

Anchorage Assembly & Administration COVID-19 Response Framework & Funding

Work Session #1 Summary (organized by topic) – July 17, 2020

Dena'ina Center, Anchorage, AK

Participants

Assembly Members

- Felix Rivera (Chair)
- Austin Quinn-Davidson
- Christopher Constant
- Kameron Perez-Verdia
- Meg Zaletel
- Forrest Dunbar
- Jamie Allard
- Suzanne LaFrance
- Pete Petersen (virtual connect)
- John Weddleton (virtual connect)

Administration

- Jason Bockenstedt, Chief of Staff
- Alex Slivka, Chief Financial Officer
- Carolyn Hall, Communications Director
- Christopher Schutte, Director of Economic & Community Development

Facilitated by Shelly Wade, Agnew::Beck Consulting

Hope and Fears for the Day

Hopes

- We agree to a shared framework and priorities; something that works for all of us.
- We have a list of projects that are divided into categories of urgency and timeline moving forward.
- We have comprehensive list of project ideas, that we're comfortable with, with some dollar amounts, for the CARES Act funding.
- We have a mechanism for getting the resources out quickly.
- We have identified a set of broad goals.
- We set ourselves up to move quickly, ideally with a good list of projects with dollar amounts.
- We have a tool for getting our community the resources they need.

Fears

- We go into a rabbit hole or languish on any one topic or project.
- We end up something so broad and without enough detail to really articulate our priorities and delays the resources getting deployed.
- We don't get to a place where we can articulate our priorities to the administration who is also clearly developing their recommended priorities.
- We overreach in our spending; we're not thinking beyond the next few months.
- We try to find the perfect thing and end up leaving good ideas that will work behind.

- We meet the federal funding requirements with a clear plan for spending down by the end December 2020, or alternative that complies with requirements.

CARES Act Funding Overview

Parameters of CARES Act Funding – Jason

First Prong – in direct response

- Primary – necessary to respond to public health or emergency of COVID-19; direct expenses related to COVID-19.
- Secondary and tertiary – rental assistance, jobs programs, childcare assistance, small business grants.

Second Prong

- Expenses incurred that were not part of most recently approved budget.

Third Prong

- Expenses incurred between March 1 and December 31, 2020.

Other:

- Treasury document includes non-exclusive list of eligible expenses. Includes broad categories of public health expenses, payroll expenses. Document difficult to decipher – folks felt was too narrow vs. CARES Act language. Treasury has continued to update initial guidance with FAQ document. Continue to update and provide additional explanation on allowable expenses. One of those I'll highlight today:
 - Eligible use highlighting today that was shared budgeting session yesterday – Language allows part of funds to go toward presumed payroll expenses, salaries and benefits, for public safety and public health departments. Administration current thinking – CARES Act has put restrictions on timing and how/to what the funding is put into the community. Administration considering how to provide additional flexibility to MOA. We would put CARES Act funding into payroll expenses of our public health department. Would create a large fund balance. Create opportunity to not have restrictions. This would allow more flexibility and no longer set MOA on timeline to spend every penny this calendar year. We are not sure what October and November will look like; it's good to have cash in reserves and be flexible and nimble as we can. Have talked to community organizations about this – could spend some funds before end of December but would be more helpful to spread out beyond end of year.

Other

- Generally, capital project not allowed, but for facilities such as those that MOA is considering purchasing for homelessness, there is specific US Treasury guidance.

Assembly Comments

- Need to be clear about how the dollars that go into the “big bucket” are identified.
- Messaging should be “COVID-19 Recovery Plan” versus “CARES Act Funding Plan”.

What are Other Municipal Governments Doing

- Surprisingly not creative; little imagination in the investments and projects.
- San Diego – some homelessness, small business grants.
- Not like us, where we're prioritizing equity in our investments.
- Juneau – couple to million childcare, small business grants, rental assistance, jobs program.

Summary of MOA COVID-19 Funds to Date – \$210 million

- \$5 million – CDBG that go through health department – prepare, prevent and respond for families that are experiencing homelessness; operating dollars for new facilities MOA is buying for homelessness; not on same timeline as CARES Act funding. We have two years to use these funds.
- \$18 million – FAA for Merrill Field – 5-year timeline.
- \$156 million – CARES Act Coronavirus Relief fund – monies received from the state.
- \$9 million – FEMA reimbursement – emergency appropriations – a little over \$9 million requested – direct costs, currently expending
- \$18 million - 5307 funds for transit related issues; also, likely a couple of years out in terms of timeline; split between MOA and Railroad.

