



Coweta County Board of Commissioners

Work Session/Called Meeting

22 E Broad Street
Newnan, GA 30263
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Shannon Zerangue
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Tuesday, September 28, 2021

6:00 PM

Commission Chambers

~ Minutes ~

COWETA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Call to Order

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Bob Blackburn	District 3 - Chairman	Absent	
Tim Lassetter	District 2 - Vice Chairman	Present	
Paul Poole	District 1	Present	
John Reidelbach	District 4	Present	
Al Smith	District 5	Present	
Michael Fouts	County Administrator	Present	
Eddie Whitlock	Associate Administrator	Absent	
Kelly Mickle	Assistant Administrator	Present	
Fran Collins	Deputy County Clerk	Present	

The Honorable Board of Commissioners of Coweta County, Georgia met in a Called Meeting/Work Session on Tuesday, September 28, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Meeting Called to Order

Vice-Chairman Lassetter called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Purpose of the Called Meeting/Work Session

Vice-Chairman Lassetter explained that the purpose of the Work Session is to discuss and garner input regarding utilization of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

Pledge of Allegiance

Vice-Chairman Lassetter led the Pledge of Allegiance

Invocation

Invocation was given by Commissioner Smith.

WORK SESSION

1. 12542 Presentation and Discussion Regarding the Use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 Funds

Administrator Fouts explained that the purpose of the Work Session is to lay the foundation of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), discuss guidelines and ideas developed by staff, and to seek input from the Board and public regarding potential investments in the community. He recognized staff members Associate Administrator Eddie Whitlock, Assistant Administrator Kelly Mickle, Finance Director Hans Wilson, and Grants Manager Charlyn Shepherd for their involvement.

Administrator Fouts further explained that he will present a brief overview of the Rescue Plan, highlight the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund objectives, provide an overview of the State Fiscal Recovery Fund, work through some eligible uses and examples, describe the overall timeline, and field any questions the Board may have. He explained that the purpose of ARPA is to provide direct relief to Americans, contain COVID-19, and help the economy recover. Coweta County will

receive \$28.8 million, and the State of Georgia will receive \$4.85 billion. Of the \$4.85 billion, the State has earmarked \$2.4 billion for statewide grants to local governments, organizations, state agencies, other types of governments, businesses, and non-profits for appropriations through the application portal. He pointed out that Coweta County is independent from the municipalities in the County as well as the school system in any funding received.

He highlighted similarities and differences between Local Fiscal Recovery Funds for Coweta County (\$28.8 million) and the State Fiscal Recovery Fund (\$2.4 billion statewide) available through the State of Georgia and explained that the application deadline for State Fiscal Recovery funds is October 31, 2021. In both cases, the deadline for funds to be obligated is December 31, 2024 and funds must be spent by December 31, 2026. He explained that the guiding document for the use of both funds is the Interim Final Rule (IFR) published by the U.S. Treasury Department, and the County and any sub-recipients must comply with these regulations.

He highlighted the following six (6) primary categories under objectives, board examples of the plan, and any actions taken by the County under each:

- **Support public health response** - services to contain and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 including vaccination, medical expenses, testing, contact tracing, quarantine costs, capacity enhancements, and many related activities; behavioral healthcare services, including mental health or substance misuse treatment, crisis intervention, and related services; payroll and covered benefits for public health, healthcare, human services, and public safety staff to the extent that the work on the COVID-19 response. He explained that to date under this category, the County has purchased personal protection equipment (PPE) for staff, made some modifications to existing facilities, instituted vaccine incentive programs for employees and the public, and began an expansion of the Coweta Cares mobile integrated healthcare program provide by Pathways and Coweta Fire Rescue.
- **Address negative economic impacts** - deliver assistance to workers and families to support unemployment, aid households, survivor's benefits for families of COVID-19 victims; support small businesses with loans, grants, in-kind assistance and counseling programs; speed the recovery of impacted industries including the tourism, travel and hospitality sector; rebuild public sector capacity by rehiring staff, replenishing state unemployment insurance funds, and implementing economic relief programs. He explained that to date under this category, staff has conducted internal meetings to identify potential recipients and how to improve various public health outcomes.
- **Premium pay for essential workers** - provide premium pay to essential workers both directly and through grants to third-party employers; prioritize low- and moderate-income workers who face the greatest mismatch between employment related risks and compensation; key sectors include healthcare, grocery and food services, education, childcare, sanitation, and transit; must be fully additive to a worker's wages. He explained that to date under this category, the County has disbursed premium pay to essential County employees.
- **Replace public sector revenue loss** - ensure continuity of vital government services by filling budget shortfalls; revenue loss is calculated relative to the expected trend, beginning with the last full fiscal year pre-pandemic, and adjusted annually for growth; recipients may re-calculate revenue loss at multiple points during the program, supporting those entities that experience revenue loss with a lag. He explained that to date under this category staff has performed the revenue loss calculation, and there has been no overall revenue loss for the first of four annual calculations. There are certain areas like recreation or library that have loss revenue, but in total the County cannot use ARPA funds to provide government

