

AMERICAN RESCUE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, December 16, 2021

Task Force Meeting 6 Minutes- Thursday December 16, 2021 at the Joseph Yenni Bldg. Room 405 —9:00 a.m.

Committee Members in Attendance

Angela Callais
Mike Quigley
Francisco Christian
Bob Evans Jr.
Brian Grenrood
John Litchfield
Jim Martin
Jim Young
Victor LaRocca
Brett Lawson
Ruth Lawson
Jerry Bologna

Committee Members Absent

Todd Murphy
Oscar Pipkins
Pamela Watson
Steve Lachute

Seeing that there was a quorum of task force members, Chairman Mike Quigley called the meeting to order:

1. Approval of Minutes:

Task Force Meeting 5 minutes were forwarded to the members. Seeing no additions or corrections, motion was made by Bob Evans and seconded by Francisco Christian to approve the minutes. The Committee unanimously approved the minutes.

2. Presentations:

Veneeth Iyengar- Executive Director, Louisiana Office of Broadband Development and Connectivity “Connect La.”- Mr. Iyengar thanked the task force for inviting him and noted that he could advise us on the different buckets of money and what other parishes are doing. Connectivity has three basic aspects: access, affordability and literacy.

Access:

- Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) There is \$347 million available in Louisiana. Jefferson Parish is entitled to have high speed internet connected to 2,870 locations. The state will provide funding to Cox Communications and Space X to do the installation. These providers were selected by the FCC by auction. Mr. Iyengar went to the Connect La website to provide some of this information.
- American Rescue Plan Funds- Louisiana is allocated \$177 million to address broadband issues. These funds will be administered via Mr. Iyengar’s Dept. It is called the Gumbo Fund and will be disbursed in 2 rounds. The funding will be allocated for Access. Providers such as Cox can apply for these ARP funds. It provides 80% for capital. It requires a 20% match of the provider. Local governments can also provide a match to enhance the application. Preference is given for providing to underserved areas. 42 companies are internet providers in Louisiana. Jim Young asked about requiring reliability. Mr. Iyengar stated it can be specified in allocating the local funds. We are encouraged to get with a provider to apply to Round 2. It was noted that the deadline to apply for Round 1 of these funds is December 31st.
- Infrastructure Bill—Each State will get an initial seed amount of \$100million. Will arrive at the end of 2022. Additional funds will be allocated due to a formula. Louisiana should get a significant amount of additional funds because we are a high cost state. The ultimate goal is to get every home and business access to high speed internet. Phil Rebowe asked about investing in technology

that may change. Mr. Iyengar advised they are specifying scalable technology (technology that would be can grow and adapt with ease) --- mentioning using fiber and future satellite accessibility. Points are awarded for high speed.

Affordability & Literacy

- 18% of persons between the ages of 18-64 do not have computer literacy and the basic skills to access telehealth, pay bills, apply for jobs and engage in learning. guidance for May 15th

Mr. Iyengar advised the task force that now was the time for Jefferson Parish to a provide recommendations to the federal government regarding rulemaking guidelines pertinent to the Infrastructure Bill. We should send our recommendations to Mr. Iyengar by January 7th
Jim Martin asked if a municipality could own its internet system to which Mr. Iyengard replied yes the municipality can build and operate its system.

Veneeth Iyengar can be reached either by email: Veneeth.Iyengar@la.gov or by phone 225-219-7574

Presentation by Dominick Impastato

Thanked the task force for the time and effort expended. He has a PowerPoint presentation (https://jeffparishla-my.sharepoint.com/:p:/g/personal/bcampos_jeffparish_net/EZEMFxPX2o5JsWXJPPzRglgBPMNIu3F8tTwc1ZU8FheSYA?e=vdxhSf). He led the presentation by outlining ways in which he categorically did not wish to see the monies spent, citing the circumstances involving BP funds which were not all judiciously spent. Rather, he emphasized that the Parish should spend this one time funds wisely.

