



# *Town of New Fairfield*

*Selectmen's Office*

*4 Brush Hill Road*

*New Fairfield, Connecticut*

## **BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

### **SPECIAL MEETING**

### **ARPA PUBLIC FORUM**

### **ZOOM MEETING**

**Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://zoom.us/j/92971218361>

Meeting ID: 929 7121 8361

Dial In: (929) 205-6099

**Monday May 23, 2022**

**7:00 P.M.**

## **AGENDA**

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Discussion of Proposed ARPA Projects
  - a) Business/Commercial Sewer
  - b) Ball Pond Drainage
  - c) CoA Firehouse Renovation
  - d) Communications Center Equipment
  - e) Police Building Renovations
  - f) Beach House Reconstruction
  - g) Emergency Housing Fund
  - h) Community Center Feasibility Study
  - i) Small Business Grants
  - j) Hazard Pay for Public Safety/Public Health Employees
4. Public Comment

Adjournment

Received by email on 05/19/2022 @ 11:20 a.m.  
By Tricia Quinn, Asst. Town Clerk, New Fairfield

## **THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT**

I'm sure that many of you have heard about the American Rescue Plan Act, or "ARPA". The Act has provided municipalities and school districts in Connecticut with \$2.55 billion of funding for specific purposes. The summary below discusses the provisions for municipalities, the work that we have been doing in New Fairfield and next steps.

ARPA funds may be used as follows:

- 1) to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency or its negative impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses and non-profits, or to aid impacted industries such as tourism, travel or hospitality,
- 2) to respond to essential workers performing essential work during the public health emergency by providing premium pay to essential workers,
- 3) for the provision of government services, and
- 4) to make necessary investments in water, sewer and broadband infrastructure.

The funds may not be used to fund pension funds, to compensate for lost tax revenue, or to replenish "rainy day" funds. The intent of ARPA is to look forward and not backward – in other words, funding should be used for new projects, not to reimburse projects already funded through other sources. Municipalities are urged to identify pre-pandemic inhibitors to growth when considering eligible projects, and to ensure that investments will result in lasting benefits.

New Fairfield will receive approximately \$4.1 million in ARPA funds over two years. When ARPA funding was announced in July of last year, the Board of Selectmen convened a working group comprised of Town employees and officials with expertise consistent with the goals of ARPA. This group includes the Town Engineer (infrastructure), the Health Director (public health response), Economic Development Commission Chair (negative economic impacts and aid to small business) Social Services Director (aid to households), and the Emergency Management Director, Police Sergeant, and Fire Chief (public safety) to advise us on town needs in their respective areas consistent with the provisions of ARPA. The working group reports to the BOS periodically on potential projects that may be funded with ARPA funds. The meetings are Special Board of Selectmen meetings that are noticed and open to the public. Meeting dates are posted on the town website, [www.newfairfield.org](http://www.newfairfield.org). To date, the working group has presented information to the BOS on the following projects:

### **Business/Commercial Sewer Study and Design**

Most septic systems serving our small businesses in the center of Town are close to 30 years old and some are starting to experience failures. The business/commercial zone is located above the largest drinking water aquifer in New Fairfield, presenting a potential environmental concern should these systems fail. Ball Pond Brook, which discharges directly to Candlewood Lake, passes through the business/commercial zone and is also at risk of contamination from aging septic systems. Many years ago, the Town declined the opportunity to connect to the Regional Waste Treatment Facility located in Danbury, and the Town Engineer has proposed seeking that connection now to support the future economic and

environmental health of our Town. Through discussions with commercial realtors and property owners, the lack of sewer and water infrastructure in the center of Town has been identified as a primary obstacle to filling vacancies in our business/commercial district. Reliance on septic systems severely restricts both the types of businesses that can operate in Town and the potential growth of our existing small businesses. The project could be expanded to include New Fairfield schools, also served by aging septic systems. A sewer study identifying potential sewer flow to Danbury has been completed using budgeted funds. ARPA funds could be used to fund the design and permitting of the system necessary to make the project “shovel ready,” removing this item from our Town budget. Such status is required before the Town can apply for state or federal funding to complete the project. ARPA expressly allows for investment in sewer and water.

### **Ball Pond Watershed Stormwater Drainage**

Over several decades, stormwater drainage has caused severe erosion and flooding in the neighborhoods located between Ball Pond and Putnam Lake, impacting numerous homeowners in the area. The Town Engineer is proposing the study and design of stormwater mitigation measures to control the flow of stormwater in the area. ARPA expressly allows for investment in sewer and water, including stormwater management.

### **CoA Firehouse Renovations**

The New Fairfield Fire Department Company “A” Fire Station requires modifications to address building use requirements and member safety concerns. The modifications will include providing additional accommodations for contracted paramedics, showers for use by members after fighting fires, modern gear washer and dryer and a new air compressor to fill SCBA bottles.

### **Public Safety Improvements**

The Emergency Management Director and Resident Sergeant have made recommendations on improvements to the Police building and Communications infrastructure. ARPA expressly allows provisions for funding police, fire and other public safety services.

### **Premium Pay for Public Health and Safety Employees**

The working group has discussed premium pay for public health and safety employees and volunteer firefighters. ARPA expressly allows premium pay to eligible workers performing essential work during the pandemic.

### **Emergency Housing Fund**

After reviewing the services currently available to New Fairfield residents and additional needs in the community, the Social Services Director has recommended the creation of an Emergency Housing Fund. The fund would be used to assist residents who may be on the verge of homelessness. ARPA expressly provides for emergency housing assistance.

### **Beach House Reconstruction**

The Town, through the Parks and Recreation Commission and Permanent Building Committee, has long recognized the need to reconstruct the Beach House at the Town Park. To date, the Town has been unable to fund the project through the municipal budget or state grant funding. Preliminary plans for the project exist. ARPA provides for funding government services, including infrastructure.

### **Small Business Grants**

The Economic Development Commission has proposed funding grants to local small businesses impacted by the pandemic. ARPA provides for grants to businesses with fewer than 500 employees.

After the scope of the projects identified by the working group has been defined and each project has been reviewed for eligibility, the BOS will hold additional public hearings on the proposed projects. Projects approved by the BOS will be presented to the Board of Finance for review and approval and then to referendum for final approval by taxpayers. I encourage you to attend upcoming BOS meetings for more detailed information on this important project.

### **Community Center Feasibility Study**

Many residents support the concept of a Community Center in New Fairfield. Before moving forward, several important questions need to be answered before any decisions are made. With that in mind, we are proposing a feasibility study to explore the possibility of a Community Center in Town. The study that would bring together the public and other stakeholders to answer questions such as what would residents like to see in a Community Center? If you ask five different people that question, you will get five different answers ranging from a space with meeting rooms to a facility with a gym, outdoor pool and playing fields and everything in between. Each one of those concepts requires a different amount and type of space. For example, how much property do we need? How large a building and associated septic system is necessary? Does the Town own a suitable piece of property to meet these needs? How will the facility be staffed and maintained? After developing a concept, a cost estimate will be developed using the input from stakeholders and then, a decision can be made on how to move forward.