



Town of Coventry

**Memorandum**

TO: Town Council  
FROM: Ben Marchant, Town Manager  
DATE: February 1, 2022  
SUBJECT: American Rescue Plan Act – use of funds survey

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Residents of Coventry were asked to complete a survey asking for their opinions about how they think the Town should approach using the funds received from the Federal government designated under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The survey was posted on the Town website and residents were informed by public announcements and a CodeRed text to fill out the survey by January 31.

391 surveys were completed. All respondents, except for three, indicated that they were residents of the town. Twenty respondents indicated that they either owned or worked for a business in town. Fifteen respondents indicated that they are both residents and employed by the Town of Coventry.

When asked to select the top three priorities for the eligible use of funds, several respondents checked more than three boxes, however, all responses were recorded in the following summary.

Town infrastructure:	225
Roads, bridges, sidewalks:	166
Water infrastructure (water/wastewater/stormwater):	156
Economic small business assistance:	142
Parks and Recreation facility improvements:	139
Community health and wellness:	125
Premium pay for first responders:	66
Community safety:	61
Mental health and wellness:	60
Broadband internet:	34
Workforce development:	26
Assistance to Non-profit organizations:	26

When asked generally how the Town should use ARPA funds the candid responses were grouped into the following categories:

Schools (buildings, air quality, materials and student resources):	60
Sewers (expanding system, reducing cost to residents):	48
Parks & Recreation programs/facilities/services:	42
More services in general:	22
Dog park:	7
Playgrounds:	7
Bike path:	2
Rec Center (new/upgrade):	2
Pool/splash pad:	2
Roads and bridges:	37
Tax relief/cash to residents:	30
Stormwater projects:	25
Business assistance and development:	22
Water projects:	8
Town building improvements:	7
COVID relief (test kits, masks, ppe):	6
Johnsons Pond (buy/eminant domain/enforce lease):	6
Sidewalks:	5
Broadband:	4
Affordable housing:	4
Mental health services:	3
Debt reduction:	3
Infrastructure:	3
HVAC upgrades:	3
Teacher pay increases:	3
Health & Human Services:	2
Nutrition (public/senior):	2

Septic replacements:	2
Digitizing Town services:	2
Wind turbine acquisition/investment:	2
Police/public safety:	1
DPW equipment:	1
Electrical grid upgrades:	1
Beautification:	1
Grant writer (hire):	1
Invest the money:	1
Low income/senior assistance:	1
EV Charging stations:	1
Composting site:	1
Animal Control facility (new):	1
Assist those harmed by illness and unemployment:	1
Litter pickup throughout town:	1
Healthcare services:	1
Improve roads at Center of New England:	1

**Open ended responses:**

Very concerned that schools were left off this survey specifically. Considering the middle school improvement did not go to referendum. Also \$ should be set aside to catch students up from learning loss. I have no students in the schools, but this is so important to the town's future.
The money should be put towards the school buildings that are in terrible condition. Upgrades to the schools for the Children of Coventry!
Anything that can be done to reduce covid test result delays. Maybe more rapid tests available? Considering the school improvements books was shot down, could these funds be used for school updates?
Every month there should be an accountability portion of the TC meeting, what dollars came into the town and what was processed into each department, based on these relief funds and to be spent according to the requirements stated by the federal government. There should be a balance segment with expected future deposits and withdrawals, etc.
Can we provide funds to the Central Coventry Fire Department for emergency services provided to transport emergencies to the local hospitals and provide funds to the fire department staff?
why not just apply a set credit to everyone's residential taxes.
I would not like to see any funds use to further expand the sewer project in this town.
Our school department needs help as well.
Perhaps a fund set up for families who have lost an income generating member to COVID so that they can have receive some financial assistance to keep their home or feed their children while they figure out how to transition to being a single income family.

