



ENVIRONMENT AND LAND USE COMMITTEE STUDY SESSION

RE: American Rescue Act Funding

County of Champaign, Urbana, Illinois

Thursday, September 9, 2021 – *6:00 P.M. *PLEASE NOTE TIME

Shields-Carter Meeting Room/Zoom

Brookens Administrative Center

1776 East Washington Street, Urbana, Illinois

MINUTES – Approved as Distributed December 9, 2021

Members Present:	Samantha Carter, Lorraine Cowart, Aaron Esry, Stephanie Fortado, Mary King, Jenny Lokshin, Jim McGuire, Diane Michaels, Kyle Patterson, Jacob Paul, Chris Stohr, Jennifer Straub, Steve Summers, Leah Taylor and Eric Thorsland
Members Absent:	Jim Goss, Stan Harper, Brad Passalacqua, Emily Rodriguez and Jodi Wolken
Others Present:	Darlene Kloeppel (County Executive), Dana Brenner (Physical Plant), John Hall (Planning & Zoning), Kathy Larson (ARPA Project Manager), Susan Monte (Planning & Zoning), and Mary Ward (Recording Secretary)

Agenda Items

I. Call to Order

Chair Thorsland called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

II. *Roll Call

Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

III. Approval of Agenda

MOTION by Mr. Esry to approve the agenda; seconded by Ms. Straub. Upon roll call vote, the **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously.

IV. Public Participation

None

V. Communications

Ms. Michaels communicated that Steve Thomas, Mayor of Ludlow, is not able to attend tonight's meeting.

Ms. Cowart joined the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

VI. Discussion – Water Infrastructure

A. City of Champaign – T.J. Blakeman, AICP – Senior Planner for Economic Development

Garden Hills Project to solve flooding issues as well as many other needs of the neighborhood. They have found ways to move this project forward. He provided background information on the

Garden Hills Neighborhood. The first homes were built in 1955 outside of Champaign's corporate limits and sections were annexed in over time. It's one of the largest subdivisions in Champaign.

Recurring flooding happens regularly. There are no curb and gutters, drains, streetlights, etc. There will be a detention basin built along Hedge Road. They have acquired and razed structures as Phase I. Phase II is construction of the detention basin. Phase III will be the interceptors to connect some of the heaviest flood prone areas to the basin. Through a series of different funding solutions, they have found a way to move this project up.

Champaign is planning to use \$5,000,000 of their ARP allocation for this project. The rest is issuance of debt. They are also able to move up other improvements to the neighborhood such as the SLEEP program (Safety Lighting Energy Efficiency Program) which installs yard lights, doorbell cameras, etc. directly to homeowners and adding public street lighting.

They would create a Garden Hills TIF District to help pay for this project. They can transfer money from the North Mattis Avenue TIF to help with the early years of debt payment. Mr. Blakeman gave a brief explanation on how TIFs work. The \$5,000,000 of ARP funds along with the creation of the TIF district have allowed this project to move forward.

Ms. Carter spoke on her experiences with Garden Hills and concerns they have with flooding. Ms. Carter asked if a TIF would have been beneficial 20 years ago? Mr. Blakeman said probably not, it's the starter funds from the North Mattis TIF that allows this to happen now.

Ms. Fortado asked specifically how much are you asking the County for? Mr. Blakeman said he didn't come with specific dollar amount in mind. It could be some more pieces that come forward depending on what the county offers. Ms. Fortado said water infrastructure is a clearly defined use of ARPA and that is probably where county funds would go. She also asked when the city incorporated Garden Hills. It happened over time with the first annexation in 1958 and the final one in the 1980's.

Ms. Carter feels like this has been an overlooked and underserved community and this could have been done sooner. Mr. Blakeman stated there's been a very long list of stormwater projects since the 1990's that the city has worked on and there's only so much the city can borrow. Mr. Thorsland asked if we have money to direct toward this project, will that help speed the project up? It's mostly about the time it takes to create a project of this scale; it does take two years of design time for a neighborhood of this size.

Mr. McGuire feels that Garden Hills is a very important issue. He asked what can fit into rather strict ARPA timeline and how are people reacting to the Ring doorbells. Mr. Blakeman said it is a matter of staffing as to how much they can get done. If the County Board wants to participate and have a discussion with City staff that would be welcome. They have not done many installations yet, so really doesn't have much feedback.

