



TOWN OF CANTON
FOUR MARKET STREET
P.O. BOX 168
COLLINSVILLE, CONNECTICUT 06022-0168

ARPA ASSISTANCE PLAN

As part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), the Town of Canton will be receiving \$3,034,667.30, half has already been received and the other half will be received in June 2022. Pursuant to the Act, as further defined by regulatory guidance, the funds can be utilized to address the negative impacts of COVID 19 on families, businesses, nonprofits and government. The funds must be encumbered by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026. The “safe harbor” method of utilizing ARPA funds is to declare the funding as loss revenue pursuant to a federal formula. Once the funds have been declared as loss revenue, they can be used for normal government expenses except for debt service and pension fund costs. Town officials have determined that most, if not all of the funds can be recouped as loss revenue.

Earlier this year the Board of Selectmen requested that the Town’s CIP Committee review and make recommendations for possible uses of the ARPA funds. The CIP Committee was recommended for the review because it included members from many of the municipal stakeholders including the BOS, BOE and BOF along with other municipal officials.

Overall Theme is Quality of Life

The CIP Committee determined the overall theme should be that the funds be utilized to enhance residents’ quality of life. This would include health and well-being, safety, and outdoor recreation. Further enhancing the community’s well-being would be support of non-profits, especially those that support tourism, and support for small business. Of particular interest was supporting small businesses that could be impacted by development of the Ax Factory. Finally, there were facility improvements including HVAC improvements for both the Town Hall and High School auditoriums.

Some of the items funded would have had to be funded through the budget process if not for the ARPA funding, thereby lowering future costs. Finally, the items recommended to be funded are not items that will need substantial future additional funding such as adding additional personnel.

Along with the ARPA Assistance Plan there is a summary spreadsheet that outlines the expenditures. It indicates that there would be substantial funding still in reserve to cover future programs/expenses.

Process

Approving the use of ARPA funds will utilize the same procedural process as other special appropriations. The ARPA Assistance Plan will need to be approved by the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and then finally a Town Meeting.

The funds would be accounted for in a special revenue account entitled ARPA funding. The account would be handled similar to the current Capital Improvement fund. Each project or program would be a separate sub-account within the ARPA fund and each individual expenditure would be tracked and accounted for within the sub account.

Proposed Funding

The distribution of ARPA funds will be within one of these major quality of life categories:

- Health/Well-being
- Safety
- Outdoor Recreation
- Tourism/Museums and Small Business Support
- Facility Improvements

Health/Well-being

Many individuals still have psychological scars from the impacts of COVID 19. The following steps will be taken to assist those who have psychological, emotional or other negative impacts from COVID 19.

- Social Service Fund – (\$60,000) To a social services fund to be utilized to support Canton residents who have been negatively impacted by COVID-19. Not only will this include temporary funding for basic essentials, but it will also include funding for counselors. In particular, the counselors that the Town already contract with should be utilized to provide quality services at the contracted rate.
- Social/Emotional Learning Support – (\$40,000) Funds shall be provided to the BOE for psychological services for students and families. These should be contracted services in lieu of hiring a long term employee.

Safety

The pandemic has emphasized the importance of health and safety organizations. This includes police, fire, EMS and the Health Districts. It is important that we maintain the personal protective gear and supplies that became essential during the pandemic.

- Fire Department Air Packs – (\$360,000) The Fire Department air packs cannot continue to be used and must be replaced. A grant has been applied for but if not received then ARPA funds can be utilized.

- Security Improvements for Public Offices - (\$70,000) The public offices in Town Hall have structurally changed little in decades and are not set up to modern safety measures. Many of the offices do not separate staff space from the public, including offices that handle significant money. These concerns have been amplified since decreased staffing has left only one staffer in some of the offices. These funds would be utilized to do physical improvements.

