

I am unable to participate in the hearing today yet would like to submit a brief testimony in favor of the Budget Adjustment.

The town of Craftsbury is certainly facing a crossroads as are many of our small Vermont towns. We are a community with an intact pre-K through 12 public school, Sterling College, a care center for the elderly, a new childcare center, the Craftsbury Outdoor Center, and community members who step up and volunteer for town committees and groups. Maintaining the integrity of these enterprises and continuing to recognize community needs takes plain hard work.

The Community Visit process in 2015 spearheaded by VCRD (Vermont Council on Rural Development) again highlighted many ongoing concerns, especially road safety, land conservation, broadband access, and the lack of child care.

Working through the ARPA process has continued to remind us that our little space in this world still has lots of needs to fulfill. For the ARPA funds we had many fine applications from broadband expansion to storage for our new food pantry to a library microgrid to a dog park(!) and many others. On the ARPA Committee's recommendations, the Select Board has voted to fund many of these projects. The ARPA Committee also asked the Select Board to access town spaces and places since many of the applicants for the town ARPA funds needed a space for their project. We need community meeting spaces and the town has long recognized that need. So here is where we need the help. Our three person Select Board does not have the ability or the capacity to continue investigating and implementing funding possibilities that are available to continue carrying our little town forward. We do not have the expertise or the technology. For years we have discussed the idea of a 'contracted grant' person whose job it is to help our town recognize, apply for, and, most importantly, follow through with fund possibilities. With covid and now ARPA fund possibilities we feel we may be underserving our community and missing incredible chances. And town committees, such as the Planning Commission and the Conservation Commission and the Energy Committee, have so many more requirements and concerns for the health and vibrancy of our town that they are feeling overwhelmed which doesn't help as we try to fill committees with new, especially younger, members who may find the town committee expectations too much.

Thus, for all the examples listed and so many more, we support the Budget Adjustment proposal to help our small towns, in these unsteady times, continue to build resiliency and stability as we navigate present and future possibilities.

Thank you,

Susan Houston for the Craftsbury Select Board