

**Porter County American Rescue Plan
Sub Committee County Covid Health Response
Wednesday, May 4, 2022, 1:00 p.m.
Commissioners' Meeting Room Chambers
Porter County Administration Center 155 Indiana Ave., Valparaiso IN 46383**

Voting Members Present:

Laura Blaney
Sylvia Graham
Mike Jessen

Citizen Members Present:

Patrice Mullen
Karen Nelson
Connie Rudd – Non-voting Health Department Advisor
Rhonda Young – Non-voting HR

Also Present:

Attorney Scott McClure
Vicki Urbanik

Laura Blaney addressed the Committee. Tonight they will hear presentations. They will use the same scoring rubric as the other committees did. Laura went through the Priority Considerations.

Presentations

Emergency Management Agency

Lance Bella presented.

Volunteer Pay - \$20,458.75 This is using the calculation on the website of \$13 per hour. EMA had volunteers working during COVID. Some for 2-3 months straight. Porter County was the central distribution point for District 1, a five county region. Lance went through a list of all the projects volunteers helped with. Without the volunteers they would not have made it. They put in a great deal of time. This payment would show them appreciation for what they did.

EOC Laptops - This was open throughout COVID. They have a video wall in the facility. Each station has a computer, telephone, and headset. One of the local schools donated laptops. These are now nine years old. They cannot be updated any more. This hinders operations. They would like 13 new laptops. When there is an emergency, it is important to get the EOC operational in a very short period of time.

Enclosed Trailer - \$12,150. They have a lot of equipment that was stored in the lofts at EMA. When they had a call, they would have to run up and down the stairs and load a vehicle or trailer to get to the scene. They have prepackaged all the inventory they need which makes it easier to pack up. There is one trailer shared within the District. It is not always available.

They are asking for a trailer that would be Porter County's own trailer. This would also be used when they have to pick up supplies.

Deployment Tent - \$59,595.25. This is a 21' X 20' inflatable tent. Among other things this has been used at the fair and Popcorn Festival. It is used like a mash tent. The coroner has asked to use it. Any of the five areas can ask to use the tent. If Porter County had its own, it could be for their own needs and would always be available. Also in this quote is an air conditioner. It has heating units. Lighting can be put in. There is a cart to get it from point A to point B. It is very heavy.

Q – How many hours do volunteers usually do per year

A – Normally around 2,500 per year. They have a Director, Deputy Director and Administrative Assistant. Currently they have 14 volunteers.

Q – Were these hours from March, 2020 to December, 2021.

A – Yes

Q – Vicki, can you explain how that works.

A – Vicki Urbanik answered when premium pay was awarded for the County it was simple. Those individuals worked the hours to get to the limit the Council imposed. This \$13 is in the Final Rule. Premium pay can be awarded to salaried workers, hourly workers and part time workers. Premium pay may not be awarded to volunteers. If that is something they want to do there are other specifications to follow. Vicki Urbanik is concerned that this is being called premium pay.

A - There are logs kept. These are not just volunteers. They are people that train on the equipment and spend their time dedicated specifically to Porter County. They have never been compensated for anything they have done for Porter County.

C – These are volunteer people. We appreciate them. There are a lot of people in County Government that did not get premium pay.

A – This is not above and beyond premium pay. These people got nothing.

Q – Doesn't FEMA have money they can pay to them?

A - No.

Q – Did any of the volunteers that worked the vaccines get any pay for their volunteer work?

A – The Health Department had paid hourly workers and some volunteers.

Q – Did the volunteer fire departments get any sort of stipend?

A – They get paid per call or per hour. They also get a vehicle/clothing allowance. The hazmat team gets a stipend every year if they meet the minimum requirements.

Q – Why are people that get paid regularly being called volunteers?

Q – If you had known people were under consideration for being paid would you have managed them differently?

A – No. We probably could have used more but didn't have them.

Q – Do you need 13 laptops?

A – Yes. There are more seats than laptops in the EOC. People will share.

Q – So fewer would not serve the purpose.

A – No. It really depends on what we are doing. On some emergencies I need them all.

Q – Is this the best quote?

A – I asked the IT Department to do the bid. It is the best.

Q – Are the computers hooked up to the Porter County system?

A – They have the Porter County network that just paid staff are on. The volunteer computers and the computers in the EOC are on a separate Comcast internet so they can get the information they have to get. It also acts as a backup if the system should go down.

Q – You really don't want less. You need all 13.

