

**SPECIAL COMMISSIONERS' MEETING - WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2022**  
**ARPA COMMITTEE**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Brian Baird, Commissioner, at 1:04 P.M. Ron Deer, Councilman, Rob Henderson, Councilman, Shena Johnson, County Attorney, and Kevin Walls, Commissioner, were present; Jonathan T. Myers, Councilman, attended via zoom.

**DISCUSSION OF ARPA EXPENDITURES**

Mr. Baird stated Commissioners' Ordinance 2022-O-4 is complete and Johnson County Council has appropriated funds for the following expenditures: Professional Services related to the Watersheds Project (#4100002) in the amount of One Hundred Sixty-Six Thousand Dollars (\$166,000); Professional Services related to Animal Shelter Improvements (#4100003) in the amount of One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000); and Professional Services related to the Drake Road Project (#4100004) in the amount of One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000).

Mr. Baird stated there has been previous discussion regarding the JC Fiber project for \$1 million, Mental Health, and Employee Premium Pay (Stipend). He said the Nineveh Park project has not been discussed in detail; he would like to get back to that discussion because it is an important project. Mr. Baird said he had been contacted by the Nineveh Township Trustee; they expressed an interest to be involved and possibly assist with funds for this project. Mr. Baird suggested the focus of today's meeting be on JC Fiber and Employee Stipends. He stated there were ARPA funds for roads and highways; he asked the Committee if they would like to move forward with this as well.

Mr. Walls stated he made a motion at the last ARPA meeting regarding dollar amounts, he asked if the numbers were available. Pamela Burton, Auditor, presented a copy of minutes from the last meeting which included the motion made by Mr. Walls at the previous ARPA meeting. "JC Fiber project for \$2 million, the Drake Road project for \$5 million, Animal Shelter Add-On project for \$1.25 million, Premium Pay project for \$1 million for county employees only at this time, Mental Health project for \$3 million, Road Repairs located inside additions project for \$3 million, and Surveyor's County Watershed project for \$166 thousand." Mr. Walls suggested the Committee review JC Fiber, Road Repairs, Employee Stipends, and Mental Health. He said Animal Control and Drake Road Projects are in the early stages and additional information is needed to move forward.

Mr. Baird stated they would begin with JC Fiber. Mr. Walls said he was prepared to make a motion unless further discussion was needed. Mr. Baird said he would like to discuss the dollar amount that was approved at the previous ARPA meeting. JC Fiber project for \$2 million was the amount and he said he would like to release these funds in order to get this project moving forward. While talking with John Sturm, CEO at JCREMC and President of JC Fiber, Mr. Sturm said they would like to see \$1 million now because they are through the phase that he originally said the money was needed. He said JC Fiber would like zone four (4) and five (5) at \$500,000 each time the zone was complete. Mr. Walls stated he would prefer to release the funds all at once and have JC Fiber be responsible for the accounting, rather than coming back after each phase. Mr. West stated he had met with Mr. Sturm twice to discuss ways to partner with them on this project. Mr. West stated he had reservations; the first being that we are putting money into a not for profit company, noting JCREMC is a for profit company. Discussion was held regarding how this project would benefit Johnson County Taxpayers and all questions were addressed satisfactorily. Mr. Walls withdrew his request to give JC Fiber the full \$2 million based on Mr. West's concerns. He stated he would like to move forward with \$1 million and then the remaining amount once Mr. West's concerns were addressed satisfactorily in writing. Mr. Henderson stated that he had spoken to Mr. Sturm and he informed him the property the actual fiber is running

through is personal property owned by JC Fiber and they could possibly seek a tax abatement; this would help with this project. Mr. Henderson explained the concept of a successful request for the tax abatement and the potential help it could be.

