



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Boston's COVID-19 Recovery

Kenzie Bok, *Chair*

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REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

July 13, 2022

Dear Councilors:

The Committee on Boston's COVID-19 Recovery was referred the following dockets for consideration:

Docket #0503, message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Three Hundred Forty Nine Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$349,500,000.00) in the form of a grant, awarded by the United States Department of Treasury, to be administered by the City of Boston's Chief Financial Officer/Collector Treasurer, from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (CSLFRF) in the Treasury of the United States established by Section 9901 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), and pursuant to the requirements of the ARPA, the grant payment would fund COVID-19 response and recovery efforts and accelerate a Green New Deal for Boston through once-in-a-generation, transformative investments that address the systemic health and economic challenges in the areas of affordable housing, economic opportunity and inclusion, behavioral health, climate and mobility, arts and culture and early childhood.

This matter was sponsored by Mayor Michelle Wu and referred to the committee on April 13, 2022.

Docket #0855, message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Seventeen Million and Seven Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$17,700,000.00) in the form of a grant, awarded by the United States Department of the Treasury to be administered by the City of Boston's Chief Financial Officer/Collector treasurer. Pursuant to the requirements of ARPA the grant will fund COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

This matter was sponsored by Mayor Michelle Wu and referred to the Committee on June 29, 2022.

On May 3, 2022, the Committee held an initial hearing on Docket #0503 to provide an overview of ARPA funding proposals from the Administration. The Chair invited Councilors to submit Hearing Orders with ideas for programs, resources, and projects that would utilize ARPA funding. In the week of May 9th, various Councilors filed Hearing Orders with their ideas for

ARPA funding. On May 20, 2022, the Committee held a working session where the Chair outlined the process for upcoming hearings and Councilors discussed their filed ARPA-related Hearing Orders.

On May 25, 2022, a detailed information packet with a full breakdown of the \$349.5 million spending proposal was sent to the City Council. Following this submission, the Committee organized four ARPA hearings by topic: one on Economic Opportunity and Inclusion, Arts & Culture, and Childcare, which was held on May 27, 2022; one on Housing, held on June 1, 2022; one on Climate and Mobility and Digital Equity, held on June 3, 2022; and one on Public Health, COVID Response, and Behavioral Health, also held on June 3, 2022. In the week of June 13th, follow-up responses to questions generated from these four hearings were received from the Administration.

During the week of June 20th, the Committee held various ARPA-related working sessions. On June 21, 2022, the Committee held a working session where the Chair outlined the process for gathering further information on detailed Council ARPA proposals. On June 22, 2022, the Committee held a working session regarding federal ESSER funds with representatives from Boston Public Schools. On June 23, 2022, detailed Council proposals for ARPA funding were due to the Chair of the Committee. On June 24, 2022, the Committee held a working session to discuss these detailed proposals.

On June 27, 2022, the Committee held a hearing to further discuss Councilor ARPA proposals, and on June 28, 2022, the Committee held a working session to finalize these proposals and discuss final action, both on docket #0503 and on an expected companion docket reflecting Councilor proposals, which was then filed by the Mayor as Docket #0855 on June 29, 2022.

On June 29, 2022, discussion of dockets #0503 and #0855 occurred on the floor of the Council meeting, and an amendment concerning the Dorchester Field House was proposed and passed to the Chair's report of June 29 on docket #0503. This amendment reduced the allocation to the Mayor's Office of Housing by \$5 million and added \$5 million for the Dorchester Fieldhouse. The Chair subsequently withdrew that report, and docket #0503 was returned to the Committee.

On July 12, 2022, the Committee held a working session to discuss both dockets #0503 and #0855. At this working session, the Chair presented a draft version of this committee report, and Councilors discussed procedural questions as to how the amendment of June 29 would be treated in the Chair's report, substantive matters as to what is funded within dockets #0503 and #0855 as proposed in their new drafts, and reasons for urgency in appropriating these ARPA funds. The Committee also received a legal memo from Corporation Counsel outlining the reasons why the Law Department believes the Mayor to have line item veto authority to selectively veto any component of these two ARPA dockets. The Council discussed this memo with in-house counsel Christine O'Donnell, who concurred with the Law Department in their analysis. The Chair surveyed Councilors for their opinion on how this legal guidance, which appears to reduce the threat that a mayoral veto could imperil the entire collaboratively-agreed ARPA package, affected their opinions on whether or not the Chair's report should reflect or amend to remove the Fieldhouse amendment of June 29.

Ultimately it was the Chair's decision, in light of the legal memo, to leave the amendment of June 29 included in this report, although it has not been negotiated with and agreed to by the Mayor's Administration as the rest of the amendments included in this report have been.

Summary of Legislation and Amendments

Docket #0503 authorizes the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of \$349,500,000 in the form of a grant awarded by the United States Department of Treasury, to be administered by the City of Boston's Chief Financial Officer/Collector Treasurer, from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (CSLFRF) in the Treasury of the United States established by Section 9901 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA). Pursuant to the requirements of the ARPA, the grant payment would fund COVID-19 response and recovery efforts through investments that address the systemic health and economic challenges in the areas of affordable housing, economic opportunity and inclusion, behavioral health, climate and mobility, arts and culture and early childhood.

