southboroughtown.com/arpa-committee>

Southborough ARPA Committee: Charter

- **Duties:**

- **The Committee shall provide recommendations to the Select Board on the expenditure of approximately \$3,051,241 in ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act of 2021) funding;**
- The Committee shall solicit input from Town departments, boards, committees, and commissions;
- The Committee shall solicit input from the Southborough community, through means including but not limited to surveys and public forums;
- The Committee shall develop an evaluation tool to rank proposals for funding, taking into account the benefit of the requested improvement to Town operations and/or the community as a whole;
- The Committee shall develop a report to present to the Select Board that will include a list of all proposals submitted for consideration, in addition to those recommended for funding;
- The Committee recommendation will be presented to the Select Board at a regularly scheduled meeting not later than **May 16, 2022** and be prepared to discuss their process and findings at that time.
- **Recommendations that impact FY23 funding for Annual Town Meeting articles should be made no later than March 1, 2022.**

ARPA Provides Funds That May Be Used

- To respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality;
- To respond to workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency by providing premium pay to eligible workers;
- For the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID–19 public health emergency relative to revenues collected in the most recent full fiscal year prior to the emergency;*
- To make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.
- SLFRF funds may only be used for costs incurred within a specific time period, beginning March 3, 2021, with all funds obligated by December 31, 2024 and all funds spent by December 31, 2026.

***Recipients may elect a “standard allowance” of \$10 million to spend on government services through the period of performance**

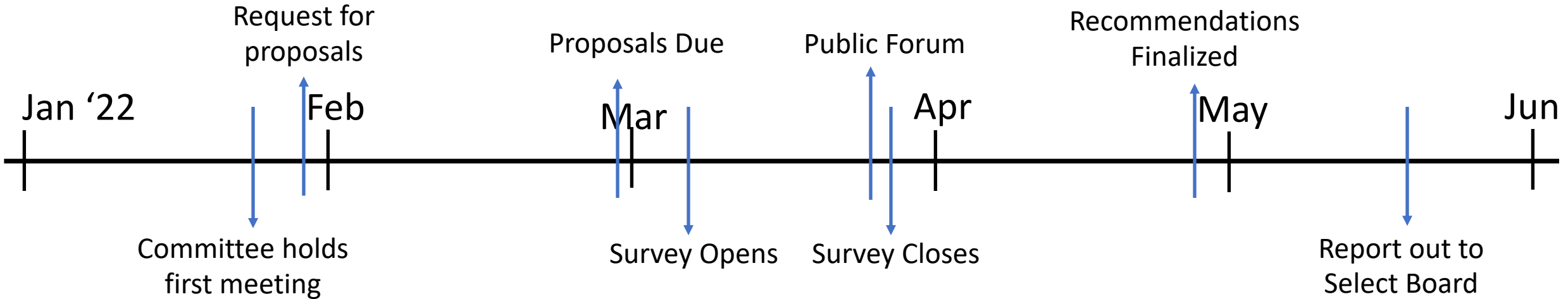
Lost Revenue Standard Allowance

- Recipients may elect a “standard allowance” of \$10 million to spend on government services through the period of performance
- Government services generally include any service traditionally provided by a government, unless Treasury has stated otherwise
- Government services is the most flexible eligible use category under the SLFRF program, and funds are subject to streamlined reporting and compliance requirements. Recipients should be mindful that certain restrictions, which are detailed further in the Restrictions on Use section and apply to all uses of funds, apply to government services as well.

