



## FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE STUDY SESSION

### RE: American Rescue Act Funding

County of Champaign, Urbana, Illinois

Tuesday, May 25, 2021 – \*6:00 P.M. \*PLEASE NOTE TIME

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Shields-Carter Meeting Room/Zoom

Brookens Administrative Center

1776 East Washington Street, Urbana, Illinois

#### MINUTES – Approved with Corrections on June 15, 2021

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**Members Present via Zoom:** Titianna Ammons, Samantha Carter, Lorraine Cowart, Aaron Esry, Jim Goss, Stan Harper, Jordan Humphrey, Mary King, Jenny Lokshin, Jim McGuire, Diane Michaels, Brad Passalacqua, Kyle Patterson, Jacob Paul, Emily Rodriguez, Chris Stohr, Jennifer Straub, Steve Summers, Leah Taylor, Eric Thorsland, Jodi Wolken

**Members Physically Present:** Stephanie Fortado

**Members Absent:**

**Others Present:** Darlene Kloepfel (County Executive), Tami Ogden (Deputy Director of Finance), Megan Robison (Recording Secretary), Lynn Canfield (Executive Director, MHB/DDB),

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#### Agenda Items

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Fortado called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**II. \*Roll Call**

Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

**III. Approval of Agenda**

**MOTION** by Mr. Summers to approve the agenda; seconded by Ms. Straub. Upon roll call vote, the **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously.

Mr. McGuire joined the meeting at 6:02 p.m.

Ms. Cowart joined the meeting at 6:07 p.m.

**IV. Public Participation**

Before beginning public participation Chair Fortado made a quick statement. She thanked the administrative staff for their work on this agenda packet, stated there won't be any voting today but just a beginning of many conversations, and she thanked the 70 different people that submitted ideas to the Board. She then asked the public participants to the make it clear

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what issue they are speaking to and to let the Board know if they submitted a written statement.

Lynn Canfield, Executive Director of Mental Health Board, thanked Chair Fortado for getting her submission to the Board at the last minute.

Marlon Mitchell, Executive Director of First Followers, is strongly suggesting that funds be set aside for the prevention of gun violence. The City of Champaign has had a shooting every 1.4 days and the City of Urbana has had one every four days. They believe brick and mortar sites should be set up in Champaign, Urbana and Rantoul to help service these communities effectively.

Bradley Uken, Farm Bureau, stated the pandemic has proven that a fast, reliable broadband internet connection is a true critical piece of infrastructure. He is asking the Board set aside \$15 million to improve access to fast, reliable internet connections throughout Champaign County.

Bridgette Moen, Champaign County Forest Preserve, is asking the Board to use their transfer authority to give funds to the Forest Preserve to assist with their losses due to the pandemic.

Nils Jacobsen, Immigrant Services of Champaign County, referenced his written comment regarding housing for poor immigrants. Their current crowded living conditions can have adverse consequences for public health conditions and their education. He believes using these funds to purchase housing for immigrants would be a very sustainable project.

William K.T. Brown, CEO of HV Neighborhood Transformation, is speaking about community violence. He believes the Board should view the violence as a public health issue. He is asking the Board to give funds towards preventing the community violence.

Dr. Regina Parnell recognized the many people that have lost their lives to gun violence in our community. First Followers has been providing support to those affected by the gun violence.

James Corbin, First Followers, referenced his written proposal and would just like to reiterate what his colleagues have said in regard to community violence. He believes a one-stop center would be the best use of funds in the prevention of violence with wrap-around support services.

Rick Manner, Urbana-Champaign Sanitary District, referenced his written comment. He also commended the people at LIHEAP that have helped establish a new assistance program for sewer systems. He is hoping this is something they find possible to fund.

James Kilgore, Co-Director of First Followers, is echoing the comments made by his colleagues. He believes we need a coordinated response for the prevention of community violence. He explained many programs that are needed in the community.

Amanda Dixon spoke about her written response regarding animal welfare and the Animal Control Department.

Mr. Passalacqua joined the meeting at 6:20 p.m.

**V. Discussion – ARPA Funding**

Chair Fortado started the discussion section by suggesting they speak about each topic for approximately 15 minutes each. She also requested for the Board members to share any feedback they have received from their constituents.

- **Broadband Infrastructure**

Board members discussed broadband as a possibility for funding. Many Board members expressed issues they or their constituents have had with internet during the pandemic and stated this was a very important issue their constituents would like to see funded. Most members expressed their support for funding this topic. They would also like to find a way for low income members of the community to receive a high-speed connection.

