

Item 24-0352: Request to approve the execution of MOUs for the following projects using ARPA funding, thus obligating the funds per ARPA requirements

Common Council

Wed, Apr 03, 2024 7:00PM

Mayor Jake Woodford 53:33

All right. Moving on to the next item from the finance committee. All right, this is item 24-0352 request to approve the execution of MOUs for the following projects using ARPA funding thus obligating the funds per our requirements. We have a motion and a second to approve.

Mayor Jake Woodford 54:12

I'm sorry, we—can we get one more second here? Oh, oh, come on. All right. Alder Fenton, we got you. All right. Alder Fenton.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 54:32

Thank you, Your Honor. Um, I was asked in the breakdown of the items—the internal items that for which we're being asked to approve the memorandums of understanding—specifically the traffic signal control safety enhancements being under the project category of community wellness, mental health, and violence prevention. And I will leave it at Your Honor's discretion who to ask to answer this, but can somebody give me a little bit of answer as to how this fits specifically into community wellness, mental health, and violence prevention? The obvious traffic issues, but could we have that?

Mayor Jake Woodford 55:17

I can, I can address this briefly. And if I miss anything Traffic engineer Lom come bat clean-up for me. But this, this particular set of interventions relates to the switching equipment that we rely on to manage the traffic networks throughout the city. As I think we've all seen in the wake of the pandemic, driver behavior has changed sometimes fairly significantly. And as we continue to try to prioritize managing a well-maintained network of traffic control infrastructure, this equipment is critical to maintaining systems like our crosswalks throughout the city and also making sure we're prepared to grow that network if as we work our way through the Complete Streets design process, there are other types of interventions that need to be made with respect to things like pedestrian safety and traffic control systems related to that. Okay, I got the thumbs up from the traffic engineer.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 56:21

Thank you. And may—I actually have a second question.

Mayor Jake Woodford 56:24

Please, go ahead. Yeah, of course.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 56:26

Okay. So doing—and I understand doing the math, that leaves us with 500,000 in that particular project category allocation. Could I ask for an update on the status of, you know, I know we have grant applications. When are those going to be open, and could just can we just get a status on that other part, please?

Mayor Jake Woodford 56:49

Deputy Director Kress—or okay, Director Ohman, your mic number please? Right, Director Ohman.

Director Jeri Ohman (Finance) 56:57

Thank you, chair. We have opened the application process for mental health grants with community organizations. I believe that timeframe is closed and those applications that are in the early review process stages.

Mayor Jake Woodford 57:13

And do we have a timeline for awards?

Director Jeri Ohman (Finance) 57:17

I know that BMC, our ARPA consultant, is currently reviewing those, and they will be turned over to staff and the review committee by the end of next week, I believe, for our process. I'm not sure if we have a date—if that date is a month out.

Mayor Jake Woodford 57:38

Deputy Director Kress

Deputy Director David Kress (Community and Economic Development) 57:41

Just to build on that. As Director Ohman indicated, we're currently having our consultant review for compliance with ARPA regulations. After that process is complete, we do anticipate that there will be an internal review committee established, and the hope is that once that review process has wrapped up, we'll bring it through finance committee and Council sometime in May.

Mayor Jake Woodford 58:08

Alder van Zeeland.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 58:11

Thank you, Chair. I had a hard time wrapping my mind around the plan for the neighborhood Leadership Academy. And it turns out that when I was doing some research for a constituent issue, I found that our strategic plan 5.4 actually addresses this in detail along with the metrics that would make this program successful. So, I am going to support it wholeheartedly. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 58:44

Alder Alfheim.

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 58:46

Thank you, Chair. I'm just going to voice my appreciation for the downtown lighting enhancements making this list. I appreciate the speed in which the APD, ADI, and the city came together and found a correction. And I will also support the Neighborhood Watch program. I think anything we can do in our community that is passively impacting our safety in downtown and in our neighborhoods is positive. And getting our communities involved, using their eyes and their communication and little things, learning and communicating as well as a little bit of lighting, we can make a pretty big impact when it comes to reducing crime and taking care of us. So, I appreciate both of these steps and when will and look forward to both of them being involved. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 59:34

Alder Doran.

Alderson Chad Doran (District 15) 59:36

Thank you. Just wanted to follow up with a couple more questions about the transit center renovation piece. We'd asked about this at the Finance Committee just for the benefit of the rest of our colleagues as well. I had questions, I guess, to for—I'll start with clarification about the funding in that we—we were told that committee the that we cannot offer the \$1.8 million in ARPA funding as a incentive to a developer for this project. I guess I just want to clarify that that's correct.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:00:15

That is correct.

Alderson Chad Doran (District 15) 1:00:17

And then we were told that we were planning to, I guess, advertise the 1.8 million dollars through the RFP process, that this money would be available for the purpose of adding low-income housing as part of the transit center project, correct?