Restrictions of Use

OFFSET A REDUCTION IN NET TAX REVENUE	DEPOSITS INTO PENSION FUNDS	ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS
<p>States and territories may not use this funding to directly or indirectly offset a reduction in net tax revenue resulting from a change in law, regulation, or administrative interpretation beginning on March 3, 2021, through the last day of the fiscal year in which the funds provided have been spent. If a state or territory cuts taxes during this period, it must demonstrate how it paid for the tax cuts from sources other than SLFRF, such as by enacting policies to raise other sources of revenue, by cutting spending, or through higher revenue due to economic growth. If the funds provided have been used to offset tax cuts, the amount used for this purpose must be repaid to the Treasury.</p>	<p>No recipients except Tribal governments may use this funding to make a deposit to a pension fund. Example: Reduce a liability incurred prior to the start of the COVID-19 public health emergency and occur outside the recipient's regular timing for making the payment</p>	<p>No debt service or replenishing financial reserves. Since SLFRF funds are intended to be used prospectively, recipients may not use SLFRF funds for debt service or replenishing financial reserves (e.g., rainy day funds).</p> <p>No satisfaction of settlements and judgments. Satisfaction of any obligation arising under or pursuant to a settlement agreement, judgment, consent decree, or judicially confirmed debt restructuring in a judicial, administrative, or regulatory proceeding is itself not an eligible use. However, if a settlement requires the recipient to provide services or incur other costs that are an eligible use of SLFRF funds, SLFRF may be used for those costs.</p> <p>Additional general restrictions. SLFRF funds may not be used for a project that conflicts with or contravenes the purpose of the American Rescue Plan Act statute (e.g., uses of funds that undermine COVID-19 mitigation practices in line with CDC guidance and recommendations) and may not be used in violation of the Award Terms and Conditions or conflict of interest requirements under the Uniform Guidance. Other applicable laws and regulations, outside of SLFRF program requirements, may also apply (e.g., laws around procurement, contracting, conflicts-of-interest, environmental standards, or civil rights).</p>

Committee Timeline



3 months from first meeting to recommendations

Soliciting Proposals

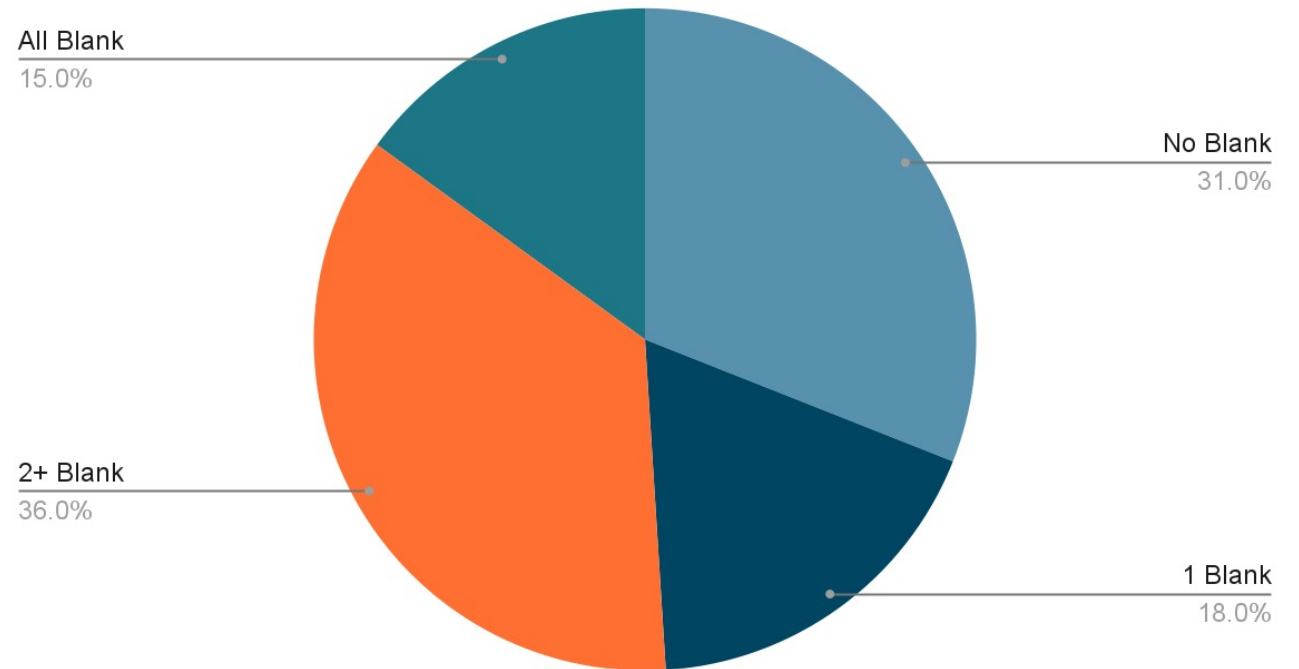
- Proposal request sent to all town chairs, boards, committees & department heads
- Standard template provided including a request to prioritize:
 - Ongoing pandemic-related need for Southborough residents and businesses (health or economic)
 - Reduce the property tax burden for town residents
 - Address a significant community want
 - Risk-reduce future town expenditure
- Additional email also sent expressing the committee's hesitancy towards funding long term staffing positions with ARPA money
- Follow-up conducted by individual committee members and invitations to speak at committee meetings
- We received >30 proposals from 14+ groups (\$4-5MM worth of projects)

