

COMMISSIONERS' WORKSHOP ON AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FUNDING

SEPTEMBER 15, 2021

YORK,ss

At a workshop of the County Commissioners of the County of York, begun and holden at the York County Government Building in Alfred, within and for the County of York, being held on Wednesday, September 15, 2021 A. D. at 3:30 P. M.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Richard R. Dutremble
Richard Clark
Robert Andrews
Allen Sicard
Donna Ring

County Manager Gregory Zinser and Deputy County Manager Linda Corliss were present at the meeting.

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County Manager Zinser opened the meeting and asked the Commissioners how they would like to proceed.

Commissioner Chairman Dutremble asked each Commissioner if they have any projects that they'd like to be funded.

Commissioner Clark stated that he doesn't have a personal favorite but listening to folks who came in the past, he would like to hear more about Fair Tides, behavioral health issues from York Hospital and the Biddeford Teen Center. He added that there are certainly other things he could support but these came to his mind as impressive.

Commissioner Sicard stated that he would like to have the Commissioners assign the County Manager to get working groups together on the following items: Kevin Roche from Save our Shores regarding their request for the county to fund a dredge, York County Community Action and Shutz transportation as transportation is a necessity for what we want to open up at the jail facility. We would need some experts to come in, continued Commissioner Sicard. The lady from the American Festival Theater is here so maybe we can give her some time to speak as well as the Biddeford Teen center people who are on the ZOOM call.

Commissioner Ring stated that the rehab facility, affordable housing and mental health are the projects she is looking closely at.

Commissioner Andrews stated that he would've thought that we had enough money to give everyone what they want but that won't be so. He stated that he agrees with Commissioner Ring that diversion programs are important and transportation is a valued thing. We will have to have some commissions formed to look at these things, stated Commissioner Andrews.

Commissioner Dutremble stated that he agrees with all of the Commissioners and added that the youth center is also going to be housing for handicapped on first floor and then the youth center will be on the second floor. He added that transportation to be able to transport kids to the center that will encompass about 10 to 12 communities will be important. He added that he believes the Biddeford Youth Center would be a worthwhile project.

Sara Bloom from the American Festival Theatre addressed the Board and stated that she had been summering here since 1970 and became a full-time resident in 2002. Ms. Bloom informed the Board that she was the sole representative for the State of Maine Performing Arts Committee under Governors Baldacci and Lepage. She gave an overview of the Theatre's request to York County for ARP funds and stating that their June application for \$2 million was adjusted after she attended the Public Hearing and realized, after hearing others, that her request wasn't a practical one. She stated that she has been in touch with Senators and Representatives as to when she can apply for grants. We feel we will become one of the biggest economic drivers in the State, stated Ms. Bloom. We ask you to grant us the \$1 million contingent upon getting the \$2 million from the State. She added that they plan to build a sea wall around the island and also build a walkway. The current plan of the owner of the land is to build condos, explained Ms. Bloom.

Commissioner Dutremble asked Ms. Bloom if she had acquired a permit for the seawall? He also asked if an environmental survey had been done on the land for contamination as there was a Tannery across the street from the property at one time. Commissioner Dutremble added that Ms. Bloom had stated that perhaps they would build a parking garage. He questioned this as there is already one a few hundred yards away.

Sara Bloom responded, perhaps we don't and added that they haven't received and money for research and development yet.

Commissioner Dutremble also asked if a traffic survey had been or will be done? He continued that in the summer time you can expect delays.

Ms. Bloom replied that the owner does have traffic studies and soil tests and so if he comes to the table and partners with us, we will have that information.

Commissioner Dutremble stated that he was looking at all of the possible problems this might present to Biddeford and Saco.

Commissioner Sicard asked if they had received approval from the Heart of Biddeford to serve as their fiscal agent? Sara Bloom replied that we are nothing yet and that until they have gotten into the process, we can recruit the members to apply for the necessary items. She added that she had just sent this information to Allan Cassavant the other day. We would pay a \$90,000 fee to them for that service and add \$12,000 a year for a bookkeeper and \$12,000 for an attorney so we don't over burden the staff.

Commissioner Sicard recommended that this is very ambitious for just starting and it is very difficult with the other shovel ready projects so it is important to "get your ducks in a row". Commissioner Sicard stated that he would have a very difficult time supporting the project as it is presented now.