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:00:42

The \$1.8 million would be a part of the capital stack for the overall project. Our requirement with the \$1.8 million associated with the project would that it be supportive of affordable housing within the development.

Alderson Chad Doran (District 15) 1:01:02

So, we're, we're not necessarily advertising as an incentive, but we are advertising that it is, in a sense, an incentive to add affordable housing for the transit center project. I don't remember if I specifically asked this question at committee, but I just want to make sure if I if I do it now, I guess. Do we expect that without this \$1.8 million dollars, that affordable housing would be part of that project?

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:01:36

I don't believe we're clear on that at this point. Our intention with committing funds to the project in this fashion is to ensure that it is part of the development.

Alderson Chad Doran (District 15) 1:01:48

Okay, thank you. And I guess I'm still just kind of uncomfortable with the whole proposition, given that when we discussed it at committee, it sounded like that, while we technically are not allowed to advertise this as an incentive, we're essentially doing that anyway in a kind of workaround fashion which may, I guess, meet the letter of the law, but doesn't seem to meet the spirit of the law in that sense. And I, I guess, I have an issue with that.

Alderson Chad Doran (District 15) 1:02:23

But I also have issue I guess, with some of the other projects and some of the spending, certainly, some of which we could we could say are needs that are being met, some of which I think are, in my mind, ways that we're looking to allocate funding that we have to do something that could be better allocated elsewhere, given the very narrow scope of projects. And my concern all along with the entire ARPA package is that we're not making the highest and best use of these dollars to invest in as improvements for as many people in our community as possible. And, like I objected to the \$2 million allocation for the library, I won't be voting to support this either for those same reasons.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:03:19

Alder Doran, I heard in your statement a question related to definitions of incentives. I can think of no better colleague to answer this question than probably our resident expert on federal funding requirements, given all the work with the FTA. General Manager McDonald, would you please speak to the question?

General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 1:03:40

Thank you. Yes. So very specifically, the consultant for the ARPA funds has told us that it cannot be used as an incentive directly. We can use it to supplement the project, which is what we intend to do. Now, during the process of getting somebody, a developer, on board, we're going to release a request for expression of interest which will ultimately evolve into a request for proposals.

General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 1:04:11

In both of those documents, we're gonna be very clear that we are very serious about getting affordable housing in this project. So, we're very clear on that. That's a that's a component we desire as part of the project.

General Manager Ron McDonald (Valley Transit) 1:04:25

With this project, we'll be developing the foundation, all the underground utilities, whatever cleanup is needed within a facility, to support the structure above that. As part of that process, we're going to be doing \$2 to \$3 million worth of work to be able to build a facility on top of us. That puts us in the driver's seat for a discussion about affordable housing with a developer because we're making it very cost effective for them to come in and build on top of us. So, this is being used to supplement the project. We can't use it specifically as an incentive, but it does allow us to be part of the project. Whether it's utility work or preparation of site, whatever, we can use it on the project, which will then help us have that discussion for those types of uses for affordable housing. Does that answer?

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:05:16

Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:05:18

Alder Alfheim.

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 1:05:21

Thank you, Chair. I would just like to voice my support for this grant going towards the Transit center. Housing is a massive priority in the city. It's a massive priority in every urban place. I've been hearing about it since I stepped foot in this building. And this is concrete movement towards that. There's nothing that we do in affordable housing, that is not a positive impact for this community, the employers who are desperate for people to work there. We have to make it accessible to people, for people to live in this community. So, you may disagree with the concept of ARPA, but please don't disagree with the concept of us needing to increase the inventory of affordable housing in Appleton. We need it. We've needed it for years, and people continue to ask for more of it because it's what we need. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:06:14

Alder Wolff.

Aldersperson Nate Wolff (District 12) 1:06:17

Thank you, Chair. So, one point that I heard was that this money could be spent differently. And I could agree on some of that, that I think this money could have been spent in other areas, effectively helping another group of people. But in that same respect, I'm in a room of 14 other people who could probably think the same thing and

staff who could probably think something else. So, I think that this breakdown is actually really good because it's not making any one person—it's not just one person's work, but a work of a whole of our thoughts and staff's input. And I think that the way we've laid this out is really effective, despite, you know, personally thinking that maybe we can spend a little more here or a little less than this, but I agree with the way that it was put together and will support it. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:07:20
Alder Van Zeeland.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 1:07:23

Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to point out that affordable housing is also a very large part of chapter five of our comprehensive plan. And that plan is reviewed not just by people here in City Hall, but also with members of the community. It's required that we have their input. And this isn't something that just came out of the sky because people are talking about a lack of affordable housing. This is a priority for the city. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:07:54

Any further discussion? Hearing none, we have a motion and a second to approve. Please cast your votes. Motion passes 12 to one. The item has been approved.