

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

Common Council

Wed, Jun 05, 2024 7:00PM

Mayor Jake Woodford 15:34

At each meeting, the Common Council reserves 30 minutes for members of the public to express their views on items which appear on our agenda. We have five people signed up to speak this evening. When I call your name, please approach the microphone, and state your name and address or your affiliation for the record. We ask that you please keep your comments concise and to the point, and that you please take into consideration comments that have been made by those who spoken before you. We also ask that you limit your comments to five minutes or less, and we will help you keep track of time.

[Cut]

Mayor Jake Woodford 26:38

Alright, next is Barb Ten—I'm sorry, Barb, you'll have to say your last name for I don't want to I don't want to get it wrong. Go ahead.

Barb Tengesdal (First Five - Executive Director) 26:51

My name is Barb Tengesdal, and I live at [XXXXXX] in Appleton and I'm speaking in support of item 24-0669, the ARPA nonprofit grant recommendations. I'm the Executive Director of First Five Fox Valley. And I want to say thank you on behalf of the early childhood community partners for listening to your constituents, taking a thoughtful and thorough approach to using the city's ARPA allocations for children and families.

Barb Tengesdal (First Five - Executive Director) 27:28

First Five participated in listening sessions, counties, city, Imagine Fox Cities. And over and over again, we heard that families were feeling isolated, feeling like they weren't getting the resources they needed. We heard this idea of a family resource center bubbling up in all of those listening sessions. We saw the screening data through our Help Me Grow program that showed that children were falling behind developmentally from their mi—for their milestones. Families were struggling. Mental health issues were on the rise. The normal spaces for learning and educating and getting together turned to virtual or non-existent.

Barb Tengesdal (First Five - Executive Director) 28:12

We advocated that this group would support with your ARPA funds 10% to go towards support for families and children. And you did it. And here we are. And we commend you for the work that you've done.

Barb Tengesdal (First Five - Executive Director) 28:27

In the spring of 2023. First Five brought together some community partners and we asked, "Well, if we do this family resource center idea, what does it look like? Who's in it? What would happen there? Why—should we pursue this idea?" We kept hearing it bubble up. We realized that the heart of what is needed was missing. It was parents at the table. And so, we started the Parent Leadership Network—and we have a parent who was a part of that—and we listened to template to what parents said we needed. And it wasn't always what those of us who are doing the work thought they needed. It switched the way we thought about things. What do parents want? What do parents need? They need to be at the table in leadership roles to help decision making, to help understand what programming is, to even figure out what a design would look like for a family resource center.

Barb Tengesdal (First Five - Executive Director) 29:27

It was a very collaborative process, and that vision has been moving towards a reality. The advocacy that brought many of us to this point tonight was—is being identified in the recommendation that's before you. We believe that catalyzing resources to reduce the barriers is a reason to launch a family resource center. It will create the needed support for our thriving community. The primary goal of a family resource center is to strengthen families, recognizing that there's a variety of ways to do that and each family is unique, and by working together, we can create better outcomes for children and make generational change for many—for our community.

Barb Tengesdal (First Five - Executive Director) 30:17

I thank you for the opportunity to submit a long application. It was hard; it was arduous. We took a lot of our partners to think about it, what we felt was important to put into it. It was a very collective and collaborative process, and we appreciate that we are recommended for funding, and we'll, we'll make you proud with the steps that we're doing. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 30:49

Next is Oliver Zornow.

Oliver Zornow (Building For Kids) 30:53

Hello, my name is Oliver Zornow. I live at [XXXXX], and I'm the CEO and President of the Building for Kids Children's Museum. Also here to speak about the ARPA award recommendations. The Building for Kids Children's Museum, our mission is to inspire discovery and build resilience through intergenerational play-based learning and the exploration of the arts, sciences, and humanities.

Oliver Zornow (Building For Kids) 31:15

The grant that has been recommended will have a targeted expansion of our early childhood continuum of programming, specifically targeting those children who are most impacted in their development as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. The American rescue plan Act and the Treasury guidance that went along with it, specifically note exactly what we see everyone who works with children or if you have children of your own, see every day is that the COVID 19 pandemic and the economic crisis that accompanied it had a profound impact on young children and their families. You're only two years old once. And so, when that developmental those developmental opportunities are taken from you because of a pandemic, you can't bring those back. There is no going back. All we can do now is to use these funds as a community to make investments to try and mitigate the impact of the toxic stress, the adverse childhood experiences, the numerous barriers that have been placed in front of this next generation of leaders in our community.

