

North Powder City Council Work Session
December 14, 2021
6PM City Hall

Attendance: Mayor John Frieboes, Councilors Joyce Lawyer, Logan McCrae, and Jeff Grende. City Recorder Beth Wendt, County Commissioner Donna Beverage

Mayor Frieboes called the meeting to order to discuss uses of funds from the American Relief Plan Act (ARPA). Beth noted that we need to decide how the City wants to spend the funds. We have to file a report at the end of January, even if it isn't spent yet. Donna added that the guide lines are still changing. However, anything spent within the current guidelines will still be acceptable. The County hasn't allocated any of their funds yet but there are reports coming due. Shelly, the County's administrative assistant will be happy to help in any way she can. Joyce hoped that the City could receive some of the County money. Donna noted that the County is not in a rush to spend the funds because they have until 2024 to decide how it will be spent. They are looking at projects from the whole County and would like North Powder to figure out what projects we would like help with and prioritize them. They will have a work session in February to start looking at those projects. John noted that North Powder has received \$51,000 and will get another \$51,000. He wondered if the County money was in addition to that. Donna said the County will get a total of about \$5.2 million, so this is in addition to the City's money. Beth commented that we are getting ready to start on remodeling the fire station for City Hall. She wondered if the Library would fit the parameters of the ARPA funds. Donna didn't know. Joyce interjected that the Library only has one grant, so far, for \$10,000 and the City has some money but she didn't know what it would take to finish it. They want to start with the roof. Donna couldn't promise anything, but suggested we finish City Hall first and apply for funds for the Library with the 2nd half of the funds. Logan wondered how a project like fixing a building would tie into COVID. Donna noted that not all of the projects submitted would fit into the ARPA guidelines, but the County hopes they will receive other pots of money where they might fit. She reiterated that we need to prioritize and submit a project list to the County. Beth verified that we could apply for more than one project. Donna added that there are no guarantees at this point, but there are a lot of different sources. Some of which the City would have to apply for on our own. Beth was concerned that being a small town with limited staff we could easily get overwhelmed with too many grants at one time. Donna suggested hiring someone to oversee grants. Some grants will include technical assistance. Logan wondered if we could use part of the ARPA funds for that. Donna thought it was worth looking into. She added that Val Stockoff from Union has done some grant writing. Anderson & Perry is another possibility, particularly for water or wastewater projects. She reiterated that the Council needs to decide what the City needs and to make a prioritized list. Joyce was really anxious to have something done about the roof of the fire station. John wanted to take a look at it. Logan wondered who would be the best person to help us figure out if a project would fit into the ARPA limits. Donna suggested we talk to Shelly. She reminded that the Commissioners would meet in February and she would like to see North Powder have something on their list. They will probably consider the projects more so than costs. She also thought they would do a business grant, like they did last year. They were able to help 93 businesses in Union County, including a couple in North Powder. That will be separate from what the City is doing. Joyce wondered if the County had funds to hire law enforcement. Donna said she would check. There are other grants that can be used for that, but she didn't think the County worked on them. Union had one that paid half for 5 years but after 5 years the City has to be self-sustaining. Logan noted that our biggest issues are drug related. We can self-police some, but we need help. Jeff noted that Baker is starting to see more homelessness. Donna said La Grande is, too. Joyce added that we are seeing a lot of camp trailers sneaking in. Donna commented that there are over 400 jobs

available in Union County. A lot of places are offering signing bonuses. Logan wondered if we could use ARPA funding to tear down the old City Hall because of the lead paint. Beth remarked that there are brownfield grants that can help with that. Logan thought we could add that to our list of projects. Donna suggested we talk to Courtney at Regional Solutions. John agreed that we should be looking at what do with the old building and where the funds would come from even though it will take a while before we get both City Hall and the Library moved. Donna will send us any grant information she sees. In the meantime, we should start putting together a prioritized list of projects. We can ask Shelly if we have questions. Beth noted that the CARES Act parameters for the City were a little different from the County's. We were able to purchase equipment for "Zoom" meetings and gave money to the Food Bank. Donna noted that she is the County Commissioner liaison for North Powder. Beth will send Donna a schedule for Council meetings. Donna asked if we did virtual meetings. Beth noted that we bought the equipment with the CARES Act funds but we haven't been able to use it because we don't have a place to set it up yet. Logan added that we haven't had any requests for it either. Donna said Union uses Facebook Live. People can call in to make comments and it is important to allow that. Joyce asked if we should submit big projects instead of small ones. John thought it should be what is most important, regardless of the size. Logan felt it would be smart to hire a grant writer/manager. Joyce thought that was what Janet Dodson was trying to steer the City toward. She thought they'd need to be paid by the hour instead of by grant. Donna proposed the Library might need to wait for the second round of ARPA money. Nothing with government gets done in a hurry. Beth interjected that most people figure a government funded project will take at least 5 to 7 years to complete. Joyce commented that we can't get more than one or two grants at a time. Beth explained that is because as a small town, they don't think we have the staff to manage them. Donna remarked that right now, rural has been a high priority so there may be more grants available. Anderson Perry could manage some grants for the City. Another grant option might be the Ford Foundation. They would like to invest in Eastern Oregon but they want the City to take ownership in the project. Again, make a list of projects and submit it to the County. Donna noted that Union County just applied for \$50,000 from Senate Bill 2 to look for land to help start new businesses. It is an opportunity to possibly change some zoning areas to allow for business expansion. The Commercial Interchange zone might be a good spot to consider. It can be private or public land. Scott Hartell will be coming to every City to talk about the possibilities. Donna added that Union County is part of the Eastern OR County Association. It is a group of 15 counties in Eastern Oregon who work together for the betterment of each county. John thought it might be nice to have money for housing. Donna agreed. But a concern is how people will be able to afford housing with the job market like it is. Jeff added that right now, rent is outrageous, yet North Powder doesn't have housing available.

Meeting adjourned at 7:16PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Attest:

Beth Wendt
City Recorder