Thank you to all who submitted! All proposals were thoughtful and with merit!

ARPA Survey to Solicit Town Feedback

- Addendum to town Satisfaction Survey
- Significant advertising throughout town and via direct mailer to all residents
- 17 rank choice options
- 674 participants
- An open forum was also held on March 25th but attendance was very limited

Percent of responses left blank



Thank you to Matt Probst, Maryanne Beauvais and Brian Beauvais for their help in executing and analyzing the survey!

Survey Results

Majority Rules: Count of Primary Answer Choices

- 1. Property Tax
- 2. Tie: Senior Center & Sidewalk Work
- 3. Purchase 1.7 Acre Lot
- 4. Youth & Family Services
- 5. Town bonus pay

ROUND 1 Candidate	Votes	Status
Property tax relief	169	Hopeful
Fund sidewalk work (repairs and new installations)	87	Hopeful
Senior Center expansion	87	Hopeful
Purchase of 1.7 acre vacant National Grid parcel in downtown for future town use	41	Hopeful
Youth and Family Services increased mental health support services and outreach	33	Hopeful
Bonus pay for town employees who performed essential work during the COVID-19 health emergency	27	Hopeful
Lunblad field renovations to include multi-use sports fields, picnic area and dog park	25	Hopeful
Grants in the areas of education, arts & culture, and environment	18	Hopeful
Improve town trail systems	18	Hopeful
Board of health enhancements to address ongoing needs from the pandemic	17	Hopeful
ADA compliance upgrades to town facilities	14	Hopeful
Provide needs-based economic relief	14	Hopeful
Electronic clickers to enable anonymous in-person voting at town meeting	9	Hopeful
Improve municipal Wi-Fi, cybersecurity, and conference rooms	5	Hopeful
Upgrades to the municipal tracking of septic plans	5	Hopeful
Upgrade the town website (including consolidated event scheduling and registration)	5	Hopeful
Signs to mark the Southborough Center Historic District	4	Rejected

Above shows majority rules analysis for all responses. The survey was analyzed in several ways, but the six proposals above always represented the top five selections

Senior Center Renovation



- Cost: \$400,000 (\$20,000 has already been committed from ARPA funds for architectural drawings)
- Top 5 In Survey? **Yes**
- Master Plan Goal? **No**
- Description: Construction of a new room on the front of the Senior Center
- Justification: A significant town want in the survey. Supports seniors, a group disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Youth & Family Services

Mental Health Support Services



**SOUTHBOROUGH YOUTH
AND FAMILY SERVICES**
STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY BY SUPPORTING ITS FAMILIES

- Cost: \$76,000 (\$46,000 part-time mental health clinician; \$5,000 marketing & outreach; \$25,000 one-year contract Interface Referral Services)
- Top 5 In Survey? **Yes**
- Master Plan Goal? **No**
- Description: Referral service to connect residents with mental health specialists, temporary mental health clinician to provide short term and 'bridge' services for residents requiring mental health support. Marketing and outreach to advertise services available to residents.
- Justification: A significant town want in the survey. Supports an increased need for mental health support driven by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Board of Health Temporary Staffing