Mr. Walls made a motion pending legal review to move forward with \$1million for the JC Fiber project. Mr. Henderson seconded the motion, which unanimously carried. Mrs. Johnson stated this motion is contingent on JC Fiber presenting a project that meets all ARPA Fund requirements. She anticipates this information will be ready for presentation during the April 11<sup>th</sup> Commissioners' meeting with appropriation of funds at the Council meeting later that day. She will draft an ordinance for the Commissioner's, and along with Barb Davis, County Coordinator, they would draft a letter to the Council.

Mr. West stated for the record, the 30% customer discount Mr. Sturm referenced in a prior ARPA meeting is through the ACP Federal Program.

Mr. Walls stated he would say no to any further discussion on the Drake Road Project as well as the project to add-on to Animal Control at this time.

Mr. Walls suggested they move to Road Repair projects inside housing additions. Mr. Baird stated the road Repair projects inside housing additions would be under discretionary and not regulatory, it is important to keep this information in mind as there is only \$10 million in discretionary funds. Mr. Walls said they have previously talked about using \$3 million for the road repair inside housing additions. Mrs. Johnson suggested they ask the Highway Department for recommendations. Mr. Baird said he believed the Highway Department had previously stated concrete roads inside housing additions are in most need of repair. Mr. Walls stated that \$3 million would not be enough; however, it would help.

Mr. Walls said he will re-address the ARPA Committee at a future date requesting to use an additional \$2 million of the ARPA Funds as match money for grants, if acceptable.

Mr. Walls stated immediate help is needed with the road repair inside housing additions using the \$3 million; this will not be enough, but it is a start.

Mr. Walls made a motion to move forward with \$3 million to the Highway Department to be used toward the repair of roads inside housing additions. Mrs. Johnson stated more specifics would be needed when reporting to ARPA. She will get in touch with Luke Mastin, Highway Director, to discuss the details of this project further. Mr. West seconded the motion, which unanimously carried.

Mr. Henderson said he would like to request subdivisions located in the unincorporated part of Johnson County be considered in this project. He stated the funds should be geographically disbursed and not all of the Funds be used in one area.

Mr. Myers stated he would like to talk about Mental Health in regards to ARPA Funds. Mr. Myers stated \$3 million would not be enough for a Mental Health Facility, assuming they qualify under the guidelines. Mr. Walls stated they had looked at a facility and the budgeted number of \$3 million would not come close to establishing a Mental Health Facility. Mr. Baird stated he believes the money would be better spent trying to help existing partnerships with Mental Health Resources. Mr. Walls stated this project was very big and he feels it needs more research with local Mental Health Partners in order to move forward. He is asking for a consensus of the Committee to move forward with the \$3 million previously budgeted for Mental Health and allow time for further research into different needs within Johnson County. Mr. Deer stated this would be regulatory and not discretionary. Conversation was held regarding regulatory vs. discretionary. Conversation was also held regarding crisis healthcare for Mental Health, current funding for Adult and Child Mental Health, as well as ideas for helping with Mental Health Care in Johnson County using ARPA Funds. Everyone on the

Committee stated they are in support of Mental Health Care in Johnson County. Mr. Henderson said he had been in discussion with Mrs. Johnson regarding Jail LIT. One of the allowable operational expenses is for a rehabilitation facility. He asked Mrs. Johnson to find out exactly what that means. If a Mental Health Care Rehabilitation Center should qualify, this would be an additional avenue to assist with this large a project. Mr. Walls said sustainability of such a large of project is important.

Mr. Baird said he supported two things under regulatory action and that was JC Fiber and Mental Health.

Mr. Walls stated a general consensus of the ARPA Committee is to move forward with support of Mental Health Care in Johnson County.

