

City of Valparaiso Approves Plan for ARPA Distribution

The Valparaiso City Council has passed a resolution to serve as a blueprint for spending the funds allotted to the City of Valparaiso through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). A total of \$7.6 million was allocated to the City of Valparaiso by Congress as part of a \$19.53 billion package to states as part of the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund. Earlier this year, the federal government provided final guidance and clarification for eligible expenses, stating that funding should be used to compensate essential workers performing necessary work during the pandemic and to “build a strong, resilient, and equitable recovery by making investments that support long-term growth and opportunity.”

“In creating this road map for how City government will utilize ARPA funding, we’ve considered more than 2,000 responses from residents over the past two years, expressing their thoughts about needs and wants for the community. These responses include an online portal created specifically for thoughts on ARPA funding,” said Mayor Matt Murphy. “This plan reflects expressed community priorities and complies with the guidelines we have been provided for use of these dollars,” said Valparaiso Mayor Matt Murphy.

In introducing the plan, Murphy expressed gratitude to those who served the community during the pandemic, including healthcare workers, first responders, teachers, frontline workers and City staff. “And while we’ve all been deeply affected by the pandemic, it’s undeniable that our youth and seniors have been impacted most significantly,” he said. “This plan also addresses their challenges, supporting projects and organizations that support long-term growth and opportunity.”

The proposed plan for ARPA funding allocates funds to premium pay for eligible City workers who performed essential work during COVID, as well as to a number of nonprofit organizations dedicated to serving Valparaiso residents, including Respite House, Boys & Girls Club of Greater Northwest Indiana, Hilltop Neighborhood House, Caring Place, Opportunity Enterprises, Dressed for School, MAAC, and both the Valparaiso Police and Valparaiso Fire departments. A majority of the funds have been allocated to projects that are part of the City’s Valpo for All Generations initiative which will include a 248-acre park and community sports complex on the east side of Route 49, as well as a new Adult Center for Enrichment to be constructed on North Calumet Avenue, near the current Pines Village Retirement Community and Valparaiso Family YMCA.

“We’ve worked to balance needs and support organizations that serve Valparaiso. We found that Valparaiso has many good and worthy organizations. Many creative ideas,” said Murphy. “After compensating our essential workers, we’ve chosen projects and organizations that will have the greatest positive impact. Projects and organizations that will greatly serve current and future generations.”

The City Council adopted the resolution with a vote of 5 to 1. A number of leaders for nonprofit organizations were on hand for the presentation and vote on the plan, which was shared on the City’s website and social media ahead of the meeting. According to comment from potential recipients, the funds would help fund a resource center and transitional housing for men in crisis through a project by Respite House, provide shoes and clothing for lower-income Valparaiso families through Dressed for School, help the Valparaiso Boys & Girls Club to complete their new facility on Evans Avenue, advance

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training for first responders at the MAAC Foundation, and provide for many other Valparaiso-centered projects to support the community.

The City has not spent any ARPA funds to date nor have any consultants been retained to create the plan presented to City Council, however the plan was reviewed by City Attorney Patrick Lyp, who sought legal input from ARPA experts. Lyp reported to the Council that the plan complies with all ARPA regulations.

The full proposed plan is available on the City of Valparaiso's website, Valpo.us on the City Council page.