

Item 24-0669: Request to approve the following ARPA non-profit grant award recommendations

Finance Committee

Mon, May 20, 2024 5:30PM

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 01:03

We have no public hearings or appearances tonight, which is not to say that there's no public participation, we'll just we'll address public participation when we get to the items of interest. With that being said, we'll move into action items. And we're going to move a little bit out of order and start with 24-0669 request to approve the following ARPA nonprofit grant award recommendations.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 01:25

Move to approve.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 01:26

Second.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 01:26

All right. Thank you. Motion and a second has been made. And I guess we want to start with staff, if you want to just give us a quick overview. If you got a mic number for me, please. Six. All right, Director.

Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 01:45

So, I actually have Olivia Galyon here. She's our community development specialist. If it's the will of the chair, I'd actually like to defer to Olivia to give an overview of the process and how we came to the recommendations before you.

Olivia Galyon (Community Development Specialist) 01:59

Yeah, so I'm Olivia Galyon. As Kara said, I'm the Community Development Specialist. So originally, when Appleton received our ARPA award of over \$14 million, 8 million was set aside for internal and external programmatic areas of focus by Common Council. And two of those focus areas included early childhood development, child care, and family support, which received an allocation of \$1.5 million, and then mental health, community wellness and violence prevention, which received an allocation of \$1 million.

Olivia Galyon (Community Development Specialist) 02:30

And then going forward, as we were working through how those funds would be used, Common Council apportioned the entire early childhood development, childcare, and family support allocation to a nonprofit grant opportunity and the remaining 500,000 from mental health, community wellness, and violence prevention to a grant opportunity. So, one grant opportunity for each category.

Olivia Galyon (Community Development Specialist) 02:56

And then it was identified that those areas of programming would have a strong impact on the community. And so, we opened—the city—opened up a competitive application process to allocate the remaining funds to nonprofits. And we had about four weeks for those applications from nonprofits throughout the community.

Olivia Galyon (Community Development Specialist) 03:16

We received a total of nine applications for the early childhood development, childcare, and family support program, and 18 applications for the mental health community wellness and violence prevention program, which you can see all of the applications and the requested amount totals in Exhibit A. And then our applications—once we received them, they were reviewed by Booth Management and Consulting which is the contractor that we've been working with for ensuring all ARPA projects that we pursue are eligible under federal statute. And so, once they confirmed that all of the applications were eligible, and that the project budgets fit what we were expecting for the projects, the applications were sent to members of an ARPA grant or ARPA grant review teams for each allocation area. And they were reviewed and they were viewed and evaluated individually.

Olivia Galyon (Community Development Specialist) 04:13

Once that was completed, the review teams came together and have discussions on kind of where they came up with their individual evaluations. And then where they felt that the funding would have the largest community impact and the largest program sustainability and longevity following the end of the funding period, which the ARPA grant funding has to be spent by the end of 2026. And that is something that all applicants were made aware of during the application process.

Olivia Galyon (Community Development Specialist) 04:44

As a result of that meeting, they recommended five organizations for funding with a mental health, community wellness, and violence prevention program and for organizations for early childhood development, childcare, and family support. So, I'll just go through each of those. So, for the mental health community wellness and violence prevention program, they awarded a NEW mental health connection, which is—their program type is focused on mental health, and they were awarded \$100,000, which is the same as their requested funding. World Relief was awarded \$50,000 for a community wellness program, and that was below their requested funding, but that was what the committee felt was the appropriate amount for theirs. The Boys and Girls Club of the Fox Valley was awarded \$100,000 for community wellness programming. Pillars was awarded \$120,000 for community wellness programming. And Valley packaging Industries was awarded 100—\$130,000 for community—or for mental health programming. And then in the memo, you can read a brief program summary of each one.

Olivia Galyon (Community Development Specialist) 05:58

And then for the early childhood development, childcare and, family support, Us 2 Behavioral health care was recommended \$250,000 in funding for childhood and family mental health programming. The YMCA of the Fox Cities was recommended \$250,000 for expansion and renovation of their facility. Building for Kids was recommended \$250,000 for program development of early childhood programming. And First Five Fox Valley was recommended \$750,000 for expansion and renovation of the building that they have purchased. So, the—again, the brief program summaries are included in those memos. And then you can see in exhibit A the totals of all of the—you can see all of the applicants, the program types for them, and then the total requested for each program.

Alderperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 06:54

Thank you. I know there's a number of people from the community here that wish to speak. So, I'd like to open up the mic at the podium at this time. So, if anyone just wants to walk up, just give us your name and address. Otherwise, if you're all shy, I'm gonna start calling people from the list.

Oliver Zornow (Building For Kids) 07:08

Hi. my name is Oliver Zornow. I live at [XXXXXX] just up the road. I also spent a significant amount of my time downstairs at the Building For Kids. I believe it was Nelson Mandela, who said "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than in the way in which it treats its children." There's a lot of unclear—lack of clarity from the years of the pandemic. But one thing is clear is that our choices as a society had profound impacts on the children in this community. This trauma is evident as we continue to see greater needs for those systems of support in our community, and the systems of support that every person in this room relied on to achieve the developmental ceiling that you've hit as adults are being invested in in much more scarcity minded way.

Oliver Zornow (Building For Kids) 07:54

You know, Appleton's decision to allocate 10% of its ARPA funds towards early childhood stands out among the crowd, right? It's this innovative investment that stands head and shoulders above the investments of other municipalities in this category, and I would expect nothing less from this community that I call home. I'm super grateful to the leadership of the Council and the staff of the city, who have decided to venture out in this space. And I hope that this is the beginning of continued investment in our children and focusing on the impacts of the policy decisions we make on the kids and the next group of people that are going to sit in your chairs. Thank you so much.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 08:32

Thank you. Who would like to be next?

Barb Tengesdal (First Five - Executive Director) 08:39

Barb Tengesdal, and I live at [XXXXXX] in Appleton, and I'm the Executive Director of First Five Fox Valley. And one word, "gratitude." Some of you were at the beginning of the pandemic in these roles, some of you weren't. And we had listening sessions, and we heard from the community. You heard from providers; you heard from families that were dealing with the stress of what the pandemic rose to the top and brought forth on their ability to be a parent and work as a family. And at First Five we do developmental screenings with Help Me Grow, and we saw that development was going down and down and down. And we knew something had to be that interrupted piece.

Barb Tengesdal (First Five - Executive Director) 09:37

In your listening sessions, we heard about a family resource center as something that would be critical for all families. That it needed to be culturally relevant, in the heart of the community where all could come, where all would have access, and you wouldn't feel like "I have to have a need to go there," but that "I wanna go there." Then the process happened where we did the advocacy and we gave lots of testimony about why we felt giving your ARPA funds or earmarking a part of your ARPA funds was so critical. It did like our—like Oliver said, talk about where your heart is, there your treasures will be. And you said, we believe in our families and our children. And you earmark 10% of the ARPA fund.

Barb Tengesdal (First Five - Executive Director) 10:27

The next part was putting together what this grant process would look like. And as a person who the team wrote around that it was ardu—Olivia over there, it was a hard grant to write. I'm not saying it was easy at all. We had to align evidence, align the mission, align the values, and we went back and we listened to what families want, and we heard from a parent from our parent group, a part of the steering committee, saying, "We want a place that we can go to and say what we need and not feel shamed. We want to have peoples hear what we have to say, and we want to have a place where we can get all the resources we need under one big tent. We're tired, and we can't always drive here for early intervention, drive here for a vision screening, drive over here to get to get diapers. Why can't we have it together? How can we do this collaboratively?"

Barb Tengesdal (First Five - Executive Director) 11:27

So now you've created a process. You had an arduous process. You we created a rubric to great—to develop a process to decide what you are going to fund and recommend, and now I say "Gratitude." The process has worked, and we're willing and excited to represent you in the next step and the next phase. I know it's a lot of money, but it's well invested. Well invested. And I can say already because we're doing Help Me Grow, I'll just end it with this. Now that we see we're doing ongoing developmental screening, we are actually seeing now after two years of data, intervention is working because kids are scores are going up on development. By third grade, I think we are going to actually see the difference in about five years when these kids get there because they're three right now. So, thank you. Gratitude.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 12:28

Thank you.

Nancy Jones (First Five - Board Member) 12:34

Hi, my name is Nancy Jones. I live at [XXXXX] in Appleton, and I've been following the ARPA process from the city from the beginning, and I'm just so pleased. I just wanted to come and express my gratitude to the Council and the staff for listening to the community and being responsive. The process has been great, and knowing that the needs are being heard is heartening.