The amended draft proposed for passage by the Chair repurposes \$12,300,000 from the original filing to address within the aforementioned categories certain Council priorities with which the Administration concurs, specifically:

- Dedicating at least \$8,000,000 within the category of affordable housing to create a pathway to affordable homeownership for low and moderate income residents, including a new partnership with the Boston Housing Authority
- Dedicating at least \$1,100,000 within the category of affordable housing to support a new pilot model in the style of "rapid rehousing" to help returning citizens secure housing opportunities
- Dedicating at least \$100,000 within the category of affordable housing to support the work led by the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute for the families of victims of violence
- Dedicating at least \$100,000 within the category of affordable housing to support a capacity study by the Boston Housing Authority of its property in the vicinity of South Boston potentially suitable for affordable veterans housing
- Dedicating at least \$1,000,000 within the category of behavioral health to support behavioral health capacity-building and training for community-based organizations and city departments
- Dedicating at least \$1,000,000 within the category of economic opportunity and inclusion to support the recovery of restaurants and bars in disadvantaged neighborhoods of the City
- Dedicating at least \$350,000 within the category of economic opportunity and inclusion to support investment in and activation of an Arts Corridor in Roxbury
- Dedicating at least \$650,000 within the category of arts and culture to support investment in and activation of an Arts Corridor in Roxbury.

Additionally, the amended version of the order adds language to specify the shared intention to support both worker cooperatives and sustainable pay increases in the childcare sector, along with good worker standards as appropriate across funded sectors in general.

The amended version of the order also leaves in place the amendment concerning the Dorchester Field House that was made at the Council meeting on June 29, 2022, which removed \$5 million from the Mayor's Office of Housing and dedicated it to construction of the Dorchester Field House.

Docket #0855 authorizes the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Seventeen Million and Seven Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$17,700,000.00) in the form of a grant, awarded by the United States Department of the Treasury to be administered by the City of Boston's Chief Financial Officer/Collector treasurer. Pursuant to the requirements of ARPA the grant will fund COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

This docket represents a collaboration between the Council and the Mayor's Administration by dedicating a further \$17.7 million of ARPA spending to priority areas identified by City Councilors, including:

In the category of Housing:

- \$1.1 million to fund temporary housing support for migrants
- \$1 million to support the East Boston Blue Line Portfolio
- \$750,000 to fund a pilot for emergency housing support pilot for city workers
- \$400,000 to fund a housing capacity study at the Dorchester YMCA Washington St site
- \$250,000 to fund housing pre-development work by the People's Academy on a designated city parcel at and around 436 Warren St.

In the category of Economic Recovery:

- \$1 million to invest in an Early College STEM pathway
- \$350,000 to support immigrant-owned businesses
- \$350,000 to support YouthBuild Boston
- \$100,000 to support the workforce development programs hosted by the Newmarket Business Association

In the category of Climate & Mobility:

- \$2.5 million to support the creation of municipal infrastructure for food waste disposal
- \$750,000 to support a Chinatown microgrid pilot
- \$500,000 to improve and create parks and green spaces in District 4
- \$500,000 to support constructing a new playground at the O'Donnell School, East Boston
- \$500,000 to support the siting and construction of a Center for Hard to Recycle Materials
- \$275,000 to support last-mile connectivity via the Mission Hill Link

In the category of support for food, public health, and digital equity:

- \$2 million to fund expanded digital equity outreach by Tech Goes Home
- \$400,000 to support the food and public health operations of the South Boston Community Health Center
- \$400,000 to support resident programming and services provided by Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción at Villa Victoria
- \$400,000 to support the health and wellness work of The Phoenix for people in recovery
- \$200,000 to support the health and wellness work of NamaStay Sober for people in recovery

- \$200,000 to support the housing and supportive service work of St. Mary's Center for Women and Children
- \$200,000 to support the recovery services work of the Gavin Foundation
- \$100,000 to support the food access work of Harvest on the Vine Food Pantry
- \$100,000 to support the food access work of the East Boston Community Soup Kitchen

In the category of community recovery and the Arts & Culture sector:

- \$1 million to invest in an Arts Corridor in Roxbury
- \$1 million to invest in alternative community spaces in Allston-Brighton, given the closing of the Jackson Mann BCYF
- \$100,000 to fund active engagement for seniors
- \$25,000 to fund senior programming at the Nazzaro Community Center

In the category of early education and childcare:

- \$750,000 to support expanding childcare programs serving families with nonstandard schedules, such as the Care That Works non-standard work hours childcare pilot and other organizations

The amended draft proposed for passage from the Chair makes one change from the original filing, namely, to reduce by \$500,000 the amount designated to support municipal infrastructure for food waste disposal (from an original \$3 million to \$2.5 million) and to instead dedicate that \$500,000 to seeding the implementation of the community-designed mental health crisis response pilot. This change has also been endorsed by the Mayor's Administration.

Committee Chair Recommended Action

As Chair of the Committee on Boston's COVID-19 Recovery I recommend moving both of the listed dockets from the Committee to the full Council for discussion and formal action. At that time, my recommendation to the full Council will be that both these matters, Dockets #0503 and Docket #0855, **OUGHT TO PASS IN A NEW DRAFT.**



Kenzie Bok, Chair
Committee on Boston's COVID-19 Recovery