A - We could take 6 but then we would not have enough. That is why they are sharing. In the past we have gotten donations and grants to help pay for items they need.

Q – All other departments have contracts. Who services your computers?

A – If we have a problem, we call IT.

Q – Do they stay at the Center?

A – Yes. They are used for our meetings. What used to happen is when there was an emergency it was a scramble to get up and running. Now they use the laptops all the time so they are readily available if needed.

Q – Will these run the video wall?

A – No. There is one master computer that runs that.

Q – The District is set up with five counties. Does Porter County keep all of the supplies for all five counties?

A – A good majority of the District 1 equipment is there. There is a request process for using the equipment except in the case of an emergency.

Q – It sounds like you are purchasing equipment and in other committees this has been questioned if equipment is allowable.

A – Attorney McClure clarified in the Infrastructure Committee the members were concerned about the type of equipment but it was not if it qualified under ARP or not.

Q – Would the trailer be kept inside?

A – It would probably be kept out back. They are limited on space. It would not become District equipment. It would be Porter County's. Lance feels each county should have their own trailer. He takes care of Porter County first. Beyond that he will help the District.

Q – How many times in the last year would that have been useful?

A – At least 25 times if not more.

Q – In the current situation you have to unload the trailer every time you want to use it?

A – There is a similar trailer that is parked out back but it is full of the tent, shelving and supplies.

Q – Can you say that trailer is going to stay in Porter County?

A – Yes

Q – And you already have the gaylords?

A – Yes.

Q – Who insures all of the equipment?

A – Porter County insures the property that is theirs. Every County pays \$4,000 per year to the District. That goes to maintenance and insurance. All counties are up to date on payment.

Q – What is on this paper is what you are going to get. There are no additions you are going to want?

A – You will see a note that says we will have it striped to identify it as Porter County. Inside they had included a coating on the floor.

Q – There is a tent on site now?

A – Yes. It is the District tent.

Q – Are there a lot of times you cannot get it when you need it?

A – Yes. There are planned events that we usually get it. The coroner has asked for it before.

Q – Can we use it?

A – If it is not spoken for?

Q – Did we use it for COVID at all?

A – We did but it was hard to steak it down in the parking lot.

Q – Who purchased the initial tent?

A – It was a Homeland Security grant.

Q – No one else helped?

A – Lance has worked with the County grant writer and they have applied for all they can.

C – At least the other counties are now contributing. It seems they should be stepping up more to purchase this type of thing.

A – There are a lot of items that not every county needs. Those are good District assets. There are some that could hinder us if we don't have it available.

Q – How often has this been used at a scene.

A - At least twice a year it is set up and used for emergency medical services at the Fair and Popcorn Fest.

Auditor's Office

Vicki Urbanik presented.

County Health Insurance Fund - \$2 Million dollars. Her request is rooted in the belief that they have to make sure this fund is sustainable. It is a self-insured fund. It pays the health claims for the county employees. The health of this fund currently is described as "being in the emergency room". A few years ago the County was not able to pay its health insurance claims. Her goal is to bring this fund back to robust health. There is money in and out on a regular basis. There is a stop loss insurance coverage. For the very large claims they will get some reimbursement. Other revenue sources are rebates and refunds as well as employee payroll deduction. The vast majority of money that comes into this Fund is through the appropriation process. The biggest appropriations come from the County General Fund, Foundation Budget Fund and LIT Fund. The balance has been pretty healthy due to three actions taken by leadership. The County Commissioners have been reviewing the contracts. They have changed various consultants and the third party administrators. The Council appropriated new money from the budgets. The Auditor's office made a few different steps including a cash flow management system. The cash balance fell drastically with COVID. The Commissioners identified a fund that was not needed and committed to transferring those funds to the Health Insurance Fund. The year 2021 ended with a \$1.3 Million balance in the Health Insurance Fund. This is on the low end of the acceptable level. Now the fund is at a point where they are concerned about its stability. In first quarter this year they had to pull a month earlier rather than waiting until the end of the quarter. At the start of this year they had \$1.4 Million in claims. Staff thinks they are in a bad crisis right now. The COVID claims should be subsiding. They expect non-critical surgeries might start going up. The Commissioners have given an

incentive to join a high deductible plan. She is asking for \$2 Million to shore up this account. This is a qualified expense. When they get the claims they do not get the diagnostic codes. They cannot quantify the number for COVID claims. They are reaching out to the third party administrator to see if they can get that information. The Auditor's office does not want to know the particulars of this information. But they do want to know what was COVID costs. If this can't be quantified, it can be claimed under the Revenue Loss category.