services for now.

- **Water and sewer infrastructure** - includes improvements to infrastructure such as building or upgrading facilities and transmission, distribution, and storage systems; eligible uses align to Environmental Protection Agency project categories for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. He explained that to date under this category staff has received recommendations from the Water and Sewerage Authority.
- **Broadband infrastructure** - focus on households and businesses without access to broadband and those with connections that do not provide minimally acceptable speeds; fund projects that deliver reliable services with a minimum 100Mbps download/100 Mbps upload speeds unless impracticable; complement broadband investments through the Capital Projects fund. He explained to date under this category staff has held discussions with a current broadband provider regarding expansion and in particular the last mile and long driveway service.

Administrator Fouts highlighted steps in project determination including identifying the need or negative impact of the COVID-19 health emergency, identifying the program, service, or other intervention and how it addresses the identified need or impact, ensuring the project is designed to address an economic harm resulting from or exacerbated by the public health emergency, identifying the connection between the negative economic harm and the public health emergency, and explained that recipients should be able to support their determination. The Treasury will presume that certain types of services are eligible uses when provided in a Qualified Census Tract (QCT) or to families living in QCTs. Interim guidance states that if a project is located in a QCT and impacts those in the area, the eligibility requirements are broader and thus easier to define. As part of the application for State ARPA funding, the State will evaluate how the project meets the criteria and standards.

Administrator Fouts summarized a chart of preliminary projects and ideas identified by staff and provided the projects' associated categories and estimated costs. He also highlighted a few projects under the category of supporting public health including expansion of Coweta vaccine incentives and expansion of the jail.

Assistant County Administrator Kelly Mickle explained that the jail expansion only includes components that staff believes could potentially be eligible under ARPA including the infirmary, kitchen, and laundry areas impacted by COVID-19.

Administrator Fouts explained that approximately \$8 million of the estimated \$22 million total for the jail expansion project may be eligible for ARPA funding based on the scope of the project. Other categories include addressing negative economic impact (premium pay, rehiring furloughed positions, small business assistance, job training, talent development, and housing), broadband (partnering with current providers and applying to the State for possible funding for last mile/long driveway project). He estimated the total cost for projects identified by staff for consideration by the Board to be \$28 million and explained that this is subject to change as projects are vetted. He explained the importance of project justification and thorough documentation, especially for the County's community organizations and other sub-recipient partners.

He highlighted the ARPA timeline, its progression from March 2021 (when it became law), and the County's involvement to date. He reiterated that the State Fiscal Recovery Fund grant applications are due by October 31st, that the public survey for those that live or work in the community will close on October 12th, and funds must be earmarked by December 2024 and expended by December 2026.

In response to questions from the Board, Administrator Fouts explained that expansion of the Browns Mill Battlefield would fall under the category of improving community

physical health.

Vice-Chairman Lassetter expressed appreciation to staff for their work on the presentation and to those in attendance. He emphasized the importance of public input in identifying projects for the betterment of the community.

Vice-Chairman Lassetter called for any comments.

Ms. Pam Gabel, representing the Sustainable Housing Task Force, Coweta Community Foundation, and the American Red Cross, suggested that replacement of rental housing in areas impacted by COVID-19 before and after the tornado is critical. The goal is to build resilience in the community, lessen economic distress, and provide job training relevant to local business sectors. Those housed in the proposed "pocket neighborhoods" would be obligated to participate in various types of training. Lastly, she explained that her groups are working with the Housing Authority of Newnan, and other organizations.