- He advocated that we don't put funds where the Parish already has dedicated millages to address needs or to projects that will require reoccurring spending.
- Furthermore, funding for a new Department that would put the Parish *on the hook* for an unlimited time or time in perpetuity should not be recommended.

- Land Banks or Land repurposing: during the conference hosted by the Jefferson Chamber in Nashville this past year, we learned that surrounding areas benefitted from purchasing land to repurpose it and place it back into commerce. Currently the Parish has led successful programs to upgrade areas such as Terrytown and Fat City. Councilman Impastato has started a program for the Lafreniere Park Sub-area. Land Banking can purchase new streets, repurpose land and eradicate blight. He offered the idea that we can allocate additional funding to the Parish's Economic Development fund for purpose of land banking, enticing New Orleans businesses to Jefferson Parish.
- Attract Festivals: there is a need to upgrade infrastructure to allow us to attract large festivals. This would include connections to water, electricity, etc. on festival grounds, parking accessibility.
- As co-chair of the Covid-19 Budget Revenue Task Force, Councilman Impastato provided analysis on the Council District Improvement/ Assistance Funds and the impact of Covid-19. He shared with the ARP Task Force members that these funds were the only budgets truly impacted by the Pandemic yielding an overall loss of \$1,203,694. They should be restored to allow council members to continue with their long term goals.

Presentation by Councilman Ricky Templet

Councilman Templet led by reiterating that the Terrytown Revitalization Study is being implemented and is a good area to allocate funding. It is attracting young people to the Parish and increasing land values.

- He advocated for more funding for infrastructure needs of the Parish, specifically the upgraded remote water meter project. Councilman Templet emphasized that infrastructure improvements should not be beautification or "feel good" projects.
- He agreed with restoring the Council District Improvement / Assistance funds.... It's where the rubber meets the road in addressing constituent needs.

- Jim Young reported that the EB Civic Associations had met and recommended that these funds be concentrated on blight eradication and quality of life issues.
- Tim Coulon suggested that the Jefferson Finance Authority repurpose its mission to the changing needs of the Parish.

Presentation by Councilwoman Jennifer VanVrancken

She stated the council is in sync and wants these funds to be transformative and move the needle. Her PowerPoint presentation (click: https://jeffparishlamy.sharepoint.com/:p:/g/personal/bcampos_jeffparish_net/EQXur9Gs0ddJlIU70jgPN7UBzYRMiXM5aQsTlxngVmW0vQ?e=N31vOH) provides an informative video on the happenings of Fat City. Some highlights were:

- She is advocating for Fat City, Metairie Central Business District and Causeway/ Veterans Corridor. This is a choice Location, Location, Location.
- Jefferson Parish has already allocated substantial investment but parking and blight remain an issue for this area.
- No Parking Variances are allowed and on street parking has been added.
- Façade programs, streetscapes and murals have been accomplished.
- Solution #1: A Transit Hub- multi-purpose i.e. transit, traditional parking, and rentals. NC etc.
- Solution #2: Façade Improvement Program.
- Solution #3: Eat Fat City Center.... Entrepreneurship, Art & Technology Approximate cost \$2million

- The Metairie CBD has a significant number of Areas that would directly benefit from Broadband installation i.e. Lakeside, Lakeway Towers, Fat City etc.

3. New Business:

Moved from the beginning of the meeting:

The Chairman had to leave early for an appointment and Brenda Campos in his stead announced that the next meeting will be held on Thursday January 6, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. in the Parish President's Conference Room 10th Floor - 1221 Elmwood Park Blvd. Jefferson, LA 70123. This meeting will be dedicated the deliberation of the projects/programs that have been presented to the task force. The Chairman has emailed the members on a recommendation on how this deliberation can take place. These items will be outlined in the agenda for this next meeting, and members can move on whether we deliberate in this fashion or in any alternate way.

4. Old Business:

There was none.

5. Public Comments:

There were none.

6. Meeting Adjourned:

Motion was made by Bob Evans and seconded by Angel Callais to adjourn the meeting. Motion was approved.