A lot of local library's are giving away at home rapid test. That may be very helpful.
Keep public informed, use the RI broadcasters app to reach out to every household.
The residents of Coventry should be able to vote on final decisions as to how this money is allocated, nothing should be done in a vacuum.
For the love of god don't waste it on salaries or bonus pay. It's a town of 30,000 people. If you want to make \$250k a year then move to a big city
I am happy to see the Town of Coventry take this approach to ask residents and business owners.
I don't want this to be another discriminatory handout as there are a number of social programs in place to address items above. If we are making direct taxpayer payouts, it should be all or nothing with nobody exempt
Watch out for fraud, waste and abuse of these funds.
Funding to the fire districts. Our FirstResponders have been on the front lines from the beginning of this pandemic!
I appreciate the fact that the Town Manager is open to receiving ideas from everyday residents of the Town. Thank you for caring enough about our Town of Coventry to present this survey.
Tough question but we have to ensure funds are 100% allocated to those in need
Please use some funds to stop Soscia LLC from draining Johnson's Pond. The Town should have eminent domain, or the residents should own the water rights.
storm water infrastructure to match in kind for Breezy Lake that is in Town budget already
The increase of use on the lake. Jet ski and boat traffic did stir up sediment from the bottom. I have noticed more murky water and weeds, more so than previous years. Being a lakefront owner. I would like to preserve the lake and Briar Point beach. Weed control would be the 1st step, to reverse the spreading of weeds.
We need to preserve our lakes for the future of our children. In this different world, they need places to go outside and enjoy nature.
Funds should not go to schools !
Improve our Police Department
Please consider finishing the storm drain work to improve our lakes quality- well overdue
SHOW OUR RESPECT TO THE FIRST RESPONDERS BOTH POLICE AND FIRE! Not the teachers they've worked from home this entire time! First responders put their lives at risk every day dealing with possible Covid patients let's reward them for their heroic duties
Thank you for this survey to voice our concerns.
Thank you very much for allowing the residents and business owners of Coventry to have a say in how the money is spent. It's much appreciated.
In deciding use your best judgement.
Do not give this money away to businesses of any size. Businesses already have so many tax advantages and the ability to apply for separate relief. The town has a moral obligation to use this money in a way that benefits all residents and not just a few business owners because every resident has contributed to this funding via federal taxes. Small, targeted, incremental improvements and addressing longstanding issues with town finances are the safest and most responsible ways to invest this money. Steer clear of big, flashy developmental investments... Centre of New England is a great example of how little value and character those types of investments generate.
I would pick as a top 3 for premium pay to those most affected (which was not the teachers but those out there frontline), but I know the teachers would fight to make sure they got it. So I will not put that one as top 3 sadly
I live on upper dam pond. As required by the RIDEM our pond should have work done on stormwater management. This is very important to save our pond. Please set aside funding to be able to fulfill the needs of upper dam pond. This area has been forgotten for quite some time. Thank you.
This is our opportunity to get sewers installed throughout eastern Coventry, especially in all neighborhoods surrounding Lake Tiogue. Sewers will improve water quality as well as help all small businesses in the areas that are currently not sewered.
Focus on items that benefit all in town. No pet projects
Why is improving schools not on the list? We will need to move out of Coventry in order to send our kids to middle school. Giving kids lifelong sickness and allergies from poor facilities and poor ventilation