- Cost: \$110,500 (\$104,000 for bridge staffing; \$6,500 for vaccination clinic staffing)
- Top 5 In Survey? **No**
- Master Plan Goal? **No**
- Description: Temporary staffing while the department explores regionalization and post-pandemic needs. Note, the \$104K bridge funding is sufficient for either a FY23/24 Director contract or a FY23 Director and Nurse contract.
- Justification: This funding is to address ongoing acute pandemic need and to allow the department time to finalize a post-pandemic staffing plan

Completion of the Peninsula Trail & Other Trail Enhancements



- Cost: \$207,047 (\$194,547 for Peninsula Trail*; \$12,500 for other trail enhancements)
- Top 5 In Survey? **No**
- Master Plan Goal? **Yes**
- Description: Construction of accessible Peninsula Trail boardwalk and footbridge. Additional trail enhancements for Peninsula and other trails (interpretive signage, benches etc.)
- Justification: While not a top 5 want in the survey, trails and connectivity have historically been community priorities and completion of the Peninsula Trail is a Master Plan goal. It would be the only ADA certified trail in Southborough. Trails saw a significant uptick in usage during the COVID-19 pandemic and the additional trail enhancements will make them more broadly accessible to town residents.

* Note, there is a grant pending for this trail. It is low probability, but if awarded this money would need to be re-allocated. Grant decision expected by year end.

Town Purchase of National Grid Property

- Cost: \$252,000
- Top 5 In Survey? Yes
- Master Plan Goal? Yes
- Description: Purchase of the ~1.7-acre vacant parcel in downtown Southborough currently owned by National Grid
- Justification: This is both a significant town want in the survey and a Master Plan goal. The land represents a future town asset.

Technology Infrastructure Updates

- Cost: \$330,000 (\$250,000 for WiFi upgrades; \$80,000 for new town website)
- Top 5 In Survey? **No**
- Master Plan Goal? **Yes**
- Description: Upgrade town's website to support more collaborative features and upgrade the town's WiFi capabilities at specific town facilities
- Justification: While this is not a significant town want, it is a need. It will provide necessary cybersecurity updates and improve the town's ability to conduct business online, which has increased in importance due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ADA Upgrades

- Cost: \$70,000 (\$20,000 for recreation; \$50,000 already allocated to facilities as part of '22 property tax reduction)
- Top 5 In Survey? **No**
- Master Plan Goal? **Yes**
- Description: ADA compliance upgrades in town buildings and recreation facilities to address deficiencies from the Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan.
- Justification: While this is not a significant town want, it is a need. This money will not address all compliance gaps but allows the town to start making necessary modifications to meet ADA requirements

Signage for Southborough Historic District

- Cost: \$26,532
- Top 5 In Survey? **No**
- Master Plan Goal? **Yes**
- Description: Purchase signage to mark the Southborough Center Historic District
- Justification: While this was not a significant town want, it is a Master Plan goal. It is particularly straight-forward and executable within the timeline of the ARPA funds.



Property Tax Abatement

- Cost: \$500,000 (including money already allocated for FY23)
- Top 5 In Survey? **Yes**
- Master Plan Goal? **No**
- Description: Allocate funds to reduce town property tax rate beginning FY23
- Justification: This was the number one want in the survey. The \$500,000 represents a number the committee feels can bring significant reduction to the overall property tax burden while balancing against other needs.

Needs-Based Economic Relief

- Cost: \$70,000
- Top 5 In Survey? **No**
- Master Plan Goal? **No**
- Description: Allocate funds to provide needs-based relief to citizens facing economic hardship. Recommend administration by the Southborough Board of Commissioners of the Trust Fund
- Justification: Economic relief is a stated goal of ARPA. This money provides a mechanism for targeted relief to those in town who do not benefit from the property tax abatement as well as those who need greater relief than that provided by property tax reduction.