Nancy Jones (First Five - Board Member) 13:04

There's really fundamental needs that came up. I'm looking at Kara Homan over there. I know that the same things that the city heard were heard in Outagamie County but also our surrounding communities. There really are some fundamental needs, and I think it's also evidenced by the a number of applications. You know, we wish we had an even bigger pot of ARPA money and that it was ongoing. But the fundamental needs are there, and I really hope that the kinds of applications that you have received will inform planning and budgeting going forward as much as it's in control of local governments.

Nancy Jones (First Five - Board Member) 13:47

So, the categories that you're looking at today, I'm especially interested in—I do serve on the First Five Fox Valley Board and I also am a retired elementary school teacher and know that the early childhood years are so critical, and investing in First Five is just a wise choice. First Five Fox Valley as you know from the materials is a backbone—early childhood backbone collective impact organization so it's really well positioned to continue to advance programming that will serve children and families in our community. And the Family Resource Center I think is just an a project that will raise the profile of children and families, be a point of accessibility for children and families' needs to be met, and it'll be a statement to area residents how important the well-being of our citizens from the youngest on our to our community. So, I thank you for the good process, for your good investments. I'm sure it's hasn't been easy, but I just want to thank you so much.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 14:57

Thank you Anyone else on this item? All right, I'll bring it up to Council. Are there any non-committee members that wish to make any comment or ask any questions at this time? Alder Wolff, microphone number please.

Alderson Nate Wolff (District 12) 15:16

Thank you. I heard a lot of thank yous out there. I would like to thank all of you too for being active members in our community, making our community better every day. And I'm very excited for what's in store in the city. I think each year we're gonna get better, bigger, and greater. Thank you.

Alderman Brad Firkus (District 3) 15:40

Alder Jones. Mic for you? Nine. All right.

Alderman Vaya Jones (District 10) 15:46

I just wanted to take a moment, again, to repeat how wonderful the work is that you're doing. But to also let my colleagues know that through my day job, I've had the honor of working with First Five Fox Valley, and their Help Me Grow program. They have helped put a early childhood navigator onto my team. And through that work, we are not only helping these individuals with their transportation and housing and barriers to health care, but we're also able to dig in and make sure that these children in rural communities especially are getting their screenings, and if there are issues with their screenings, they are getting served and they are getting connected to where they need to go. And I love my data, and the data is showing that it is working, these interventions are working. And so, from my experience, I am so excited to see the names on this list because they are doing the right work, and they're doing it well. Thank you.

Alderman Brad Firkus (District 3) 16:46

One last check. Anyone else before I bring it up to the committee? All right, anyone on committee? Alder Hartzheim.

Alderman Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 16:56

Thank you, Chair. I have to be a bad guy. And most of you probably knew that was coming. I appreciate everything that all these groups are doing and that there is great need in our community. But on this same agenda today is a request for us to increase the wheel tax because we can't build our roads in this city fast enough or rebuild our roads in the city fast enough.

Alderman Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 17:28

We have to look at the priorities of what a city is supposed to do. We are supposed to support these groups that do these things for people, but we are supposed to build roads and collect garbage and do snow removal. So, this is a really difficult decision for me to look at and say "Yeah, that seems fair."

Alderman Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 17:52

The ARPA dollars were created by the federal government primarily for infrastructure, and the infrastructure of our city is in need. And if it weren't in need, we wouldn't have, again, on this agenda, a request to increase the wheel tax on our taxpayers. So, I'm conflicted, because what was told to us was we had to look at what would make the largest impact on our community. And I think every one of us here can say the way I feel about one particular item would be the most impact. Mr. Zornow obviously feels that children will make the most impact, and that is admirable and correct for Mr. Zornow. But what is the city's requirement? What would make the biggest impact on the citizens of this city? And perhaps that is keeping the wheel tax where it is and using ARPA dollars to fund our roads as we need them to be reconstructed.