is unthinkable. This is the most important issue for Coventry right now - Coventry is and will continue to lose taxpayers because of it.
Support/grants for dry hydrants where pressurized hydrants are not available for fire suppression purposes.
I hope the Town will use this opportunity to assess all its necessary improvements, regardless of whether they meet the qualifications of ARPF, so the the ARPF and the bipartisan infrastructure law money will be used to make schools safer and updated and help Coventry families be more healthy and more resilient for the future.
The schools get the majority of the towns money, while education is important to me, they need to learn to live within their means like the rest of us.
Invest in our town- the high school & middle school need it desperately. A newly remodeled teen center. We something for these kids to do in this town. A rec center is in dire need
Buy Johnsons Pond as part of our parks and recreation upgrade.
fund the Land Trust to improve existing Land Trust property access, trail system development and mapping, forest management and outreach.
Coventry property taxes are crushing its residents.
New programs, not filling holes in budget shortfalls.
Focus on school improvements
Spend Wisely Please
Helping the low income and elderly
Put it towards sewers to save residents the exorbitant costs
This money is being received due to a health and safety crisis. It should be invested back into the health and safety of the taxpayers of Coventry.
Focus on projects with long term benefit possibilities - make sure the funds are spent as an investment rather than a short term nicety.
Money should be allocated for specific uses related to hardship caused by the pandemic: funding for new businesses, assistance for businesses affected by the pandemic, NOT for things that should have been being addressed as part of the budget/maintenance of facilities in the town
Overall improvement of quality of life for Coventry residents whether it be through Infrastructure improvements, direct assistance to those affected and reimbursement of town funds spent in response to thr pandemic.
New tennis courts at the high school
Use money towards tax relief, improving school buildings and relief to towns people sewers system
Town should be self sufficient regarding clean energy. Build turbines and solar collectors to satisfy town needs. Sell excess energy to defray costs.
Educate children about CoVid 19 and how germs are spread and the benefits of vaccines and science to combat some missing Marion they have received from home.
My first choice was not available above. I believe it should all be used to pay down debt.
Do not increase our taxes
Spend Money OnThe Schools / All of our school really need help
Fix the school buildings. That's the future for this town!
pay more attention to the western part of town
Improve schools
A special fund for sewers that are required to be put in. And for new septic systems where ones have failed.
Reduce debt. None of the covid 19 fit my ideas of doing awY with existing debt. Getting rid of the biggest debt that the town now is carrying on its books. No expenditures on anything until old debt is gone. Then prioritize area of greatest need ifvthere is money left over from this 10 million.
Provide more health and wellness programs and facilities for children and adults
Only that the funds be used appropriately and not for 'fluff stuff'.
My biggest concern is the town is going to get their hands on this money and piss it away. I truly hope there's something tangible to show at the end of it. Do the yourselves and the people of this town a favor, boost morale and keep a running tally of every cent that is spent and what it is spent on.

Use funds to settle the Johnson's Pond Issue
use some of the funds to settle Johnson's Pond dispute
Use the funds with an eye to the future. Improvements.
Finish the bike path from summit to Connecticut state line that was started and stop by DOT money taken away!
Making something safe clean and fun for a family to do. Maybe a large playground. Installing street lights on Wood Cove Drive or speed bumps to monitor all the speeding high school kids that fly by the neighborhood every afternoon after school. Maintenance on one of the several empty strip malls to possibly bring in some small businesses that are not based around guns liquor or used car garages.
Build the Reservoir Road Extension. It will be: A WIN for Police & Fire response times; A WIN for student transportation; and, A WIN for all drivers by shortening driving routes around town. All of these benefits will also save money on the cost of fuel for vehicles and generally save time for everyone in getting around town!
Thanks for allowing community input.
Would be nice to be able to give the tax payers some direct payments of cash or credit towards tax bills. Guess that's not an option
Any money that could be used toward school improvement, rebuilding & repair should be done first. Our schools are falling apart!
Sewers does not benefit all of Coventry
Providing help to people that are disabled and struggling to survive price increases, including food, heating oil, etc.
There have been a significant number of mental health issues in Coventry lately. Better paved roads.
Much needed renovations to the animal control shelter
Anything that reduces overall burden on businesses to increase tax rev or sewers etc projects that are needed but are already costing the tax payers
Coventry should be providing services such as snow removal and trash pick-up to the residents of Sherwood Valley Mobile Home Park. Residents here own their homes AND own the park. We pay standard taxes, but do not receive the standard services that other Coventry home owners do!!! It's basically a form of double taxation!!!
Making sure our ponds and recreational fishing areas are safe from personal gain.
This money should not be spent on pension funding, the sewer debacle, or anyone's salaries. It should be spent on updating all the schools infrastructures, buying all new laptops for students and making sure the broadband internet connection is strong in all areas of the town. Any monies after that should be given to the small business' that that suffered and lost revenue during this pandemic.
Work on lowering water bills!
SVHCC Residents also pay both Federal and State Income Taxes; therefore, these Residents should receive some Financial Relief.
Helping seniors that need guidance using computers that show basic skills in navigating screens ; open the schools to seniors to learn new skills if they choose to make any supplemental income
Keep the free breakfast and lunch programs at the schools. Address school building safety,
The funds should not be utilized for a project that was not previously funded which will incur repeated funding due to maintenance or new paid positions.
Funds should be given to EMT's, firefighters and police and in that order.
Should be given to EMT's, firefighters and police.
Being that the majority of us are on strict limited income, it would be nice if we got a discount on our taxes or the HOA fees. Just a suggestion. The cost of living has gone up so much, many of us cannot afford some of the basic necessities. Thank you!!
As stated above - Covid shutdown created many new pet owners, Coventry could really use a dog park.
As a taxpayer I'd like to see the extension to the Coventry Greenway completed, reasonable sewers made available to residents and improvements to town roads with the ARPA funds.
Our town is a great semi-rural community, but there are not many reasons someone from outside of our town would come to visit. I would like to see something which would generate some tourism and revenue for the town. I was recently in the town of Johnston indoor recreational sports complex which

