

**ALLEGANY COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**July 13, 2022**

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 3:01 p.m. by Chairman Philip G. Stockin.

**LEGISLATORS PRESENT:** G. Barnes, J. Burdick, P. Curran, A. Cyr, K. Demick, D. Fanton, G. Hanchett, B. Harris, S. Havey, J. Ricci, J. Ricketts-Swales, J. Rumfelt (*left at 4:24 p.m.*), P. Stockin (Absent: D. Healy, D. Root)

**OTHERS PRESENT:** T. Boyde, A. Carrow, S. Decker, C. Knapp, B. Riehle, T. Ross

**American Rescue Plan Act Funds**

Chairman Stockin began by stating that the Board needs to discuss potential projects for the use of ARPA funds. County Administrator Knapp said the County has been awarded around \$8.9 million in funding which must be allocated for expenditure by December 31, 2024, and must be spent by December 31, 2026. We need to start planning on how we are going to use these funds. The County has hired a consultant to help with claiming the funds. We must submit paperwork to the federal government to see if the use of the funds is going to be restricted. Ms. Knapp noted there are some restrictions as to how the funds may be used. For instance, the funds cannot be used to pay off debt or to balance the budget. Department heads were surveyed last year to see what projects they would like to see considered. We have a list to consider, as well as other projects we've tried to include in our budget the past 5-6 years. Additionally, in 2020, the County submitted a list of projects to NYSAC in hopes of getting funding related to the CARES Act. That list is on the NYSAC website. It includes both County and town and village projects. These are things to look at but the Board is welcome to bring forth other ideas as well.

Prior to the meeting, ideas were organized so we could get a feel for what subjects are most desirable to the Board. Deputy County Administrator Timothy Boyde presented a list of ideas to discuss and consider. He noted there would be some overlap of ideas. Of the suggestions brought forward by Board members, the most popular suggestions were Emergency Management Services (8), Fair Board (5), and Mental Health Services (4). The other suggestions receiving more than one vote were the DPW building project in Friendship and County parks. Other items suggested for discussion were parking and signage for access to County forests, monies for municipalities for small outdoor projects, Crossroads to Belmont sewer project, Crossroads infrastructure, better internet coverage for the County, money for roads and bridges, Rushford Lake improvements, railway signage, development of County-owned church property, economic development, Court Street parking, third floor buildout, and pictometry and flyover to help with real property assessments and other things.

Legislator Harris stated that when the Legislators met at Houghton college some of the ideas were placed into larger categories. He suggested it might be a good idea to group these. County Administrator Knapp stated that if we group these into categories, we might see where the largest need is. Legislator Harris stated that it appears that public safety issues are the largest category. Legislator Rumpfelt said that there are several things that we could do to help fire departments. We've talked about the County applying for a CON (Certificate of Need) so we can administer EMS through the County. Legislator Harris asked if there was an estimate for the cost. Legislator Rumpfelt stated that if the County was to operate its own ambulance, the cost would likely be a few million dollars. If we were to contract with MTS or another provider, I'm not sure what the cost would be. We would have to get bids. He suggested the County could take over the billing and allow the existing squads to take care of providing the service. He doesn't want to see anyone run out of business. Legislator Demick agreed that the County needs to start somewhere and a timeline needs to be established regarding a CON. He suggested an EMS Director dedicated just to this would be necessary and while the cost to establish an EMS program would be expensive, it will eventually be self-sufficient, and we should be able to put money in the bank rather than paying out. Legislator Harris stated that one of the concerns County Administrator Knapp raised before was permitted use versus appropriate use. Ms. Knapp suggested that consultants should be able to tell us what is reimbursable. She stated that due to the urgent nature of EMS we need to be moving forward with this.

Legislator Harris brought up the subject of 911 records management software. Ms. Knapp stated that one of the requests from the Sheriff's Office is a records management system used by law enforcement. The cost for this is \$400,000. The current system, SJS, is no longer going to be supported. We've been looking into purchasing new software from Tyler Technologies. She stated that licenses could be given to towns and villages. Legislator Rumpfelt stated that SJS provided a patch but we only have about a year until the software is no longer usable. Legislator Burdick asked if it's typical for Counties to have an ambulance service. County Administrator Knapp stated that it's becoming more common, especially in rural areas. Legislator Rumpfelt stated that more and more counties are switching to county-run ambulance services, but a lot of them contract out the services. He remarked that MTS has been a blessing, but even they are struggling. Angelica no longer has an ambulance squad. A lot of fire departments don't want to have to bill for services. New York State is requiring an ALS (Advanced Life Support) interface without support for the fire departments. County Administrator Knapp stated that without a CON, we're unable to help. If we can get a CON, we are an active participant that can help solve the problems. Legislator Burdick asked if the volunteer ambulance squads would be put out of business. Legislator Rumpfelt stated that they would not be put out of business and the CON would actually help them. We would be able to handle the billing, etc. We might be able to help them staff their ambulances or help in other ways. There are different ideas that can be looked at. Legislator Burdick asked about response time and if that would be affected. County Administrator Knapp stated that some counties own ambulances, some contract it out. We would like to improve response time rates. Legislator Rumpfelt explained how an area like Wellsville is

