

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: August 20, 2021

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Joe Lamers, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy, and Budget (PSB)

Subject: Requested Authorization to Allocate \$2.5 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for ongoing emergency needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic

File Type: Action Report

REQUEST

The Director of the Office of Performance, Strategy, and Budget (PSB) is requesting an allocation of \$2.5 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to support ongoing emergency needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic. At current spending levels, existing allocations for COVID-19 needs are projected to be exhausted in approximately October of 2021. This request is designed to ensure that there is continuity of funding for COVID-19 response activities, while the County's ARPA Task Force is preparing to make recommendations regarding ARPA spending, and before larger allocations are approved by the County Board.

Examples of emergency funding needs include COVID-19 communications, testing of employees, vaccine administration costs, and other expenses needed for the safety of employees and the public.

BACKGROUND

In December of 2020 the County Board authorized the use of \$7.5 million of reserve funds to be dedicated to COVID-19 related expenditures in 2021 (File 20-937). The approval amount was later revised to \$5.9 million (File 21-196). The revision was related to a change in projected versus actual revenues brought in from the Miller Park COVID-19 testing site. The reserve fund allocation for COVID-19 purposes was provided as a bridge between the time when CARES Act grant funds were exhausted, and the time when a new federal relief allocation was provided. In addition, at the time this reserve fund allocation was approved, the American Rescue Plan Act had not yet been approved or signed into law.

As of August 2021, the \$5.9 million COVID-19 expenditure allocation which was approved has been fully budgeted within departments, and most of this allocation has been expended or encumbered. The following chart provides a summary of where funds were budgeted, as well as detail regarding expenditures.

Department	Budget Amount	Expenditure Detail
OEM	\$ 2,377,299	COVID-19 testing of employees including ongoing testing of HOC/CJF employees, vaccine outreach, vaccine administrator, COVID-19 communications, COVID-19 Data Analytics Coordinator, Chief Health Policy Advisor contract, After Action Review of COVID-19 response activities
DHHS	\$ 1,150,000	\$1.15 million of Eviction Prevention costs which were approved in 2020 were expended in 2021 and paid for from the allocation approved in File 20-937.
Aging	\$ 106,000	Local share match requirement for continuation of Aging meal delivery services
DAS	\$ 1,658,336	Enhanced cleaning of county facilities, plexiglass, office reconfiguration and re-opening costs, vaccine incentive program at HOC/CJF (21-632), HVAC air quality improvements, Employment program extension
IMSD	\$ 600,000	Property tax software upgrade needed to give property owners more time to pay property taxes without accruing interest & penalty (20-398), Project Management costs for COVID-19 IT/telework activities, Development of online Government Services, increased cell phone and other charges due to increased remote work activity
ME	\$ 10,000	Contract support for increase in cremation permits
Total	\$ 5,901,635	

As of 8/19/2021, there is approximately \$1.8 million of unexpended and unencumbered balances against the allocations shown above. From this amount, there are pending costs for testing, communications, and other activities which will further reduce the available balance. At the current rate of spending, there is potential that the approved allocation will be exhausted by October of 2021. The funding balance could be available for a shorter or longer timeline, depending on the level of COVID-19 expenditure needs in the upcoming months.

To avoid the possibility of reaching a point in time where funding is not available, a \$2.5 million request is being made for emergency COVID-19 needs, to be funded by the County's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation.

The \$2.5 million appropriation is requested is for ongoing emergency costs related to the pandemic, and to ensure that the budget for emergency purposes is not exhausted prior to the time when ARPA Task Force recommendations are made and when larger ARPA allocations are approved by the County Board.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) detail

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021, which was signed into law on March 11, 2021, provides Milwaukee County with an allocation of \$183.7 million of Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. Funds are required to be incurred by December 31, 2024 and are available to:

- A. Support public health response to the pandemic
- B. Address negative economic impacts
- C. Provide government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID-19 public health emergency
- D. Provide premium pay to essential workers
- E. Support water, sewer and broadband infrastructure

The Milwaukee County Board has established a Task Force which is designed to make recommendations regarding ARPA. The Task Force is expected to make non-binding recommendations in or around late 2021, which will be considered for the purpose of establishing fund allocations.

In general, the administration is waiting for recommendations of the ARPA Task Force prior to making requests regarding the use of the majority of the ARPA grant. However, there are certain ongoing emergency activities related to the pandemic where additional expenditure authority is expected to be needed within an earlier timeline. For example, testing of employees at the House of Correction and Criminal Justice Facility is ongoing to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Communications activities are ongoing to inform employees and the public of matters related to COVID-19. The County is participating in vaccination outreach programs aimed to increase the number of individuals vaccinated. As employees return to work, there is continuing needs to reconfigure offices and facilities space. The \$2.5 million allocation which is requested within this file is intended to ensure that there is ongoing funding support for the types of expenditure activities described above, as well as other necessary costs directly related to the pandemic.

RECOMMENDATION

The Director of the Office of Performance, Strategy, and Budget (PSB) is County Board authorization to provide an allocation of \$2.5 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to support ongoing emergency needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

JOSEPH LAMERS

Joe Lamers, Budget Director
Department of Administrative Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution
Fiscal Note

Cc: David Crowley, Milwaukee County Executive
Jason Haas, Chair, Finance and Audit Committee
Sean Rolland, County Supervisor / Co-Chair ARPA Task Force
Ricardo Diaz, Co-Chair ARPA Task Force
Scott Manske, County Comptroller
Jeff Roman, Director Office of African American Affairs
Aaron Hertzberg, DAS Director
Ashley Adsit, Director of Grants & Special Projects
Mary Jo Myers, Chief of Staff, Office of the County Executive
Steven Cady, Research and Policy Director, Office of the Comptroller
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, County Board