Framework

Outcome Areas (NOTE: Later replaced with “Priorities”, as identified below.)

- We are missing/need to add the following: childcare, food security, municipal response, contingency funds.

Priorities

- Economic Stimulus
- Family Support
- Housing and Homelessness
- Public Health and Safety
- Community Investments
- Direct Municipal COVID-19 Expenses
- Contingency Fund

Urgency

- For “short term” guiding questions – should also consider what deadlines and other requirements exist that are beyond our control.

Guiding Principles

Add/modify to reflect the following:

- There is often tension between the principles of being “needs based” and having a “community wide impact”.
 - Change: “community wide” to more accurately reflect that we will invest strategically to have a ripple effect across the community; resources will be allocated on a need basis across the municipality.
- Targeted investments in infrastructure.
- Consider other federal funding programs and investments made to date/planned for specific individuals, businesses, etc. If the investment is already happening, do we need to invest? If there is a gap, or clear inherent inequity, we should prioritize.
- Support that sustains the community beyond COVID-19.
- Feasibility and Flexibility – Consider implementation timing and administration/other resource needs. Be targeted but broad enough to allow the administration to implement as quickly as possible.
- Considers the most recent data, public input and where possible, best practices.

Proposals

See accompanying spreadsheet, dated 8-4-20, for details. As requested in session pre-work, each assembly member had the opportunity to share a proposal idea for potential CARES Act funding, including:

- Proposal name and description
- Potential cost/funding amount
- Timeframe
- Other collaborators

Messaging & Public Input/Process

- Need to communicate – This is not enough money to do everything for all.
- This is a COVID-19 Response Plan versus CARES Act Funding Plan.
- We should consider developing a website and an RFP or similar process for soliciting community input – what are your ideas?

Closing Comments on Potential Next Steps

- Kameron – Work in smaller groups to define the priority areas and develop spreadsheet that takes a first pass at categorizing different project areas.
- Meg – Drill down into the details and frame them in the framework. Assembly should come back with proposals as described by our pre-work for today. Should also talk with people about the framework so they're familiar.
- Forrest – Opportunity to consolidate areas to get a sense of \$\$ amount by priority; would have been great to have another work session like this.
- Jamie – Would like to do this again; can expand on our thoughts; ready to move forward with white paper on projects – already have a start on a number of those.
- Suzanne – There is a need for consolidation; unsure where to focus; there's a lot of overlap in the draft list; if there is an opportunity to do this again, that would be helpful.
- Felix – Work with A::B to refine the framework; a lot of great proposals that we need to take the time to finesse and get the dollar amounts; this may be the best forum to get this done.
- Austin – Should look at doing this again.
- Chris – Need definitions and rough budgets; basic survey with list of priorities with deadline for comment; we need capacity to help facilitate/coordinate this process, focus only on COVID response.
- Pete – Want to get money on the streets as soon as possible; people being evicted has to be a top priority as does food access.
- Jason – Can meet with each of you to discuss what your ideas are; have to fit ideas into the reality of \$\$ available and capacity of the administration to implement.

Next Steps Summarized

1. Immediately – within the next couple of weeks
 - Shelly to consolidate notes for consideration in next steps.
 - We need to communicate our priorities to the public, ask for their input, and describe what we have funded to date. Potentially, assembly communications dollars (\$150K) to cover this expense and/or using MOA recently hired communications consultant to assist. Admin is also preparing another RFP for COVID-19 specifics communications work, but something needs to happen sooner than the timeline for the RFP/securing contractor.
 - Identify a date for a **second work session to happen BEFORE JULY 31st**.

2. Before Second Work Session – work with A::B to revise the framework/prioritization process, and to develop a consolidated and refined preliminary project list of ideas that are categorized using the framework. Work with A::B to put this into an accessible/easy to navigate tool in preparation for the second work session.
3. Before July 31st – Hold a Second Work Session to review and finalize project list potentially with performance measures/measures of success – how will we be held accountable for these investments?
4. August 11th Meeting – Present priority projects with resolution and public hearing.