

*Town of Weymouth
Massachusetts*

Robert L. Hedlund
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Responses to Councilor Belmarsh's questions regarding ARPA:

1. In consideration of funds received by state legislature, please detail the funds received, how do you get these funds and how they will or have been distributed?

If this refers to the federal ARPA funds that the Commonwealth received and used as part of the COVID relief legislation signed by Governor Baker in December, there were several earmarks for Weymouth, but the Mayor was not consulted on any of the funding details in that state legislation.

Typically, any earmark in a state legislative vehicle requires a standard contract between the town and the state (agency) before the town receives the funding. The town department associated with the earmark manages the funding within the intent of the earmark language, with the oversight of the Mayor's office.

Here is a list of the earmarks from this legislation that would be under "custody" of town departments or school administration: "not less than \$100,000 shall be expended for the dredging and improvements of the public boat ramp located in the city of Weymouth; not less than \$100,000 shall be expended for core communication boards to enhance the educational experience for children and their caregivers in public spaces in the city of Weymouth; not less than \$100,000 shall be expended for the protection and maintenance of Whitman's pond and for costs associated with invasive species in the city known as the town of Weymouth; not less than \$100,000 shall be expended to the Weymouth Teen center for job skills training and equipment; not less than \$100,000 shall be expended for the Weymouth Senior Center to address food insecurity, loneliness and isolation of impacted senior citizens; not less than \$100,000 shall be expended for materials for career and technical training within the career and technical education programs at Weymouth high school;"

2. What do you see the role of the Town Council in this ARPA Funding processed?

The Administration has asked for ideas, priorities and feedback from each councilor.

3. Census tells us there 57,437 people who live in Weymouth and you received 2,000 responses which if they were 2,000 individual responses would be 3% of the population. Was there a goal of number of responses for the survey?

2,052 responses to such a survey is very successful and we are extremely pleased that so many residents took the time to take this important survey. It far exceeded expectations. Not every municipality even took such a survey. It was important to Mayor Hedlund to hear from residents and taxpayers.

To put the 2,052 responses in some perspective, other recent surveys in the town included the Weymouth Public School survey on ARPA spending that had 677 respondents, a farmers market survey that had 1,042 respondents, and a survey conducted by Weymouth Libraries that had 519 responses.

4. Mayor indicates in his letter of January 18, 2022, to Town Council to submit additional feedback on ideas and priorities. How are you looking for additional input regarding ideas and priorities?

By any means convenient to that councilor. Typical modes of communication to the Administration have been by letter or email.

5. Does the Mayor's office have any data on who (groups, sectors) has been hardest hit by the pandemic? If not, what is the best way to gather data to make sure funds are going where really needed?

There are ongoing efforts to identify areas where the need could be considered disproportional. One example is in the area of food insecurity. Working with the Weymouth Food Pantry (WFP), it was learned that Massachusetts saw the rate of food insecurity rise 55% due to the pandemic. The WFP distributed record amounts of food since the onset of the pandemic. Nearly 600 households visited the WFP for the first time since the onset of the pandemic. It is expected that these numbers will remain above pre-pandemic numbers. Based on this data and need, Mayor Hedlund has committed ARPA funding to partner with the WFP to establish a mobile food pantry to extend the reach and ensure even more people and families in need of food access get it.

We also know from data that Weymouth has a need for behavioral health and substance misuse treatment, which was exacerbated by the pandemic. While we have great resources in place to help address these needs, we are looking to further address the more permanent or lingering impacts.

6. Can you detail where the resident feedback survey was located this past summer including physical and electronic locations and if it was offered in other languages other than English? Please provide the raw data of the survey results including all answer and comments received?

It would be impossible to know every detailed location of the survey because it was shared by so many. The survey was made available on the town's website, social media platforms and media outlets. It was a story in the Boston Globe, in addition to our local papers. It was also shared by Weymouth Public Schools and many other town departments and civic and non-profit organizations. The survey was offered in English, Arabic, Portuguese, and Spanish.