Digitize the Transfer Books - \$450,000 They have about 475 books. They are books that contain a recording of property and how it gets transferred. These books are used by the public daily. During COVID the county government shut down so no one could come in and use them. When opened they had to start new procedures. The Auditor's Office has a sink and everyone has to wash their hands before and after using the books. Vicki has two funds she could use but she is reluctant to use these funds for the full costs because she sees a need for the Auditor's office to have an additional employee. She feels very comfortable using one or both funds as a match. The cost of the project is \$700,000 or a little over. She would like to ask for whatever the Committee feels is appropriate and she will dip into these funds for the balance. This is an eligible use.

Q – There are a lot of people in your office and with the public coming in it gets crowded. Will this allow the public to look up these records from home?

A – This will be on line based. There might be some people who come in but this will dramatically reduce it.

Q – So you still have to keep all of these books?

A – Yes.

Q – Can you move them off site?

A – That is a good possibility. However, the GIS mapper uses them quite a bit.

Q – How many books are there?

A – About 475. This does not include the plat records. Those are included in the proposal.

C - \$2 Million seems like a lot for the health insurance. This really is not too much. The COVID claims are costly. The Commissioner's office is trying to work on mitigating the costs. Anything we can do to beef up the fund to protect the County for the next couple of years makes sense.

C – Hopefully Vicki will be able to get the COVID related claims figures. Some of the units that pay into the insurance fund were closed down and did not have the funds for their payments.

Q – How many employees are on the health insurance.

A – There are approximately 500 employees and then dependents takes it to approximately 1,400. We pay the bills and then HR manages the programs along with the Commissioners.

Q – Because we are back in business, will this help revenue coming in?

A – It will help. However, some of the units have small contributions. But every little bit helps.

C – Every time it is budget time, health insurance is a struggle. Thanks Vicki for working on this.

Porter County Public Library

Jesse Butz and Hayley Scott presented. They are asking for premium pay for the central library employees. They did not qualify for direct funding through the government. They are an enumerated expense under the compliance guidelines. In March they closed their doors but

the employees were still working. They were sewing masks, eliminating furniture, putting up plastic shields etc. In May of 2020 they opened to the public. They were the first in Indiana to open with curbside delivery. They have had over 628,000 come through their doors in 2020 and 2021. They have been very busy. During the pandemic they supported all of the County residents. They had to quarantine all their materials for a 10 day period of time. They have received notes from citizens thanking them for being there during the pandemic. Their request is \$304,490 to provide all employees with a start date of December 31, 2021 a one time wage adjustment with \$3,000 for full time employees and \$1,500 for part time employee.

They are requesting additional safe spaces in the form of outdoor library gardens. They will be modeled after their Valparaiso Rotary Garden. This is a free and safe way for the public to connect and explore everything the library has to offer. The gardens will have wifi. These gardens are not limited to normal business hours. The City of Portage and the Portage RDC are providing up to \$800,000 in funds for the design and construction as well as the donation of the land which used to be the old police station. This will allow them to expand their programming which could not be done if it were limited to an indoor space. All their programming is free to the community. They serve five communities. South Haven would utilize the natural woods for the garden. The Kouts branch would have an interactive garden. Hebron is designed to enhance the facility that is there. The request is for \$1 Million to do the outdoor gardens in Hebron, Kouts, South Haven and Portage. The projects can be scaled and done in phases.

Q – On Portage, is the proposed area connected to the library?

A – It is directly next door.

Q – You have a commitment from the City of Portage and the Portage RDC?

A – Yes

Q – Is that guaranteed?

A – They are going through their process. RDC has said they have the funds to make the payment if the request does not make it through the ARPA process.

Q - Are South Haven, Kouts and Hebron offering matches?

A – No. The Kouts branch has the most potential. There is a private donor there. There was an individual who passed away and left funds that could be leveraged for this project.

Q – How healthy are the balances of the library.

A –The cash balance to budget is 90%. They are healthy but they do not have a very large Rainy Day fund.

A – Their Rainy Day fund is about \$4 Million. It was higher but they just completed a major HVAC replacement, floor and parking lot renovation.

Q – Could you use the Rainy Day Fund as a match?

A – No. They are looking at other projects to improve the facilities. They are looking for donations for the match.

Q – Do you have all the plans ready to go.?

