



ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE NEWS

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ARPA Funding Framework

Ulster County Legislature Lays a Foundation for a Strong and Equitable Recovery

KINGSTON, NY – When the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed into law by President Biden in March of 2021, the Ulster County Legislature and the County Executive recognized this could be a transformational catalyst in Ulster County’s pandemic rescue and recovery efforts and an opportunity to make strategic investments in Ulster County’s future.

“We knew systemic social inequities were intensified by the pandemic and had already begun to discuss how to prioritize our response with our existing resources,” said Legislative Chair Tracey Bartels (D-Gardiner). “As Chair, it was imperative to ensure this one-time ARPA funding was used wisely, and I assigned a special committee to oversee this spending.”

In January of this year, Legislative Chair Tracey Bartels created the American Rescue Plan Act Special Committee dedicated to using the ARPA funds to lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery. Bartels appointed Legislator Peter Criswell (D-Kingston) to Chair this special committee.

“As the ARPA committee began discussions of potential projects and programs, it became apparent we needed a mechanism to ‘score’ any ARPA spending to ensure this valuable resource is put toward the highest and best uses. It was vital that all funds be used to create long term sustainable projects and address a number of other critical priorities,” explained Criswell.

A scoring matrix was developed that clearly outlined the mission and goals of the legislature to make strategic investments in long-lived assets and cover temporary operating shortfalls until economic conditions and operations normalize. In addition to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable populations, major considerations of the scoring matrix included equitable distribution throughout Ulster County, community impact, sustainability, cost/benefit considerations and climate concerns.

The Scoring Matrix rubric includes considerations such as:

- Does the request support an impacted household, community, nonprofit, or small business?
- Does the request remedy systemic public health and economic challenges that have contributed to the unequal impact of the pandemic?
- Does the project serve underserved/vulnerable population, thus helping to build a pathway to an equitable recovery?
- Does the request provide immediate economic stabilization for households and/or businesses and/or non-profits impacted by the pandemic?
- Does the request strengthen vital public services?



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- Does the request result in long-term benefits?
- Does the project serve the entire county?
- Does the requested value of funding appear logical for the benefit anticipated?
- Is the project self-sustaining after the initial investment?
- Does the proposal contain large administrative overhead costs?
- Were climate factors considered in the project's planning?
- Were modifications to the project made to implement climate smart solutions?

Using this Scoring Matrix, the Special ARPA Committee has already responded to critical community needs and to promote several dynamic programs and projects.

“The committee’s priorities for the remaining ARPA funds will focus on food security, workforce development and programs for youth,” Criswell explained. “Our vision is to work with the County Executive to create long term, sustainable programs, services and projects that will grow and thrive beyond this initial funding.”

The loss of county mental health services at local hospitals was of immediate concern. \$2,000,000 of ARPA funding will be used to create a Crisis Stabilization Center on Broadway in Kingston to allow individuals in need of mental health and addiction services 24/7 access to services of an integrated team of clinical counselors and addiction professionals for support and treatment options.

The County Legislature approved a total of \$4.8 million of ARPA funds for Mental Health & Recovery Center and Respite Housing, leveraging partnerships with community groups like Cornell Cooperative Extension and Family of Woodstock to expand food services programs and food delivery to vulnerable populations.

Other projects and programs supported with ARPA funding include:

\$1 million for the creation of a County Land Bank - a nonprofit corporations created to redevelop vacant or abandoned properties to better serve the public interest such as creating more affordable and workforce housing, protecting farmlands and open space from rampant development, and revitalize downtown a communities.

\$5 million in matching funds for municipal water and sewer infrastructure projects.

\$1 million Small Business Assistance program focused on black, minority and veteran small business owners.

\$750,000 to redevelop brownfields on foreclosure eligible properties for economic development, parks, or housing.

\$2.1 million for trail improvements in Ellenville, Gardiner, New Paltz, Accord and Kerhonkson.