We do not plan to share names, addresses or demographic information of individual respondents. We provided the raw numbers for each priority along with overall demographic information. We believe that is more than sufficient and do not believe sharing an individual's response serves the purpose of the survey, which was to gauge community sentiment.

7. Do we know how many town employees completed the surveys or were asked to submit recommendations to ensure the voices of those departments are represented?

The survey was for any Weymouth resident, with no response being more important than another. Department needs are addressed through the CIP and Budget process.

8. You state in your letter to Town Council, in total, \$1,385,963.90 has been expended or encumbered, with over \$760,000 of that for COVID testing and \$450,000 for the final design of Columbian Square. Please provide financial documentation when available specifically detailing all expenditures at this time.

The town is required to submit quarterly ARPA Project and Expenditure Reports. We can provide the Town Council with a copy.

9. Has the Mayor's office considered developing a public facing website like Newton, Plymouth and Boston and other communities to communicate information, progress, and opportunities to public? If not, how best could we implement something like these communities?

Traditional methods of communicating information will continue to be used, including via the town website and social media.

10. The Mayor's office stated the second half of the direct funding is expected in May of this year. Your letter states, "There are a number of projects in need of funding and under consideration, including the long-awaited reconstruction of Columbian Square, which is now fully designed. Other improvements, programs and progress to be funded or under consideration include a continuation of our Pave-The Wey road and sidewalk improvement program, Beals Park improvements, The Wessagusset Walk and coastal embankment stabilization, an after-school recreation program for elementary school students, addressing community behavioral health needs (possibly partnering with South Shore Health), Iron Hill

Park improvements, water/sewer infrastructure upgrades, and expanding wireless access and security across town.”

Please detail funding plan when available.

The town is required to submit quarterly ARPA Project and Expenditure Reports. We will provide the Town Council with a copy. Certain funding requests, whether using free cash, within the operating budget or by borrowing funds, will come to the Town Council via a measure from the Mayor for due consideration and approval.

11. The Mayor’s office stated the County has an additional \$11 million for Weymouth. Please detail the process to request these funds, the plan for the funding, including the topic and anticipated amount.

The rules that apply to our direct ARPA funding apply to this country ARPA funding. There is not a separate plan for this ARPA funding, only a separate vehicle to receive the funding. The County has developed an online portal to request funding.

12. In your response, you state, “In addition to available ARPA funding, Weymouth’s Free Cash was recently certified at \$15,918,770.00. Please note that \$10 million of this is from the Host Community Agreement (HCA) with Enbridge. \$2,748,906 of that HCA funding has already been used to purchase our new fire engine and ladder as well as for the demolition and removal of the Wharf Street incinerator and design services for Beals Park.” Please detail any and all items paid through HCA and plans going forward. Please provide the actual documents.

Those are the details. As of that memo, “\$2,748,906 ... has already been used to purchase our new fire engine and ladder as well as for the demolition and removal of the Wharf Street incinerator and design services for Beals Park.” Copies of those measures with any back-up that town council approved last year should be available in the Town Council office. Future funding request will be submitted through a measure to the Town Council for due consideration and approval.

13. With regard to all town budget requests, especial capital requests, how will you review and present if there are overlapping requests in multiple funding sources?

Neither budget nor capital request are made by funding source. The Administration determines the funding source.

14. Is there a timeline/chart/graphic of funding deadlines, etc. for projects committed or thinking will be committed to these funds? see Boston calendar

Weymouth has not hired an outside consultant for such work as some other communities have. Information on ARPA projects and spending will be shared through traditional communication channels and reporting.

All ARPA funding needs to be allocated by December 31, 2024 and expended by December 31, 2026.

15. How plan to incorporate ARPA funding into budget planning and approval process for fy23 including capital requests?

The Budget and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) processes are separate. ARPA is simply another available funding source with its own set of rules and guidelines. Since ARPA funding is a one-time source of funding, the Administration will prioritize projects that do not create recurring or unsustainable costs.