A – We are meeting with the architect in Portage next week to finalize the process. The other ones are in the conceptual stage.

Q – Can you meet the deadlines?

A – Yes. Very much so.

Q – Who is working with South Haven, Kouts and Hebron to make sure they are ongoing?

A – Right now the architect is halted. If they get the go ahead within two months they will have the finished product to be able to go out and begin the process.

Q – Will these projects take the full million dollars? If not, where would the money go?

A – The designs are scalable. Things can always be added. They can also scale back if needed.

C – If someone does not use all of their money, they do not get to keep it.

A – Vicki Urbanik explained they are still formulating exactly how the distribution of funds is going to work. Probably the subrecipient will provide invoices to the Auditor's office and they will pay directly. Conceivably some of these projects could come in under budget. That is why they set the earlier deadline than the one set by the US Treasury.

Q – Would all of the new spaces have wifi?

A – Yes. They would have security cameras. They would all have up lighting. South Haven, Kouts and Portage would have sound systems available for outdoor programming.

Q – Do reservations need to be made?

A – There are no reservations needed. That is what is so good about outdoors. There is not a restriction on numbers.

Q – Are there any plans for Valpo?

A – No since they already have their garden.

Q – In Portage you have a match.

A – Yes. The \$800,000 plus property.

Q – South Haven and Kouts are \$200,000. Is that to complete the project?

A – Yes

Q – Hebron is \$100,000 to complete?

A – Yes.

C – The match program is good. For South Haven, Kouts and Hebron you will look for donations? If you don't find a match you will go into the Rainy Day fund for the match?

A – No. They are trying to minimize the local impact tax as much as possible.

A – In prior years the library had issued bonds for the renovation of the library. Currently they are doing that through proper budgeting and fiscal spending. They really want to make sure they are not adding any additional tax.

C – Mike Jessen commented if the funding is not available for Hebron, Kouts and South Haven they get short changed. He would not like to see that happen. He would like to see the Rainy Day fund help.

A – They will talk to the Board about that. They are trying to take on as many projects as they can. They have a five-year plan of HVAC replacing, parking lot renovation and other projects.

Q – How many days a year will these outside spaces be used?

A – We don't have an answer to that. They did not shut Valpo down until there was ice. They got more days of use than they expected.

Q – Have you seen an uptick in miscellaneous crime?

A – Just skateboarding. They wax the edge of the pavilion. They slide over the top of it.

Q – What was premium pay to first responders?

A – \$4,000 and \$3,000 to the others.

Q – Sheriff's deputies and jailers, EMA JDC all got \$4,000

A – Yes.

Q – It says and related pension costs.?

A – Yes. That refers to PERF.

C – If we do decide to do this, we have some employees and staff members of Memorial Opera House and Expo who worked for the Health Department during the pandemic. It was not a lot of fun. They did not get premium pay. If we do this, we need to include them.

Q – Your staff got paid when they were and were not working?

A – There was never a time when they were not working.

Q – Were you eligible for PPE Loans.

A – They are a governmental Unit so they did not get a PPP loan. They got a CARES grant for reimbursement of PPE expenses. Nothing related to payroll.

C – There were a lot of kids stuck at home that would have been lost without the library. If we decide to do this, we may need to change the amount.

A – Anything is helpful. Our opening wage for library clerks is \$11.75 per hour. They had a difficult job during the pandemic. They were the mask police and had to deal with a lot of angry people.

Q – Other places that were also open, YMCA and Boys and Girls Club, were they offered premium pay?

A – They were able to apply for loans. The library does not qualify to apply for them.

C – But you are your own taxing unit.

A – Yes, but we are not eligible for loans for payroll assistance or other direct funding.

Q – Did you consider offering a bonus on your own?

A – We gave a small bonus at the end of last year. This was a Board decision. They gave a “pot” to use for above and beyond service.

C – The County has employees that did not get premium pay. And they gave up a raise last year.

IT and Commissioners

Lee and Curt Ellis presented. Lee discussed the jury room and social distancing. They had to expand. The judges have been requesting two large televisions in the jury rooms. He paid for it out of his budget. He is asking for reimbursement for that.