B. Mahomet Aquifer Mapping – Steven Brown, Chief Scientist, ISGS Prairie Research Institute

Mr. Brown gave a presentation on 3-D Geologic Mapping of the Mahomet Aquifer. It uses a technique called Helicopter-borne Transient Electro-magnetic Survey (HTEM). The aquifer is the water supply for East Central Illinois. Mapping the underground in 3-D is like a MRI of the earth. Mr. Brown gave an explanation on how the process works and shared some examples where this has been used. The helicopter does not fly over urban areas or where people are.

They area asking \$1.7 million to apply this to Champaign County. It would cover 550 to 600 square miles and 4,500 to 5,000 flight miles. It would be over \$20 million to map the entire aquifer.

Ms. King questioned if any other counties had approached ISGS to do mapping and are there any grants available. They have not been approached directly by any other counties. At this point they have not received any other funding at this point. Mr. McGuire asked if the water companies had been approached and if they are a source of funds. They have not approached them directly but they did a project a number of years ago for the water company that focused on bore holes and surface geophysics. It would make sense to have other shareholders participate.

Mr. Stohr asked if some of this information would be useful for hydrologic modeling? Mr. Brown said it would be one of the important applications and would answer questions that the modeling was not able to do. Would this benefit the Mahomet Aquifer Council? It would benefit them.

Mr. Paul – what is the best-case scenario of information found and new information you could learn on the worst-case scenario. It could reveal new water sources and give new information on some of the issues that nag us. Would this information be helpful to mitigate an accident in the future? This would absolutely be one of the unanticipated benefits; you have the 3-D image of the Aquifer; an accident happens how do you respond quickly. It would be helpful in a situation like that.

C. Pesotum Consolidated Drainage District – Lucas Meharry and Chris Hausman, Pesotum Consolidated Drainage District Commissioners

Mr. Meharry gave an overview of the project. The main tiles provide drainage to the west side of Pesotum. The drainage system dates back to the early 1900's, is undersized and failing at an alarming rate. They are requesting cost sharing funding to replace 8,185 feet of tile. This would help ensure that around 300+ residents on the west side of Pesotum do not have flooding issues, improve road stability and culverts from being over run and failing. It will also help protect the health and safety of the ground water.

The overall cost is \$362,968. They would like half of that or \$181,484. They are prepared to work with the courts to levy funding for the other half of the project if we choose to help fund it.

Mr. Esry asked about the timeline for this project. Mr. Hausman answered that they have a contractor lined up and could probably start the project within two years. The time constraint may be going through the courts for the levy.

D. Urbana-Champaign Sanitary District – Rick Manner, Executive Director

The UCSD covers Champaign, Urbana, Savoy, Bondville and about 10,000 residences in unincorporated Champaign County around those area. That is about $\frac{3}{4}$ of Champaign County taxpayers. One of the items they are asking for is utility billing relief. Request is for \$620,000. They are a fee for service government utility. No income comes from property taxes. Most income comes from user and developer charges. They are having budget issues now due to Covid. They have \$1.87 million in lost income due to declines in user charges, development fees and investments are down. There is also \$620,000 in accumulated debt. That is unpaid balances due to Covid. They would like to use ARPA funds to cover that debt and help them get back to normal.

A second project is the Crystal Lake Park Bridge and Interceptor Replacement Project. There is a bridge that conceals a sewer within the deck of bridge. The bridge is in trouble and is now 70 years old and needs to be replaced. The budget for the bridge is \$540,000. This needs to be done within the next 2 to 5 years. If ARPA funds would be approved, it could be done as soon as possible.

Mr. Manner made a brief mention of the Wilbur Heights neighborhood and the fact that they probably need sewers. There has been talk of re-doing the roads in that neighborhood and it would make sense to do the sewers before you do the roads.

Ms. Fortado asked about the bad debt and how they planned on handling that. It depends on what's possible and what funds are available. It could be a straight write off of all debt as of August 1. Depending on how the ARPA rules are written, would possibly also consider asking for funding to cover the documented losses.

Ms. King – have the cities of Champaign and Urbana been asked if they would like to participate in using ARPA funds to write off this debt? It has been talked about. UCSD bills for other city fees and they participate in the LiSap program. They have advised them to maybe use ARPA to write off their portion of debt. What he is asking the County is to write off the UCSD portion of debt. We could do some form of sharing and that could change the amount requested.

Mr. McGuire inquired how much LiSap money is available to use. The program has specific income requirements. They are directing as many as possible to RPC and the LiSap program. There are several that don't meet the LiSap requirements. There are 1,400 accounts behind. He also had a question about the park district and the bridge. Funding for this is on USCD. They have worked with the park district on plan design, timing etc.