was built a few years ago, and was really impressed with the town owned and managed facility. I was there for a private gymnastics competition which lasted for 3 days, supporting my 12yr old daughter and her team from Anchor Gymnastics in Coventry. A facility like this could be really beneficial in our town, and could generate some much needed revenue by renting for private events/tournaments, and creating some local tourism. We have many public and private sports teams (Basketball, Soccer/Fusbal, Gymnastics, Dance, Cheerleading, indoor hockey, volleyball, to name a few) in and around our town which I am certain would gladly rent the space for events, practices, and games. Attendees to some of the events would likely visit local restaurants and even some may stay at local hotels. Currently many of these events happen at other Town/City/private facilities throughout RI (Johnston, North Providence, North Kingstown, etc), and while we do have some small gym facilities, we could do so much better. Residents (myself included) end up spending our money to travel out of town, to use other facilities, and then spend out money on local restaurants in other towns. There is a need for something like this, so why not make Coventry the place and get a piece of the pie....

In addition, while there is some great outdoor spaces, including the bike path, parks, and fields, many of towns buildings, schools, and sports facilities are tired, and need help. The only town own building I have been into which is not beat up and worn down is the new police station. As a side note, i'm really disappointed in the current Town Council for preventing the decision of the schools infrastructure proposal from going to the residents for approval/rejection. I am no different than anyone else in this town, I don't want to spend money if I don't have to, but if must spend money, I'm looking for that coupon/discount and that's what the state is/was giving us. My children go to Western Coventry Elementary, and ASFMS, and both schools are in rough shape. With the State offering to cover a portion of the school infrastructure projects, it just makes sense to have a portion of these much needed projects done now, verses later when the must be paid 100% out of pocket from the town.

Please fix the schools!!!!!!

Appreciate you're asking residents their opinions!

When taking bids for infrastructure improvements, consider a company that offers top quality materials, to insure a long term investment. Do not accept lowball bids or back pocket buddies, who will use lesser quality materials to keep the bid low, that will not withstand wear and tear over an extended period of time. Also, talk to each other and discuss upcoming projects, so all know what is being done, when it's being done, and where it's being done. ie: don't pave a road then dig it up for another project that should have been scheduled first. The results are shoddy patches, that lessen the quality of the newly paved roads, etc.

Invest the funds in permanent/capital community improvements (open space, recreation, infrastructure,etc.) that will have enduring benefits for present and future residents.

We have huge issues in this town regarding our school buildings. I'd like to see funds directed to the school buildings to the extent allowable.

The documents from the government, 50 and 150 pages, are a long read.