

# *December* **Newsletter**

## **Better(not bigger)Vermont**



## ***Save your small town!***

You likely know about the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), a program funded by the Federal government to help the Nation recover from the negative economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Over 1 billion of the ARPA funds Vermont is receiving goes to the State government, and Gov. Scott is allocating that money to 5 broad categories...

- \$250.5 million for broadband and wireless connectivity
- \$249 million for housing
- \$200 million for climate change mitigation measures
- \$170 million for water and sewer infrastructure
- \$143 million for further economic development and recovery

Will some of the \$249 million for housing go to upgrade existing housing, or will it all be spent on greenfield development? Will some of the \$170 million for water/sewer infrastructure go for badly needed repairs to existing water and sewage treatment plants, or will it all be spent on new infrastructure and for expanding capacity? Unless the answer to these questions is “yes,” then over half of State’s ARPA money (\$562 million) will directly support economic growth and population growth. Not pandemic resilience, not infrastructure in support of

current residents, not sustainability, but rather growth that will make Vermont communities less sustainable, decrease the quality-of-life of current residents, and make Vermont more susceptible to pandemics. Is this a bit hypocritical?

In addition, ARPA offers about \$200 million directly to Vermont cities and towns. Municipalities can spend this money on projects meeting one or more of these four criteria...

- Respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality;
- Respond to workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency by providing premium pay to eligible workers;
- For the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID-19 public health emergency relative to revenues collected in the most recent full fiscal year prior to the emergency; and
- Make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.

The purpose of the last criterion is population growth. Over 200 Vermont towns lack sewage treatment facilities, and many of these are next to streams, rivers and lakes. If these towns have wastewater treatment plants, the floodgates to growth will open wide. The State of Vermont knows this and is providing other funding for wastewater treatment plants in towns.

To pile it on, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's agency of Rural Development is offering rural towns even larger amounts of money to build wastewater treatment plants.

In short, we have a concerted effort by our State and Federal governments to use the Covid-19 pandemic as an excuse to transform Vermont's small towns into mini-cities. These governments are doing everything they can NOT to have a steady state economy and TO have Vermont's small farming-based rural communities go away.

Right now, your town government is deciding how to spend their ARPA funds and may be signing onto feasibility studies with State agencies for building sewage

treatment plants. Find out what is happening in your town and make your voices heard!

Finally, we can't have a December newsletter without wishing you and your loved-ones a very happy Holiday Season and a great year in 2022!

Thank you!

p.s., Feel free to forward this newsletter to others

## ***How You Can Help***

Better(not bigger)Vermont works to improve the lives and natural surroundings of present and future Vermonters. Please support our efforts by making a donation and/or forwarding this newsletter to others.

*Thank You!*

<https://betternotbiggervt.org>

[betternotbiggervt@gmail.com](mailto:betternotbiggervt@gmail.com)

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