Mr. Stohr said the bridge is not necessarily a pedestrian bridge but is more to protect the pipes. He feels that these two projects are exactly what ARPA is meant for.

Jennifer Putman, UCSD board member, thanked the County Board for all the study sessions. This is what good government looks like. She spoke in support of the UCSD requests.

E. Triple Fork Drainage District – Dave Wolken, Drainage District Commissioner

This drainage district is on the south side of Rantoul. There are flooding issues along Route 45 on the south side of Rantoul. They would like to take out the box culvert that runs alongside Route 45 to solve the problem with this flooding. The culvert is approximately 700 feet long and was put in by the air base in case they wanted to extend the runway. They are working on getting bids. The cost would be around \$60,000.

Ms. Fortado asked if they are asking for the full amount? The drainage district does not have the funds for this. Mr. Stohr wondered if a road goes over the culvert and suggested checking with Highway to see if there are funds available.

F. Village of Ludlow – Steve Thomas, Mayor of Ludlow

Unable to attend tonight. Ms. Kloepfel stated that they had sent a letter to the board previously. They are having flooding issues and their septic system is old and not working well anymore. The project they are wanting to do is attach to Rantoul's sewer system.

G. Village of Thomasboro – Tyler Evans, Mayor of Thomasboro

The village is having issues with storm drainage problems. There are two major projects they would like to do. There are flooding issues on both the west side and east side of Thomasboro. The west side of town has two streets that 6 to 8 times a year will have water standing for periods of time. On the east side the main trunk line was installed in the 1920's and other work was done in the 1940's. Flooding issues ongoing from when the roads were installed. They have a plan in place. The preliminary budget numbers for both projects are around \$450,000. He was not sure of a final ask amount; looking for any help they can get. They do have some money they can input toward this.

H. Champaign County Facilities

1. Parking Lot – Dana Brenner

There are ten projects coming up in next seven years that are on the approved Capital Asset Plan. There are a couple of big projects coming up. The three parking lots at Brookens need to be replaced and we need to address the water run-off from those lots. The project is slated for \$680,000 for 2027 on the plan. It was suggested to use permeable pavers like MTD has used. Their lot is 70,000 sq ft and the two lots on the north side of Brookens are about 86,000 sq ft. We would be looking at \$1.5 million just for the two north lots. The drive up to the backdoors would need to be concrete. All the lots will need attention. We are looking at spending \$2.4 million over the next 7 years for all the parking lots. That does not include creating any water runoff areas.

Art Bartell Drive will also need repair over the next 7-8 years. Will need to put in curbing, gutters and drainage.

Just prior to Covid, John Bergee, Stephanie Fortado and Eric Thorsland had been researching some grant opportunities for these types of projects. Ms. Fortado gave a brief overview of some grant funding that may be available. It's the Green Infrastructure Grant Opportunity that is a program of the Illinois EPA. It is available for projects through 2025. They are awarding \$5 million a year. No project could be more than half of the money. This is state money so we might be able to use state grant money and the ARPA money would match.

2. Hazardous Household Waste Facility – Susan Monte, Planner and County Recycling Coordinator, Champaign County Department of Planning & Zoning

Ms. Monte explained how HHW is water infrastructure, and this could be an eligible project. The request is for Capital costs for a HHW facility. It is a two-part request. In year 2022 requesting \$472,110 and year 2024 requesting \$2,583,670 for a total of \$3,055,780. This is the estimated cost of a 5,000 sq ft optimal facility in Champaign County. The annual costs to operate such a facility are estimated at \$120,000. This would allow the facility to be open bi-weekly on a part-time basis year-round (about 10-15 hours each month). We would look at a cost share agreement with other local governments via an intergovernmental agreement. The Illinois EPA would enter into an agreement to transport and process the HHW. The Mahomet Aquifer Task Force Report lists HHW as a contamination threat.

Mr. Stohr stated that we have had a lot of participation in the IEPA HHW Collections and the Electronics Collections. They have been handled very well. He asked if there was information available as to numbers of participants, tonnage, etc. The facility could supplant the three times a year collection we currently do. It would be much more efficient than what we currently do. He also inquired if people were turned away from the other collections. With the online registration, we've been able to schedule everyone who's interested. People need this service year-round.

Ms. Lokshin asked if there is any potential for buy-in and support from other counties? That would be something to pursue although we would have to take a leadership role. Mr. Stohr questioned if this would be run by the County or the Environmental Stewards. It could be either.

VII. Adjournment

Chair Thorsland thanked everyone for their input and adjourned the meeting at 8:18 p.m.