

From: Koch, Austin (Middle and Large Commercial)
To: [City Clerk's Office](#)
Subject: City of Richmond American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA)
Date: Friday, October 22, 2021 4:00:24 PM

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Hello,

I wanted to take a minute and state how critical it is that we support the ARPA, for all areas listed. What is of particular importance to me is the new capital improvement projects in the Culture and Recreation as well as the Stormwater Utility Budget. Continuing to improve our parks for everyone is a critical component of a thriving community and some of our parks are in desperate need of attention. As for the Stormwater Utility Budget I hear this more and more within the community of individuals having issues within their homes due to the inundation of water within the streets that directly or indirectly enter homes.

We have to act now.

Thank you for the opportunity,

Austin

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From: Kim Gomez
To: [City Clerk's Office](#)
Subject: Funding
Date: Monday, October 25, 2021 9:11:50 AM

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Please spend money on community entities that have been doing the community work. For example, the gun violence prevention monies should be given to local grassroots groups who are a part of the community. This should not be spent on outside, consulting firms or housed within the police department. Richmond has the folks in town who know how to go about this work in a restorative, communal manner. Reach out to Dr. Ram Bhagat and work with him and others to amplify grassroots, community based efforts.

Work with the money that goes into parks and rec services to improve their technology infrastructure as well as the outreach for youth. We need to have parks and rec activities at each RPS elementary school so students can have exposure to lots of different programs and opportunities, meet the kids where they are, at the school house and expand on those activities by having improved facilities at parks and rec locations. The money has to be connected in an intentional way in order to maximize its effectiveness, the connection with RPS and offering direct services to kids at the school level would be a great place to start.

Thanks so much,
Kim Gomez
Mom and first district resident

From: Jo White
To: [City Clerk's Office](#)
Subject: American Recovery Plan Act request
Date: Saturday, October 23, 2021 2:05:55 PM

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Dear Sir/Mam,

This is to help encourage you to please consider using a nice portion of the funds from the American Recovery Plan Act funding for Parks, Recreation & Community because they are so important to our communities.

Not only do parks provide a place for recreation benefits but they are also a source of positive economic benefits. They enhance property values, increase municipal revenue, bring in homebuyers and workers, and attract retirees. Apart from the obvious benefits of parks for physical activity, most importantly to me they are sanctuaries from urban stress, places for people to connect and havens for children to explore the wonders of the natural world.

So again, please keep Parks & Rec in your considerations during your planning stages for the ARPA funding.

Jo White
Executive Director, Saving Our Youth, VA
Chapter Commander, Richmond Guardian Angels



From: Thad Williamson
To: [City Clerk's Office](#)
Cc: [Teresa Caviness](#)
Subject: Richmond Together public comment on proposed ARP spending
Date: Monday, October 25, 2021 9:59:12 AM
Attachments: [Richmond Together Statement on ARP Spending Plan--October 25 2021.docx](#)

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To the City Clerk,

Please enter into the public record the attached comments concerning the proposed budget amendment related to the City's use of federal aid received through the American Rescue Plan (ARP), to be voted upon by City Council this evening. The comments are submitted on behalf of the community organization Richmond Together.

Sincerely,

Teresa Caviness and Thad Williamson

**STATEMENT BY RICHMOND TOGETHER REGARDING THE CITY'S FINAL
AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN PROPOSAL
October 25, 2021**

Mayor Stoney, CAO Saunders, and Members of Richmond City Council:

Richmond Together is a group of concerned citizens deeply committed to supporting bold policy change over the next decade, within a racial equity and community wealth building framework. We have been closely following, and participating in, the development of the plan, and want to commend the City Council and the Mayor's Office for the leadership they have shown in addressing this complex challenge. Also commendable are the contributions made by the many Richmonders who participated in the citizen engagement process. Their input no doubt played an important role in the development of the final plan.

Our overall view of the plan is favorable. We are especially gratified that several of the specific recommendations we made in Richmond Together's own ARP spending plan, which was released in July, are included in the city's final plan. Perhaps most notable among the adopted Richmond Together recommendations is the creation of a \$5 million Health Equity Fund, to be administered by Richmond City Health District, that would allow RCHD and community partners to tackle health inequities over the long term.