Curt Ellis talked about the enhancements to the Commissioners room for audio visual equipment. Part two is the Civic media module. To explain – this is the recording studio. Civic media is how we broadcast. Lee has talked with several companies. The only one that got back to him is one out of Chicago. With this system, a speaker will be able to bring their own device and advance a power point presentation. Audio would be much better. It has the ability to live stream. The camera system will be adjusted so you can see the people in front and the audience. The camera will focus in on the speaker. Everything in this room will be replaced. There will be a learning process but it is simple to use. Some of the equipment taken from here can be used downstairs in Room 102A for smaller meetings. This request is \$127,444.67 for the equipment and software and the four year service contract. Part two is adding the Civic Media module to the web site. This allows live stream meetings to the web site. This is automatically stored there so it can be viewed later. Through a third party service they can get closed caption

and transcription service. There is unlimited video storage. Civic Plus provided a proposal of \$27,317. This includes implementation, training and an annual fee through December 31, 2026. After that it will be an annual fee of \$6,615.00. This is a permissible use. The contracts are drawn up. Everyone is ready to go once they are given the ok. The Civic HR Module. With this module they can reach a wider pool of candidates with the job postings. The County does use Indeed. This is usually for a higher level job. It is a cumbersome process. When people apply through this module, even if they do not get hired, their application is stored. There are some compliance and control systems in place. There are Federal requirements for retaining applications. This does that. This system will allow them to electronically collect, create and distribute new employee forms. A performance evaluation module can be added. Civic has provided a quote for this \$61,755 which includes implementation, training, annual fees through December, 2026. After that the annual fee is \$10,875.

The next module leaps the County into the 21st century. The County has started adding on line forms for citizens. Now the forms tell citizens how to access services. Citizens can pay their property tax on line. The number of people paying on line continues to increase. If it is made easy to do, people will pay on line. COVID helped define the County's limits and weaknesses. The answer is Civic Plus Optimized module. This addresses the issues faced by municipalities. This would position Porter County as a leader in offering on line services to our residents. The cost is \$78,358. This covers set up, training, 32 hours of free consultation and annual fee through December 31, 2026. After that the annual fee is \$16,500

Lee added technology changes. The refresh is assured to last at least a decade.

Q - These are nice programs but cost quite a bit.

A - If we are not using one of these it can be stopped. But if it is utilized, think of the savings.

Q - Do any other municipalities use this?

A - City of Valparaiso uses their web page. Some larger counties use it and are thrilled about it.

Q - It is all user friendly?

A - Yes. Their customer service is exceptional.

C - The improved audio in there will be nice.

A - All the microphones will have a button that can be pushed to not be heard.

Health Department

Dr. Stamp presented. They would like to expand the offices and renovate the space to the tune of upwards of \$1 Million. This would provide more office space, clinical space and private bathroom, storage space and PPE supplies. There are 35 employees. They are split between two offices. Currently they have five divisions. Since they moved into this space the staffing has increased by 75% and the revenue has over doubled. The nursing division is where they get the bulk of people that come into the building. The volume of vital records take up a large amount of their business also. The environmental division deal with septic and well systems. They inspect tattoo parlors, unsafe housing, beaches and pools. The Foods department is inspection based so they are out in the field a lot. The emergency preparedness department gets just a few people who come in. Dr. Stamp showed a drawing of the current layout of their

offices and the proposed plan. The proposal shows an office for the health director, two reception areas and more clinical areas, storage areas and offices. In the future if the Coroner and Veterans office were to be relocated, the Health Department would like to take over their space and use it for classrooms. This plan does not displace anybody. This would help improve their HIPA requirements.

The Health Department has received grants on an ongoing basis and some COVID specific grants. The Local Health Maintenance Fund grant is not being renewed. They also have money in the Trust Fund which is tobacco settlement money. Some of those can help with the renovations. Not all of it qualifies. They have reimbursement money for vaccines they have administered.

Q - Thanks for what the Health Department has done over the last few years. It was a challenge. You did get some reimbursement for vaccines?

A – When we would give a vaccine we would take insurance information. The State Board of Health worked on the reimbursement. That was an administration fee they were reimbursed.

Q – The plans look like nursing will equal in space.

A – Nurses will have 6-8 offices.

C – It is clear the space you have is not adequate for today's needs. Have the Commissioners discussed taking over the space that has been cleared out?

A – Laura Blaney said they have not looked at it specifically. They do know they need more space.

A – The Health Department appreciates their Portage office.

C – It will be good to have an architect take a look at the proposed layout.

C – What is presented tonight is basic and simple. Your office has done so much with so little.

Laura Blaney suggested the committee go home and review the presentations. The next meeting will be May 18th at 1:00 p.m.

Public Comment - none

The meeting adjourned.