Mr. West stated he would like to discuss premium pay/stipend for County Employees. He said everyone on the ARPA Committee appreciates the employees of Johnson County and wants nothing but the best for them. He said his reservation with the employee stipend is during the eighteen (18) months of the COVID pandemic employees didn't miss work, they didn't miss a paycheck nor were they denied any benefits they were being offered at the time. He noted their lives stayed intact; the County also took measures to protect employees during the performance of their duties. Plastic guards were installed, personal protective equipment provided, and many systems throughout the building were changed to adapt to the COVID pandemic. During this same period of time there were thousands of Johnson County taxpayers that lost their jobs, their benefits, and many lost their businesses after dedicating a lifetime to that business. Mr. West stated he could not support using those people's tax dollars, who suffered tremendously during this time, to compensate County Employees who did not suffer economically. Mr. West said that Johnson County Council has generously compensated County Employees in the past two (2) years. This would be a slap in the face to the taxpayers of Johnson County to offer a pay stipend to County Employees. To offer this reward would not be fair to the citizens of Johnson County. Mr. Henderson asked Mr. West how he reconciled this with other cities and towns who have offered stipends to their employees; you indicate they have harmed their constituents by giving their employees a stipend in an unfair way. Mr. West said he would not use the term harm, but likewise they are as guilty in doing so with no consideration to the general population and what they suffered during that period of time. Mr. Deer asked what programs Mr. West would suggest. Mr. West said he is not suggesting any program be used for employee stipends or employee rewards using ARPA Funds. Mr. Henderson stated there were other programs afforded to the general public that were not available to local government employees during that time. Discussion was held, examples were given, with most of the ARPA Committee sharing their opinion or thoughts regarding employee stipends. Mr. Baird said the numbers are not exact at this time. He noted during the time of March 1, 2020 – March 1, 2021 there were people who worked from home and would not qualify for the stipend. The process to pin point these numbers is long and complicated, many things must be considered. Keeping in mind, many employees can and will be excluded from the stipend because they do not qualify based on ARPA guidelines, the top end number for County Employees' stipend (part-time and full-time,) is somewhere around \$1.5 million to \$1.6 million at the maximum, calculated on \$2,500 per employee as previously discussed. This amount could change based on this Committee's decision. This amount does not include township fire or EMS personnel. Mr. Baird said he agreed with part of what Mr. West had to say and he agreed with part of what Mr. Henderson had to say; however, the Commissioners made the decision to stay open during COVID when other places didn't. Employees were asked to come to work under those conditions. He cannot say it did not impact their lives, personally he believes it did have an impact on their lives. The Committee continued to discuss the option of a County Employee stipend. Mrs. Burton said she would submit maximum numbers, based on the criteria set forth by ARPA within thirty (30) days.

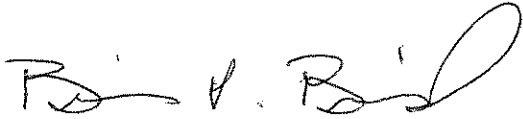
Mr. Deer stated he would like to suggest the Committee continue to work toward ideas and suggestions in regards to ARPA Funds. Mr. Baird stated this is the exact goal of the Committee; future ideas are welcome and the Committee will continue to move forward. He said this is not a job that any of the people here today want. This job has proven to be extremely hard.

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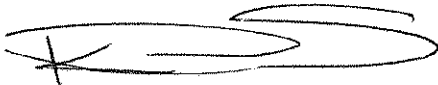
The next ARPA Committee Meeting is scheduled for Thursday April 7, 2022 at 10:00

**AJOURNMENT**

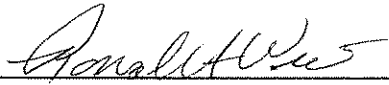
There being no further business, Mr. Walls moved to adjourn. Mr. Henderson seconded the motion, which unanimously carried.



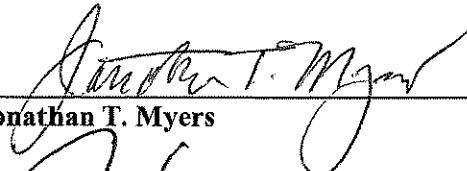
**Brian Baird**



**Kevin Walls**



**Ron H. West**



**Jonathan T. Myers**



**Rob Henderson**



**Ron Deer**



**Shena Johnson**

**Attest:**

**Pamela J. Burton**

**Auditor**