Other Richmond Together recommendations that made it into the final plan include strong support for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, establishment of an emergency relief Human Services fund, and some expanded funding for workforce development.

While we support adoption of the plan, we also wish to register some concerns about how the plan will be implemented and how the City plans to meet needs not adequately addressed in the ARP package. We in particular wish to highlight five concerns and observations.

- 1.** The proposed community centers, which at \$64 million (over 41 % of the total expenditure) represent the largest single line item in the plan, have the potential to become significant assets to the neighborhoods in which they are located. They can become hubs for delivery of a variety of city services (including workforce development) as well as being an important form of community wealth in themselves.

But we believe it's important to flesh out, as soon as possible, the specifics of how this concept will be implemented, to answer questions like these: What specific goals do we hope the centers will achieve? How will priorities be set? What specific programs will they house? How will they be staffed? How will community input inform the design and program of each center? How will the enhanced services envisioned be funded over the long term?

We suggest that the Administration, with the support of Council, develop a pilot model for these enhanced community centers and implement it in at least one *existing* community center in the summer of 2022. This pilot program and the learning it will entail should help assure that the newly built community centers are prepared to be effective from day one.

- 2.** We appreciate that the plan allocates a total of \$1.5 million (about 1% of the total) to Workforce Development and Community Ambassador programs conducted through the Office of Community Wealth Building. This funding will be helpful, but we believe the City should invest more in these initiatives, as soon as possible. The changes in the labor market following the pandemic (such as higher wages in many sectors) and changes in social policy (such as the child tax credit) expected to come from Washington create a historic opportunity for thousands of Richmond families to escape poverty on a sustainable basis. The City should be proactively connecting residents to employment and training opportunities that will enable them to take advantage of new benefits and policies over the next two years.

We know that investments in well-designed Workforce Development programs result in better job opportunities for participants, and that Richmonders favor them (as shown in the city's own ARP polling), so we must find a way to support them to the degree warranted.

- 3.** Anyone who has dealt with the city knows that its technology infrastructure is in

serious need of rescue, yet there is not a cent for internal systems improvement in the American Rescue Plan proposal. Until now it has been easy to put off spending on systems in the face of Richmond's many problems, and it is understandable that we would favor spending on programs that directly benefit people, but we may now be at the point where inadequate systems are actually harming people, by making it harder for them to access the city services they need. Somewhere, somehow, we must find funds to bring our systems into the 21st century.

4. More broadly, Richmond Together's own frustrating attempts to keep track of the various Covid-related state and federal funding sources, and the uses to which they can and will be put, strongly suggest the need for a single, cross-referenced document that provides an overview of the entire Covid relief picture and makes the details readily accessible. We trust that both the Budget and Strategic Planning Department and Council budget analysts have versions of such documents already; we urge you to make these documents available and accessible to the public so Richmond citizens can more easily see how the many moving pieces fit together.

5. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the plan contains no information on how we will assess the performance of the recommended expenditures. We recommend that the administration and City Council together develop a report card, based on realistic metrics to be established for all ARP funded programs, and that periodic assessment (including public reporting) be conducted on a consistent, ongoing basis.

We appreciate the work both the Administration and City Council have put into the formation of the current plan. The plan does not address all important needs, but **if well-executed**, the proposed investments will both help Richmond neighborhoods in need and improve quality of life for all Richmond residents. A commitment to transparency and establishment of clear metrics for success and reporting on progress will build confidence that this money is being well-spent and bolster the public's confidence in city government in general.

On behalf of the entire membership of Richmond Together, we thank you.

Teresa Caviness and Thad Williamson (for Richmond Together)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: Anne-Marie McCartan
To: [City Clerk's Office](#)
Subject: Support for Parks & Recreation in the ARPA plan
Date: Monday, October 25, 2021 9:39:08 AM

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As an active member of the Friends of William Byrd Park, I support the Children and Families projects listed in the plan. Although none of the proposed funding is targeted for Byrd Park, the priorities chosen will support communities with pressing need for the programs and services in the plan.

I ask the City Council to approve this category of funds as listed.

Thank you,
Anne-Marie McCartan