Alderman Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 18:59

I expect to vote no on this but not because I don't see the value in every one of the things that has been presented in this memo, or the work that has been done by staff. I just feel so conflicted by these two pieces of information. "Hey, we need more money from you taxpayers," but "Hey, we've got \$2 million and we're going to give it to organizations that aren't what a city is—what our city's core competencies are." Roads are what a city is supposed to do. The other things—if we have extra money—obviously are what we want to do. But I think we have to do what is core to us first. Thank you.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 19:46

I saw Alder Fenton and then Alder van Zeeland.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 19:49

Thank you Chair. Not to jump on what's already been said, but I am so grateful to the organizations who are doing this work. We're in, unfortunately, political season, and what people often say in political season is, "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" Four years ago, we weren't in these chambers. We were conducting all of our business as Committee of the Whole via zoom. Schools were closed. We didn't know. We lived in fear. We didn't know whether it was safe to eat the food that some brave people delivered to us from the grocery store. Children weren't in school. Babies weren't getting well care. There were no library programs for childhood enrichment. Mental health were—professionals weren't seeing patients. We didn't hadn't worked up to having zoom therapy yet. Every podcast wasn't sponsored by Better Health.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 21:03

The American Rescue Plan absolutely, in the notes, it talks about infrastructure. However, I focus, as I did when Appleton found out how much we were to be allocated for this program—I focused on the rescue, the funds to help the people who had been impacted by a worldwide pandemic. And particularly for this area, mental health and children were what was being impacted, and honestly, I wish we had all the money to do all the things. But the children, the young people, they're going to be around after everything that sits, you know—everything has crumbled. And if we don't take care of those things, now, it doesn't really matter what we do. So, I want to thank the staff who worked on these applications. I know it was super hard because everybody who applied, I know of their work, and they're deserving. And I think we've made wonderful choices, and I applaud it. Thank you.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 22:28

Thank you, Chair. For those who don't work with children regularly, it's really hard to explain how much children lose when they lose learning in the early years of their life. I have a child with a developmental disability. I understand how important early intervention can be, and how the lack of that intervention can affect a child for the rest of their life. The families and children of this city are infrastructure. They're what keep this city going. They're what will have these kids working here and wanting to live here in the future. One of the fundamental errors, of having non-parents making decisions for many, many years has been the lack of understanding that and the lack of taking that into account. I think most people now are starting to understand that we need people to buy houses here. We need people to be invested. And sometimes that means investing in them. So, I'm going to vote in favor of this, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same. Thank you.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 23:43

Anything from you, Alder Croatt? Go ahead.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 23:46

I just, I'd just like to jump in, and thank everyone involved. But also thank you for the comments on all this. Alder Hartzheim made some good points as to what we could do with ARPA dollars. I think it was decided years ago what the direction of this body wanted to do with ARPA dollars, and so I'm gonna go in a little bit different direction and support this action item. And because of the good work that this money is going to go towards, and get done in our community, it's extremely valuable work. And I'm glad we could put the funding towards it. I wish we could use the funding for important infrastructure projects—which we'll talk about the wheel tech separately. I'm trying to keep these two things separate because in my opinion that's—it's important even though there, you can make the tie. But all this work is very important. And I'm appreciative of the people that get involved and do this work every day. So, I will be supporting this. Thank you.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 24:47

All right. I think we had a good round of first comments here. I just want to make sure that we don't get into too much of mixing items or kind of get ourselves stuck into a circular debate about maybe you know, conditions and policies of years past because the item in front of us is whether or not to award these grants and to the amounts that have been specified. So, if anyone has any comments, again, I'm totally fine with the discussion we've had up here. I just don't want us to spend more time spinning wheels if we start going circular. So, does anyone have any comments or questions pertinent, specifically to these allocations, and whether or not these allocations should be approved?

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 25:29

All right, I'm not seeing any. So, I just want to say thank you, again, to staff for all the work that has gone into getting us to this point of having these grants available, for all the work that was done on gathering community feedback, on giving us the information to allow us as a Council to make the decisions that we've made up to this point and we'll be making here. I want to thank all the members of the community who have gotten involved, all these great organizations who have taken the time, shared what they're seeing out there and their experiences, and communicating that back with the city. That helps so much.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 26:06

At the end of the day, I think a city is its people, as it's the most important thing, and what we have in front of us is an opportunity to help organizations that are going to help the things that are most important to people—their children and grandchildren, their families, their well-being, and the ability to put a roof over your head, the ability to build up a life, and become a sustaining, self-sustaining, and contributing member of society. And I think that's what we're doing here with this item. So that like to take a vote. All those in favor.

Alderspersons Firkus, Van Zeeland, Fenton, and Croatt 26:39

Aye.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 26:40

Opposed?

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 26:41

Nay.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 26:42

Abstentions? That passes four to one.