Oliver Zornow (Building For Kids) 32:15

I thank you for the leadership that the City of Appleton has had in allocating 10% of their ARPA funds towards this cause, and encourage other municipalities to follow the lead in the future of this investment, and I appreciate your support, the support of the team here at the city of Appleton, the support of the finance committee for these recommendations. With your vote tonight, we're making another investment in our shared future together. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 32:44

Next is Lisa Strandberg.

Lisa Strandberg (Pillars) 32:49

Good evening, Lisa Strandberg, Executive Director for Pillars at 605 East Hancock Street in Appleton. I will be less articulate and eloquent than my nonprofit leader colleagues. I haven't prepared my remarks but speak from the heart in support of 24-0669 around the ARPA nonprofit grant award recommendations. Just want to say thank you to the review committee because I know you had a hard job. There were a lot of other colleagues of mine on the list as well, and all of us faced a lot of difficulty through the COVID 19 pandemic. Pillars was hit very hard, and the recommendation of the review team and of the finance committee really speaks to and recognizes, one, the deep partnership that we have with the city of Appleton and, two, the very hard work that our staff endured throughout the pandemic and since. They are some of the hardest working, most dedicated, most underpaid people you will meet. And this recommendation recognizes that they deserve to be compensated fairly, that they deserve to be educated and trained adequately to do the very difficult work that they have to do. So, thank you. And, again, I support that item.

Mayor Jake Woodford 34:15

And that concludes the list of folks who signed up. Did anybody miss the sign in sheet and want to speak on an item that appears on the agenda? Come on up, as long as it's an item on the agenda. Right up here—no, you could just—you, we'll get your name up here. Your name and address or your affiliation for the record.

Alicia Bushman (First Five) 34:38

My name is Alicia Bushman. It's awesome to be here. Um, my address is [XXXXXX] in Appleton. And I'm here to speak in support of the ARPA funding award to the First Five Fox Valley for the development of the Family Resource Center. We're very excited. I'm standing here as one of the parents on the team, and as we've been in meetings, it's just been so amazing just to hear the different development opportunities that are happening with it. We're marketing, how we're getting the word out. I'm really excited. On behalf of just a parent, just being able to have a space to bring my child to and be able to feel the support from my community, and all of you are making that possible, and so I'm very—I'm saying thank you. That's how I'm saying it. I could cry, but I'm not going to do that here. And I would just like to just acknowledge each and every one of you for being here and supporting this. And I really thank Barb for welcoming each and every one of us on the team to because it feels good to be able to have a voice in the community, and that you all are hearing us. So, thank you very much.

Mayor Jake Woodford 35:40

Alright, anyone else? All right, seeing none, we'll close public participation and move along to public hearings.

[Cut]

Mayor Jake Woodford 40:23

All right, let's move along to Finance Committee. We're gonna get started with 24-0669 requested to approve the following ARPA nonprofit grant award recommendations, and they are listed under the item. We have a motion and a second to approve. We'll open the floor for discussion. Alder Hartzheim.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 41:01

Thank you, chair. It'll come as no surprise to anyone in this room, I don't suspect, that while I appreciate immensely the hard work and important work that is done by these nonprofits in this city, I believe that we as a Council need to better prioritize the spending of our budget, and that includes these ARPA funds. So, while I could easily encourage everyone here to decline this or deny this, I know that that won't go very far. But I do want to make a point that we have to do a better job in this room of prioritizing what's what a city does and what a city must do first and foremost. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 41:53

Alder Heffernan.

Aldersperson Patti Heffernan (District 8) 41:57

Thank you, Chair. I'm very excited to see all of these nonprofits getting these funds as that's what they were earmarked for, and if we aren't prioritizing these issues in our community, what really are we doing as a city? The only thing that I would note is that I am disheartened to see that there wasn't any funds that were allocated to go towards substance use disorder, or any health concerns there with. That's all.

Mayor Jake Woodford 42:31

Alder Jones.