able to have a medic staffed everyday through a contract. Legislator Burdick stated that it's difficult to recruit volunteers and wondered if it becomes a County service if that will continue to be a problem. Legislator Rumpfelt stated that if it was county-run, there would be more possibility for sending people to paramedic school. Potentially the County could pay for the training and require the paramedic to sign a contract to stay with the County for a certain period of time. Legislator Burdick asked if the County would be able to meet the deadlines for the funding. Ms. Knapp stated that this will need to run concurrent with the ARCA timeline even if we don't end up being able to use the funds. Legislator Rumpfelt stated that while the start-up costs are significant, a lot of counties are actually seeing a profit from insurance and Medicaid reimbursements. He feels we can get started by the end of the year if we can get the CON. Legislator Fanton stated he really appreciates the time that's been spent by Legislators Rumpfelt, Cyr, and Demick. Legislator Fanton wondered who would be responsible for any portion not covered by the ARPA monies. County Administrator Knapp stated that the Board can choose not to continue to contract with an ambulance company if the ARPA funds expire. Legislator Rumpfelt stated that ARPA can be used to get it going and after that it should be able to fund itself. County Treasurer Terri Ross stated that a separate enterprise fund would have to be set up. Any fees generated would be kept in that fund to be able to enhance equipment. Ms. Knapp noted that we are not set up to bill for these services and stated that we could consider covering the cost of software for billing with ARPA funds. Ms. Ross stated that some County departments already bill insurance/Medicaid for services. Legislator Rumpfelt mentioned that some ambulance squads use an outside billing agency and wondered if that's something the County could do. Ms. Ross stated we'd have to put out a RFP (Request for Proposal) but she believes it's an option.

County Administrator Knapp stated another project suggested under the department head requests was an updated flyover/pictometry. She stated it would cost just shy of \$300,000 and must be booked a year or more in advance. The pictures we have are out of date. Chairman Stockin remarked that a number of towns use these pictures. This project would touch a number of offices including Planning and Public Safety. Legislator Harris likes this idea and it's for county-wide use. He likes that this money can be used to rejuvenate things that we wouldn't be able to do without the funding. It would be nice to do something that our local municipalities can use. Using the funds to make improvements to the County buildings is a good thing, but he doesn't feel it's the best use of ARPA funds. He also feels the focus should be on the big tickets items first as those are the toughest to accomplish without this outside help.

Legislator Ricketts-Swales suggested it might be helpful to put ideas into categories. Ms. Ross said she thinks we have the "buckets," we just need projects to put in those buckets. County Attorney Allison Carrow reminded the group that we have other funds available if some type of urgent matter comes up that needs immediate attention. Deputy County Administrator Boyde suggested the Board could look at it from the perspective of deciding how much to spend on each bucket. Legislator Hanchett questioned if we know how much these things are going to cost and how do we know if we're putting enough money in the buckets. Ms. Knapp suggested setting a target and

then adjusting it later if necessary. The group suggested the three buckets should be labeled as:

- Emergency Services/Mental Health
- Economic Development
- Building/Facilities

County Administrator Knapp reminded everyone that funds have been set aside for economic development already; we don't have to rely on ARPA monies for that. She asked if they'd like to talk more specifically about economic development projects. Chairman Stockin suggested that some of the smaller projects such as parks are something everyone sees and benefits from. Legislator Barnes stated that a County park is on his list. We do have state parks in the area so it may not be as big of a deal. He also suggested discussing the fairgrounds. It would be nice to be able to have facilities at the fairgrounds that could accommodate 1,500 or more people for shows or other productions. Currently, the grandstand is only suitable for a demo derby. He stated that forty or more years ago the facilities there were being used for shows. He feels it's worth the investment. County Administrator Knapp stated that there's no space like that in the County for public or private use. Often, school facilities are used when school is not in session. It's difficult to hold large meetings or other events. The fairgrounds property is already there and there is some infrastructure in place. Obviously we don't own that property. Chairman Stockin wondered if it might be easier to use other funding for that. County Treasurer Ross stated that the goal for using this money is to help communities and this is our chance to do so. Legislator Hanchett asked how large the fairgrounds property is and wondered if it would be possible to expand the racetrack. County Administrator Knapp suggested it might be a good idea to speak with the Fair Board to see what can be done up there.