Outdoor Recreation

One of the beneficial outcomes of COVID 19 is that everyone seemed to reconnect with the importance of being outdoors and recreation, whether it is hiking in the woods, playing golf or biking on the trail or kayaking in the Farmington River. The use of funds to promote outdoor recreation has the potential to impact the quality of life for many of Canton's residents. Some of these projects could be funded through the Parks & Recreation Special Revenue Account if \$185,006 is reimbursed as loss revenue.

- Farmington River Bike Trail Improvements – (\$359,000) This would include replacing the decking on the trestle bridge, flower bridge, boardwalk and replacing old fencing.
- Renovate CIS Fields – (\$65,000) Create usable recreational fields with irrigation at the Intermediate School.
- Splash Pad – (\$125,000) Construct a splash pad at the location of the current wading pool at Mills Pond Park. If P&R lost revenue is replenished this could at least partially be funded by the P&R special revenue account.
- Install Outdoor Exercise Equipment at Mills Pond Park – (\$25,000) Fund outdoor exercise equipment at Mills Pond Park that would be located at stations throughout the park.
- River Access – (\$340,000) Fund an ADA compliant boat ramp to the Farmington River for canoes and kayaks in the vicinity of 50 Old River Road.
- Replace Pool Shell at Mills Pond Park – (\$90,000) The pool shell has been failing for years and is a perennial request in the CIP from the Park & Recreation Commission.
- Partially fund new Little League field at the High School – (\$200,000) Cost estimates for replacing the field are higher than currently budgeted and therefore requires additional funding.

Nonprofit / Tourism and Small Business

Due to social distancing requirements many nonprofits and tourist operations had to be shut down or decrease activities for extended periods. As a result some of the organizations lost revenue. Also, tourism has multiple positive effects, including providing jobs for local residents and providing places of interest for both local residents and people in the region. A few of the important tourist attractions in Canton is the Collinsville Historic Museum, Roaring Brook Nature Center and the many artists that Canton is known for. Also many small businesses have been significantly impacted by COVID-19, including loss revenues and labor shortages. Finally, recent economic redevelopment opportunity (Collins Ax Factory) has required some small businesses to relocate. The various funds below can assist these businesses with these challenges. An application and review process would be required prior to distributing the funds.

- Local Shuttered Tourism Grant – (\$70,000) Funds to assist local nonprofit tourism venues that were impacted by COVID 19. There will be an application process with specific criteria for awarding this grant.
- Artist Support Grant – (\$20,000) Funds to support artists, including the Arts Council. Items to be supported could include locating an artists' incubator center where artists could showcase their creations and be provided with space to work and possibly grow to occupy future additional space.
- Business Stability Fund – (\$100,000) Assist small businesses with the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 or relocation costs caused by recent redevelopment.
- Support Main Street Fund – (\$25,000) Funds to support creating walkability and enjoyment of Main Street area in Collinsville. Much of these funds would be utilize to support the Streetscape II project in Collinsville.

Facility Improvements

Town facilities are in need of updating. Some of these updates would help mitigate the impacts of COVID 19 by creating better ventilation. All of the suggested improvements would enhance people's experience with utilizing public facilities.

- HVAC for Town Hall Auditorium – (\$152,863) Provide HVAC for Town Hall auditorium.
- HVAC for High School Auditorium - (\$150,000) Provide HVAC for High School auditorium
- Cherry Brook Elementary School Broadband – (\$49,000) Provides additional broadband connectivity for stronger/clearer communications.
- General Town Technology Support – (\$50,000) General IT equipment and software purchases including Town wide WIFI upgrade; implement 2factor identification as required by insurer, replace end of life Adtran switches, projector for room F and additional technology equipment for conference rooms at the Community Center. The current WIFI in Town Hall is so old it is not compatible with some new laptops.
- Community Center (Including Parks & Recreation, Library and Senior Center) Fixtures and Furnishings Fund – (\$35,000) Much of the furnishings in the Community Center are dated or are in need of replacement. In particular, the Senior Center is in need of upgrades, from chairs to computers. The kitchen also needs upgrades.