Sidewalk repair and installation

- Cost: \$750,000
- Top 5 In Survey? Yes
- Master Plan Goal? Yes
- Description: Allocate funds for sidewalk work from repairs to new installations
- Justification: This was a top want in the survey and is consistently reported as a top priority in other town surveys and forums. Sidewalk installation and connectivity is a Master Plan goal. The original request was for \$400,000 but DPW believes up to ~\$1.2MM of work could be achieved in the ARPA timeframe. We recommend a \$750,000 budget as an appropriate balance between this significant town want and other funding needs.

Premium Pay for Eligible Town Employees

- Cost: \$300,000
- Top 5 In Survey? **Yes**
- Master Plan Goal? **No**
- Description: Provide one-time premium pay to allowable town employees (non-exempt, worked in person during the pandemic) at a rate of \$1000/part time employee and \$5000/full time employee
- Justification: This was a town want in the survey. There is currently no other mechanism to provide premium/hazard pay to town employees who acted as essential workers during the pandemic and the committee feels it is correct to provide premium pay to compensate for this work.

Recommendation Summary

Proposal	Cost
Senior Center Renovation	\$400,000 (including \$20,000 already allocated for engineering)
Youth & Family Services Mental Health Support Services	\$76,000
Board of Health Temporary Staffing	\$110,500 (including \$50,000 already allocated for BOH Director)
Completion of the Peninsula Trail & Other Trail Enhancements	\$207,047
Town Purchase of National Grid Property	\$252,000
Technology Infrastructure Updates	\$330,000
ADA Upgrades	\$20,000 (+50,000 accounted for in Property Tax Abatement)
Signage for Southborough Historic District	\$26,532
Property Tax Abatement	\$500,000 (\$390,485 remaining after \$50,000 ADA Improvements + \$59,515 Breakneck Hill Remediation)
Needs-Based Economic Relief	\$70,000
Sidewalk repair and installation	\$750,000
Premium Pay for Eligible Town Employees	\$300,000
Audit Resulting from ARPA funds	\$5,000
Mailing for ARPA Use Survey	\$2,000
Strategic Solutions Consulting	TBD
Recommendation Total	\$3,049,079
ARPA Total	\$3,051,241
Remaining	\$2,162

Proposals Not Funded

Proposal	Rationale
Implementation of town-wide event and scheduling and registration system (\$70,000)	Not a ready to go project
Implementation of interactive conference room capabilities (\$500,000)	Not a ready to go project
Purchase of electronic devices to enable electronic, anonymous voting at Town Meeting (\$18,600)	Requires additional votes/approvals before moving forwards. Funds can be provided by Advisory if/when needed
Lunblad Field Renovations including multi-use sports fields, picnic area and dog park (cost not available)	Feasibility study in process but budget numbers not available so not possible to move forwards at this time
Greater Boroughs Public Health Escalation cost of living increase (\$5,500)	Requires additional funds from other towns and uses temporary funds for a permanent salary increase
Digitalization of septic files and new software to tracking of septic plans (\$32,500)	There is state ARPA funding for septic. Software not yet available
Mini grants in the area of Education, Arts & Culture and Environment in Southborough (\$50,000)	Not a town need and not a top want from the survey or part of master plan
Consultant support for FY23 for SHOPC to provide technical assistance to committee for ongoing activities (\$8,500)	Staffing positions should be provided through the Warrant
Funds for the affordable housing trust (\$500,000)	Should come from CPC funds
Feasibility Studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulatory issues presented in current Southborough zoning bylaws that negatively impact affordable housing Potential buildout and redevelopment of South Union School Implementation of wastewater treatment along Rt. 9 Boston Worcester Air Line Trail and Shared use path 	The committee ultimately had sufficient shovel-ready projects of merit that we did not recommend funding any future-looking feasibility work.