Legislator Ricketts-Swales asked how they should split the money amongst the buckets. Legislator Hanchett suggested that an updated strategic plan would be helpful. A lot has changed and it's difficult to move forward without a good strategic plan. Legislator Burdick stated she feels like we're getting away from the reason we're getting this money. The purpose is to help communities get going again. Upgrades to the fairgrounds would benefit the entire County. We need to look at projects that can sustain themselves after the ARPA funds are gone. The Fair is the perfect example of something that can sustain itself. We have \$7.5 million put away for economic development. We need to look at more projects that can be done in two years. Legislator Harris stated that if the Board wants to talk about things that we can do for the communities and then walk away, maybe we should consider writing a check to each town and then walk away. Each town/village would get \$10,000 to do a project that fits with the County vision. It would spread wealth across the County and it would be a nice gesture. County Administrator Knapp brought up another suggestion of putting signage on County forests. The signs could include information that would direct people to the WNY Wilds website. Legislator Fanton stated that he agrees with Legislator Harris' idea and says he'd give each town \$20,000. They could do a lot of good with that.

Legislator Hanchett wondered if the ARPA funds could be used to install “fire number” signs. Ms. Knapp stated that the enumeration project was on her list for Public Safety. It’s a project that’s come up for a number of years. The County is working on the project and it’s very important for first responders. The County doesn’t provide the signs we just assign the numbers. Legislator Rumpfelt stated that the different colored signs actually help first responders identify different towns. He said that some towns don’t have signs up because they can’t afford to pay for them. In some cases, residents pay for the signs. Legislator Burdick stated that in the Town of Alfred a Boy Scout installed signs as their Eagle Scout project.

Legislator Harris brought up the topic of integrated building control systems. County Administrator Knapp noted that this was a request from Public Works and includes the HVAC system as well as fire alarms, etc. The current system is out of date and works with Internet Explorer which no longer exists. She stated that a new system would cost \$400,000. Ms. Knapp stated that the Department of Public Works would like to see a system that is the same for both buildings. This is something that’s needed sooner rather than later.

Legislator Fanton suggested that pictometry is something the Board is interested in doing and wondered if they could direct the County Administrator to get an estimate.

Legislator Demick asked how quickly projects can be started using these ARPA funds? Ms. Knapp stated a resolution would have to be adopted to appropriate the funds. One-time purchases are easier to do with these funds. The group discussed a paving project at the Fairgrounds.

The topic of mental health was brought up as the third most popular project area. Legislator Ricketts-Swales stated that she has a dream of having a rural remote mental health van that could travel to remote areas to offer services. Some funds are already available for this, and she’s not sure that ARPA funds need to be used for that. Legislator Burdick stated there’s a lot to work on with service providers to see if it’s practical or acceptable. Legislator Ricketts-Swales said that we need to get more mental health counselors into the County. She also stated that Angelica would be a good location for a Community Services office because it would be in a more central location.

County Treasurer Ross stated that there are 27 acres at the Fairgrounds. Legislator Demick stated that they would have to look at parking. He doesn’t think any owners of the adjoining properties would ever be willing to sell.

Legislator Burdick asked if they are still considering spending ARPA funds on the DPW facility in Friendship. County Administrator Knapp stated that it’s possible to use ARPA funds and they have talked about using them.

Legislator Harris asked what’s the best method for bringing ideas forward if they haven’t been discussed. Ms. Knapp stated they would be having additional Committee of the Whole meetings to discuss these ideas, or suggestions can be sent to her directly.

Chairman Stockin remarked that Rushford Lake residents are pleased with the upgrades made to the swimming area at Rushford Lake. Ms. Knapp noted that the bathhouse still needs work as they've had a problem getting the necessary supplies.

Chairman Stockin stated that each town has its own ARPA money to use. Additional funds we can provide might help them with their projects. Legislator Ricketts-Swales asked if they are restricted in their use the same way the County is. Ms. Knapp stated they too are restricted, possibly even more so. Legislator Hanchett asked County Attorney Carrow if she could come up with what's needed if they decide to give towns money. Ms. Carrow stated that she'd have to look at the ARPA requirements. Ms. Knapp stated that we'd want to work with our consultants; we're paying them to do that type of work.

### **Upcoming Committee of the Whole Meetings**

The group set August 3 as the next date to hold a Committee of the Whole meeting to discuss the ARPA funds. The July 20 Committee of the Whole meeting will be used for other topics.

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 4:48 p.m. on a motion by Legislator Barnes, seconded by Legislator Curran, and carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah M. Decker, Journal Clerk  
Allegany County Board of Legislators