Chair Fortado wrapped up this section by giving three suggestions. She would like to dedicate the June Study Session meeting to this topic. Secondly, she believes it would be best to prioritize funding a comprehensive county study to get everything on to one page. Finally, she would like to form a sub-committee to discuss this topic alone. No one spoke against any of her suggestions.

Ms. King joined the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

- **Water/Sewer Infrastructure**

Ms. Carter, Ms. Rodriguez, Ms. Straub and Ms. King would like to see some funding go towards the Garden Hills neighborhood. The City has a plan to complete these projects, but they will take 20 years. They believe it would be great to help the City advance these projects. The issues in this neighborhood leads to gun violence problems. Mr. Thorsland added that Dobbins Downs and Wilbur Heights also need the help. Chair Fortado asked that Board members attend the City of Champaign study session they will be having about Garden Hills to find ways we can partner with them to complete these projects sooner.

Mr. McGuire would like to see the funding go towards areas that do not have the monetary means that others might.

Ms. Straub and Mr. Summers added that covering the outstanding bills at the Sanitary District would not only help the community members but also provide revenue to the district that otherwise might go unpaid.

Mr. Thorsland also advocated for the project on the Brookens parking lot that was submitted by John Bergee. He believes this would benefit a lot of people that use this building.

Mr. Stohr stated we owe it to our residents to take steps to complete the study recommended by the Mahomet Aquifer Protection Taskforce. It is important to know the physical properties of the aquifer to ensure a sustainable supply of high-quality potable water. Mr. Summers, Ms. Ammons and Mr. Paul concurred with these comments.

Chair Fortado wrapped up this section by suggesting that these conversations be continued in the Environment and Land Use Committee meetings.

- **Community violence**

Many members agree that something must be done about the community violence. They stated that investing in many different programs for wrap around services would be beneficial to beginning to prevent violence in our community. Most believe this should be priority number one for the County. They also believe it would be best to invest in the groups/programs that are already available in the community.

Mr. McGuire said they should make sure they find the best place to support with this short-term funding. Mr. Summers added to his comment by stating some short-term funding could turn into long-term funding in terms of grant funds.

Chair Fortado would like to also form a taskforce for this topic. She thanks those community groups that are already beginning these conversations.

- **Low income communities**

Ms. Carter suggested installing cameras in the communities where violence is higher. Mr. Stohr concurs with Ms. Carter and he has heard from many constituents that have recommended funding doorbell cameras.

Ms. Rodriguez mentioned that 1 in 7 residents in Illinois is an immigrant. She thanks Dr. Jacobsen for bringing forward his ideas for housing and is eager to learn more.

Ms. Straub stated she believes this would be money well spent on our most vulnerable community members.

Chair Fortado would like to find a way to be inclusive of all the voices in our community.

- **Housing**

Mr. Patterson stated that this is one of those over-arching issues that can lead to the community violence when it is lacking.

Mr. Paul would like to see assistance with home ownership. Ms. Lokshin and Mr. Stohr agreed with this idea.

- **Mental Health**

Ms. Carter recognizes there is a great need for mental health services but isn't sure exactly what needs to be done.

Ms. Straub believes the One Door program could really help with lowering the number of people in the County Jail.

Mr. Humphrey mentioned the backlog of work for mental health professionals and the access to quick care is a real issue our community is experiencing at this current time. He would like to come up with a proposal to alleviate the financial burden that goes into trying to book an appointment in a timely fashion. Ms. Rodriguez agreed with Mr. Humphrey that our community needs more competitors in the mental health field, and she would like to hold a special session to speak just about the mental health availability. Mr. Stohr agrees with these comments and

believes some of our community violence issues can be tied back to mental health troubles. He really encouraged everyone to read Ms. Canfield's memos.

- **Childcare and education**

Ms. Straub stated that affordable childcare is impossible to find in our community. It is also very difficult to find quality childcare and care during second and third shifts. This is a huge barrier to socioeconomic advancement.

Mr. Thorsland explained this is one the reasons we cannot get people to work in the hospitality field. Proper childcare would do a lot to get things rolling again in our community. Mr. Patterson reiterated these same statements.

Ms. King stated that many of her co-workers have not been able to come back to work because of the lack of childcare during the pandemic especially for the older children.

Chair Fortado mentioned how many of these issues and the ideas overlap to other areas. She believes we shouldn't be thinking of these as separate issues.

- **Miscellaneous/Multiple ideas**

Chair Fortado mentioned the different type of comments that were in this section.

Mr. Stohr would like to see if we could help those that had to close their business. Ms. Carter agreed that small businesses really felt the affects of the pandemic and would like to see some assistance go to those.

## **VI. Adjournment**

Chair Fortado adjourned the meeting at 8:17 p.m.