Aldersperson Vaya Jones (District 10) 42:34

Thank you, chair. I spoke about this in the finance committee meeting and just want to reiterate. Many of these organizations I work with regularly in my daily work, especially calling out First Five Fox Valley. They talk about their Help Me Grow program. They have put a navigator on our team, and our patients are so much better served, because we are able to get them accesses to community resources much like Pillars as well. But also, we're able to make sure that their children, birth to five, are where they need to be. We're getting them their screenings; we're getting them the support they need. And in working with Pillars, First Five, Building For Kids, in just the interactions and the meetings and the strategy sessions we have, they are determined. There is data. There are appropriate decisions made, and the money is used responsibly. So, I am very confident in allocating these funds to these organizations, knowing firsthand what they're able to do for our community.

Mayor Jake Woodford 43:43

Alder Fenton.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 43:45

Thank you, Your Honor. I appreciate the mayor's reminding us of the Treasury guidance on the ARPA funds. And I went back when I wrote my newsletter to my constituents and reread it. And the ARPA funds are were intended to—and I'm quoting directly here—"fight the pandemic and support families and businesses struggling with its with its public health and economic impacts—" families and businesses—"maintain vital public services even amid declines in revenues resulting from the crisis, build a strong, resilient and equitable recovery by making investments that support long term growth and opportunity." So, of the several—in the guidelines of the several uses that are allowed for those funds it include wat—it included water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure, and the city of Appleton used 20% of our funding for broadband, to replace lead service lines, \$3 million out of our funding. I, like my colleagues have said, am very proud that we allocated back in '21 and '22 the funding the way we did, and that a significant portion was allocated at the time to support families in their recovery from a global pandemic. I could not be—I would not second guess in any way what the work of the group that has done the—that has made these grants based on our original allocations. And I'm very happy to vote for this. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 45:40

Alder Doran.

Aldersperson Chad Doran (District 15) 45:42

Thank you. I share the same thoughts that Alder Hartzheim has so I don't necessarily need to repeat those. Do appreciate the work that these groups do, have long since as most of you know been frustrated with the process that the city used and how we allocated these dollars. We had wide berth in how we were allowed to spend this

money that was sent to the city as pandemic relief. Our job is to utilize that to affect as many people in our community with those limited dollars as we could, and instead of a lot of that money went to a very, very small number of groups that impact very small numbers of people in our community.

Alderson Chad Doran (District 15) 46:30

No doubt that the work is important and that these groups do tremendous work in those areas, but that's not our job. There was a time when nonprofits and the private sector used to compete with government and try to do the work that government couldn't do, and now nonprofits come to government to fund the work they do and in a lot of cases look to government to do the work they do. Let's not forget that government created the problem that we're in here, and now we're trying to have government solve the problem and be the solution, and it is never both. Government is never the answer to solve problems. And, while I'm sure that that this allocation will be approved, concerned about what happens after that money runs out, and I don't know that this body has given a lot of thought to that in what they'll do next when these groups may come back for more funding from the government, and we don't have the surplus of dollars sitting here to allocate. I don't know how we how we—what we tell them at that point. But I hope that my colleagues have given thought to that, because that problem will be coming back at some point in the future. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 47:51

Alder Smith.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 47:54

Thank you, Mayor. I want to thank the leaders that came and shared and represented their organizations. It helps for me to put faces together with the organizations, and so thanks for taking the time and coming here. I wish I could take credit for the allocating these funds, the ARPA funds, to these groups, but it happened before I was before I was on Council. But I think this was a really good decision.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 48:24

So much of the damage from the pandemic wasn't physical infrastructure, but it was social infrastructure. And I think study after study shows the damage to families and to children and education, and with these federal ARPA funds, I think it's appropriate that some portion of that, a good portion of that, be set aside for organizations like the ones that you represent. So, I'm proud to be a part of a Council and a city government that made these types of decisions.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 48:54

And also, I just want to say strongly that attending to social questions and social needs is very much part of our job and part of what we what I see us as doing here. That's part of building a better Appleton, and I would just oppose any desire to split physical infrastructure with the social infrastructure that your organization's represent. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 49:19

Alder Van Zeeland.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 49:22

Thank you, Chair. I'd like to ask staff a two-part question. The first would be, could staff talk about the process again, remind us and everyone who's watching at home, how we decided where the ARPA funds would be spent. I'll get to the second after that.