Ms. Candace Boothby, President/CEO of the Newnan-Coweta Chamber of Commerce, expressed appreciation to the Board for involving the community in this process. She recognized partners and Chamber members present and offered their assistance and support. She explained that the categories relevant to the Chamber include small business assistance, job training, and talent development. She further explained that there are some existing programs that could benefit in getting people retrained and back into the workforce. In closing, she informed the Board that her team has been researching best practices across the country and cataloging them to see which might be the best fit for Coweta County.

Dr. Brendan Kelly, President of the University of West Georgia, explained that COVID-19 has highlighted the needs for talent in the community and caused huge shifts in labor. Many companies in Coweta are trying to figure out how to meet staffing and talent requirements. He offered assistance from the University in any creative solutions to connect student talent to meet the needs of local industry.

Dr. Julie Post, President of West Georgia Technical College, explained that the College is vested in workforce development and in ways to support local economies. She offered their assistance, partnership, and support. In closing, she explained that the College prepares students to be career ready and hopes to play a part in the recovery plan.

Mr. Jay Boren, CEO of the Coweta County Water and Sewerage Authority, stated that the Authority requested consideration of several projects, but they exceed the \$28 million being allocated to the County. He explained that the estimated cost to expand the Shenandoah Wastewater Treatment Facility could exceed \$30 million, but the plant would double in size and benefit the entire community.

Mr. Jeff Phillips, Assistant General Manager of Newnan Utilities and Chairman of the Newnan-Coweta Chamber of Commerce, expressed appreciation to the Board for involving the community, seeking input, and looking for best solutions. He explained that workforce development is very important, that equipping people to make a living wage can provide generational change, and that any funds put toward this effort would be greatly appreciated.

In response to questions from Commissioner Smith, Administrator Fouts and Assistant Administrator Mickle explained that the local and state level funds must be designated by 2024 and expended by 2026. The October 31st application deadline is only for additional funding through the State. Currently, there isn't a program established for small businesses, but hopes are to partner with the Chamber and other organizations to earmark funds for this. In addition, some organizations may apply for State Recovery funds independent of the County if they choose. The positive takeaway is the State is not looking for detailed plans and estimates, just program design. Staff can vet potential programs before submission to the Board

for approval at the October 5, 2021 Commission meeting.

Commissioner Reidelbach suggested that local organizations spread the word about the online survey and to get people involved.

Commissioner Poole expressed concerns regarding issues at the Coweta County Public Health Department. He explained that the staff has not received salary increases in years, there are vacant positions, salaries are low, and staff has not had time off since the beginning of the pandemic. Since the Health Department is the backbone of health in the community, he asked County staff to petition the State requesting that salaries be increased, and vacant positions filled.

Vice-Chairman Lassetter explained that all of the organizations represented are vital to the community and expressed appreciation for what they do. He explained that Coweta County is one of the few communities in the state dealing with the pandemic and the aftermath of an EF4 tornado. Dealing with both has placed an emphasis on the County's ability to separate the two into categories that can be justified and approved. During his fifteen (15) years as a Commissioner, he has learned that the County is most successful when partnering with other organizations, and now is the time for these organizations to gather information so the Board can help them assist the citizenry.

Ms. Heather Carter, Associate Executive Director for the Summit Family YMCA, expressed appreciation to the Board for seeking community input in the process. She explained that the YMCA wishes to help and has research-based programs, services, and innovative ideas about how to address public health, including a "Y on Wheels" concept that would pair with the Coweta program. The intent of this program would be to look at the total health of a person including the mind, body, and spirit.

Mr. Chris Doan, Millbrook Trace, Newnan, expressed appreciation to the Board for opening the discussion for public input and explained that the Browns Mill Park became the most popular and high demand green spaces during the pandemic. He further explained that expansion of the park meets the Comprehensive Plan by preserving green space, and the park impacts the local economy, invites tourism, and improves public health and wellness.

Mr. David Keller, Board member of the Newnan-Coweta County Chamber and Central Education Center, expressed appreciation for efforts made by County Administration and the Board. He explained that the manufacturing base has a shortage of labor and affordable housing for workers.

Vice-Chairman Lassetter expressed appreciation to all those in attendance and called for any further comments. There were none.

RESULT:	ACCOMPLISHED
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ADJOURNMENT

Motion To: **Adjourn**

The Board voted to adjourn the meeting.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Al Smith, District 5
SECONDER:	John Reidelbach, District 4
AYES:	Tim Lassetter, Paul Poole, John Reidelbach, Al Smith
ABSENT:	Bob Blackburn