Guy Gagnon from Biddeford Housing Authority spoke regarding the Teen Center stating that the investment that the county would make in this project is a one time shot. No future commitment would be needed from the county. This investment will leverage at least \$2 - \$5 million more in that building and program. Mr. Gagnon continued that they have numerous verbal commitments from local contractors offering in-kind labor and materials. Dollars spent here will be going much further than the money that we are asking for. This teen center will have long term, generational impacts.

He continued that the need for our teens is enormous. Just to be able to feed teens every night would be an amazing thing.

Donna Dwyer from the Teen Center stated that during the COVID-19 crisis, we responded by serving 35,000 meals at our center in Cumberland County in 9 months. We want to bring to York County our successful business model. Ms. Dwyer continued that the Cumberland County facility has been operating since 1998. We want to bring a non-profit center for kids at risk to York County. We have a location and in kind support for the project. We will be feeding kids. Ms. Dwyer asked all to think about the opioid crisis and what this center means for early prevention efforts. She continued that we are the conduit so kids do not get addicted to substance abuse and are not committing suicide. We offer mental health type of services. We will serve communities surrounding Biddeford. She stated that they welcome any kid 10-18 to walk through our doors for free 5 hours a day, 5 days a week.

Donna Dwyer stated that the funds will support renovation and will be spent within two years. We hit so many targets of the ARPA plans.

Commissioner Ring asked if this Teen Center will serve children in all 29 York County towns?

Donna Dwyer replied, yes. She added that she encourages the Commissioners to also think about transportation funding as transportation is a huge barrier.

Commissioner Clark stated that he would like to see more information such as business plan specifics. He added that he had asked to tour their facilities. Commissioner Clark stated that he is supportive but he wants details and hard numbers.

Donna Dwyer replied that Commissioners Sicard and Dutremble did come for a tour in Westbrook. She added that they can get the renovation numbers to the Commissioners.

County Manager Zinser explained that the Commissioners can request during the regular meeting that he get additional information from those folks.

Commissioner Clark added that he would like them to be preferably in person at the meeting.

Kevin Roche (via ZOOM) from Save our Shores reminded the Commissioners that he and others had spoken to them at one of the Public Hearings about the dredge. He thanked the Commissioners for considering the project and stated that he has seen new information that this project would be an infrastructure one that is an acceptable category. We wanted to make sure it's clear that we are only asking for the capital investment. We will work with a host community to employ, operate and manage this and get it out to other communities, clarified Mr. Roche. He added that the dredge purchase also falls under the tourism umbrella. Without our beaches we have no tourism. Mr. Roche asked Ms. Bloom to contact him as Saco and the owners of the property are at the table discussing that project.

Commissioner Clark replied that we need to know more about the administrative structure that is going to house, maintain and operate and determine who gets the dredge when. He continued that when he served on the Wells Board of Selectmen he recalled the town dredged twice during the past 20 to 25 years.

Commissioner Clark continued that while he understands the need and desire, he doesn't want to commit County funds when he doesn't understand where the piece of equipment is going to be cared for and administered so its fair for all the coastal towns that may need it.

Kevin Roche replied that he agreed that a host community needs to be found. He explained that you can only dredge November through April. We believe there is plenty of time to rotate it to any community that will need it, stated Mr. Roche.

Commissioner Sicard stated that he has been told that Scarborough budgets \$1 million a year and they dredge only once every 5 years. If some towns can work together, like they do with bus transportation, this would be very similar. Have you gone further with any discussions with any towns to see if they would put any money on the table moving forward, asked Commissioner Sicard.

Kevin Roche replied that he doesn't believe they would put the money up front but if Saco owned it, they would rent the service he believes.

Commissioner Dutremble stated that he has been approached by a city official and she doesn't think it falls under the ARP funding. He asked Mr. Roche if Save our Shores has looked into this.

Kevin Roche responded that they absolutely feel it qualifies under infrastructure.

Commissioner Sicard replied that he agreed with Kevin Roche and also tourism. There is a reason we spend money to do this in the harbor towns, commented Commissioner Sicard.

County Manger Zinser stated that we can talk about these three projects in the regular meeting. He asked the Commissioners if there were any other projects they wish to consider or any thoughts that they might have.

He continued to summarize what he heard as requests from the Commissioners that they would like to hear from Fair Tide, York Hospital, Teen Center in Biddeford, transportation, rehab, housing and mental health.

Commissioner Dutremble moved to end the workshop. Vote is unanimous.