Mayor Jake Woodford 49:41

And just to be clear, you're talking specifically about the grant process that led to these recommendations?

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 49:46

That was going to be my second question, but the first question is specifically was how we decided which buckets would get funding.

Mayor Jake Woodford 49:56

I can speak to that piece for context. So, early on, when we learned that the city would be receiving these funds through the American Rescue Plan Act like communities across the country, we looked to the initial guidance that came out. And this has been evolving guidance from Treasury since the inception of the program. But after reviewing the initial guidance from that work, we started with gathering input from the community. So, we had community input sessions.

Mayor Jake Woodford 50:32

We prioritize that input up front before developing a set of initial recommendations. Based on the input that we were hearing from the community in those early days (and Barb was on those calls, for example, and other members of the community, talking about the concerns that they had and the issues they were seeing in the community), we compared that with the early Treasury guidance in terms of allowable uses or what were expected to be allowable uses for the funds to develop an initial set of recommendations to the Council.

Mayor Jake Woodford 51:03

I worked with Director Saucerman, who was the finance director at the time to develop that initial set of recommendations which were then presented to the Council. Council reviewed that set of recommendations, and after working through that as a body, you ratified the final set of provisional allocations, the buckets you refer to.

Mayor Jake Woodford 51:27

The approach we took was a two—sort of a two phased approach. So, there was a niche initial set of allocations. The money came in two tranches, if you'll recall. So, of the 14—I think it was about \$14.4 million that the city received, it came in two tranches. So, the initial set of recommendations related more directly to sort of city driven spending and needs and more immediate pandemic response. So, there was a substantial portion of the funds that was directed to ongoing pandemic response.

Mayor Jake Woodford 52:00

We're now a few years out, so we sometimes forget all of the things that were happening at that time in terms of response from standing up first testing clinics, and then our partnership with a number of agencies to stand up an initial vaccination clinic, to the ongoing response and PPE needs for public safety and the like here within the city government. We also set aside the funds at that time for lead service line abatement that Alder Fenton mentioned earlier. We also—at that time Council decided to allocate \$2 million for broadband infrastructure related to the library project. So those were really city driven projects and initiatives. And that was more about immediate response. That was also where the funding for parking utility revenue offsets started.

Mayor Jake Woodford 52:57

And the plan all along was to allocate about half of the funds to those immediate response items, and then to leave time for a process to make grants, to identify critical projects that the city itself would take on in the future, understanding that the situation with the pandemic was evolving and that we wouldn't know, we didn't know, in 2021, exactly where we would be in 2024 as we were sort of running out of clock on the on the

program. So, the Council then ratified the recommendations after reviewing it and revising it, and that's how we ended up with the buckets that we had.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 53:42

Thank you. The reason I asked for to go through that is because a lot of the concern that I received about these items was in thinking that this was new allocation of some point. It's been so long since we discussed these, when I reminded everyone about the public input and the there was an online tool, they remember that, but it it's hard for people to put this together. This sounds like new funding, because so much time has gone by.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 54:12

The second question that I have would more likely be for staff, and it's: for the application process for some of the organizations is there a component of the application process that talks about how these services will be sustained without ARPA funding?

Mayor Jake Woodford 54:34

Director Homan.

Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 54:38

So as part of the grant evaluation process, the individuals who were on each review team had to both individually and then as a group evaluate within a handful of different categories. There was three major categories with different evaluation components within it. One category of evaluation criteria is around community need. One group of evaluation criteria was around community outcome, and then the last group was around implementation. Specifically, evaluation did ask the question "How likely is this program to continue making a positive impact beyond the grant period? Do they have the ability to plan, implement, and manage the grant?" See, I believe there was also a question about sustainability.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 55:29

Thank you. I appreciate that. I know that that standard and other grant programs that we that we provide, and I just wanted to make sure that that was put out there so we understand that there is no expectation that these organizations will be coming back for more money to sustain these programs. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 55:51

Any further discussion? Hearing none, we have a motion and a second to approve. Please cast your votes. That motion passes 11 to 2. Item has been approved.