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Barney S. Heath
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 3, 2023

TO: Councilor Krintzman, Chair, Programs & Services Committee
Members of the Programs & Services Committee

FROM: Barney Heath, Director, Planning & Development
Linda Walsh, Commissioner, Health & Human Services
Amanda Berman, Director of Housing & Community Development
Meghan Kennedy, Director of Social Services

RE: **#59-23 - Requesting a discussion regarding Newton's Economic Stability/Mobility Initiative**
COUNCILORS LAREDO, NORTON, MALAKIE, BAKER, GENTILE, KRINTZMAN, WRIGHT, OLIVER, AND GROSSMAN requesting a discussion with the Administration regarding Newton's Economic Stability/Mobility Initiative – A Partnership with EMPATH, including the amount of ARPA funds being used for the program; how much of this money will be paid to EMPATH and whether EMPATH is contributing any of its own funds to this program; additional city resources that will be used, directly or indirectly, for this program; the expectations for this program beyond the initial two year period and what will be the source of any additional funds for the program; and who in the city will be reviewing and evaluating the success of this program.

CC: Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer

This memo provides responses to a number of questions raised by Councilors related to the City's ARPA-funded Economic Stability / Mobility Initiative.

1) How much of our ARPA funds is the city contributing to the program?

The Mayor has allocated \$1,750,000 of ARPA funds towards the Economic Stability / Mobility Initiative. As detailed below, approximately \$1,590,000 of this total will be awarded to EMPATH to

implement its [proposed project](#), and \$160,000 has been set aside for the UMass Donahue Institute (UMDI) to provide consulting, monitoring, and evaluation services throughout the life of the program.

Further Detail:

In the spring of 2022, [the Mayor allocated \\$2 million of the City's ARPA funds](#) to support residents disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic who continue to face significant economic challenges on a daily basis. This allocation came after the completion of the [Newton Community Needs Assessment](#), which included a series of short-term and long-term recommended actions. The Community Needs Assessment allowed us to hear from low-income residents about their specific needs and ideas on becoming economically stable.

Of the \$2 million allocation, \$250,000 was set aside for the City's [Emergency Support Program](#), administered by Metro West Collaborative Development, on behalf of the City of Newton. This program provided eligible households impacted by COVID-19 with a one-time financial assistance payment to help pay for common household expenses, such as rent, utilities, childcare, and groceries.

The remaining \$1,750,000 was set aside for the Economic Stability / Mobility Initiative to support Newton's low-income residents and families. In the late spring of 2022, the City contracted with the UMass Donahue Institute (UMDI) to work with the City's Health & Human Services and Housing staff to project manage this effort. Specifically, the City brought on the Donahue Institute's Senior Research Manager [Christina Citino](#) who has vast experience managing projects of this type. She specializes in health and human services evaluation and research work and has more than 20 years' experience providing state agencies, community-based organizations, and private entities with program development, needs assessment, and program evaluation services.

Ms. Citino was charged with providing consultation in the development of this initiative, including facilitation of an Advisory Committee process, development of a Request for Proposals (RFP), development of a scoring rubric, oversight of the review process, and the development of summary recommendations. Ms. Citino and UMDI will continue to support this initiative by providing ongoing monitoring and evaluation support of the program. Of the \$1,750,000 allocated for the Economic Stability / Mobility Initiative, the City reserved \$160,000 for UMDI to perform these services.

The remaining \$1,590,000, approximately, will be awarded to EMPATH to implement its [proposed project](#)¹. Over the course of two years, EMPATH will support fifty low-income Newton families with intensive one-to-one Economic Mobility Coaching. In addition to the tailored coaching, EMPATH will provide each family with a monthly cash incentive (\$250) for active participation in the program. This monthly guaranteed cash payment will provide participants with greater economic stability as they receive economic mobility coaching. The cash will serve as an incentive to continue with the coaching, while providing participants with some essential breathing room necessary to take on their bigger goals.

¹ EMPATH proposed a project cost of \$1,583,568.

2) Of this total, how much will go directly to the 50 families in the form of the \$250 a month subsidy and how much will be paid to EMPATH?

Of the total amount to be awarded to EMPATH to implement their project (\$1,583,568), \$305,000 is reserved for the monthly cash incentives (\$250 / month for each actively enrolled family). The remaining budget categories include costs related to personnel, fringe benefits, recruitment, marketing, office equipment, and indirect / overhead costs.

3) Will any other city resources be used, directly or indirectly, for this program?

City staff will continue to contribute to the implementation of this project. Director of Planning & Development, Barney Heath; Commissioner of Health & Human Services, Linda Walsh; Director of Housing & Community Development, Amanda Berman; and Director of Social Services, Meghan Kennedy, have shepherded this project from the beginning and will continue to work with EMPATH, Ms. Citino of UMDI, the Mayor's Office, and appropriate community stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of this initiative.

4) Is there any commitment or expectation on the city's part to support this program beyond the initial two year period and, if so, what will be the source of those funds?

No, there is no commitment or expectation on the City's part to support this program beyond the program end date.

5) Is EMPATH contributing any of its own funds to this program?

For the most part, the program will be fully subsidized by Newton's ARPA funds (\$1,583,568); however, EMPATH will provide their own funding to active participants with additional cash incentives beyond the monthly program for successful goal completion across the two-year program. Each participant could earn up to \$700 per year. EMPATH anticipates approximately \$70,000 will be awarded to participants over the life of the program.

Also, during their two years in the program, Newton families will have access to work with EMPATH's own Career, Wellness, Finance, and Education Specialists on specific goals or areas of interest.

Lastly, participants of the Newton program will be eligible to join another EMPATH program to continue working with an EMPATH mentor beyond the two-year period of the Newton grant. The costs associated with these additional services beyond the life of the Newton program would be covered by EMPATH, not the City of Newton.

6) When can we expect to see the "monitoring and reporting timeline, define outcome measures, and implement a data collection plan."

UMDI has yet to begin its second phase of work on this project – the monitoring and evaluation phase. In the coming month and a half, when the contract is fully executed, Ms. Citino will begin to develop a monitoring a reporting timeline, collaborate with EMPATH to identify process and outcome

measures and a data collection plan, and develop reporting templates and submission process protocols. These deliverables should be finalized over the next six months; however, data collection processes will be refined along the way to address any gaps in information.

7) Who on the city side will be reviewing and evaluating the success of this program.

The internal project team (Director of Planning & Development, Barney Heath; Commissioner of Health & Human Services, Linda Walsh; Director of Housing & Community Development, Amanda Berman; and Director of Social Services, Meghan Kennedy) will continue to manage and evaluate the success of this program over the next few years. Additionally, the Mayor's Office will continue to play an important role in tracking the success of this initiative.