

COVID-19 funding

March 17, 2021

10:25 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Pollock, Commissioner Swope, County Manager Erik Martin, Becky Butler, Chris Panush, Meja Handlen, Mike Baum, Larry Grove, Arny Davis, Rodney Reynolds, Steve Wohld, Grace Jimenez, Suzette Smith

Guests: Edna J. Fund, Frank Corbin

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Becky Butler provided an overview of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act. She said the National Association of Counties (NACo) has created a web page for the ARP, which includes \$65.1 billion in direct, flexible aid to every county in America as well as other crucial investments in local community.

She said the ARP funds can be used for:

- Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Covering costs incurred from the public health emergency.
- Replacing lost, decreased, or delayed city revenues caused by the pandemic.
- Addressing the negative economic impacts on local businesses and nonprofits.
- Making necessary investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure.

Becky said the county will receive half of its allocation in May and half roughly 12 months later. She said all funds must be used by Dec. 31, 2024.

She said NACo has estimated that Lewis County will receive roughly \$15.6 million, plus a portion of an additional \$1.5 billion in 2022-23 because Lewis County receives Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) funding.

Becky said she is helping establish a special fund for the revenue: Special Revenue Fund 1420.

Becky said NACo has estimated the cities likely will receive roughly the following amounts:

- Chehalis: \$1.67 million
- Centralia: \$3.86 million
- Morton: \$260,000
- Mossyrock: \$180,000
- Napavine: \$440,000
- Pe Ell: \$150,000
- Toledo: \$170,000
- Winlock: \$311,000
- Vader: \$150,000

Richard DeBolt urged the county to be prepared with shovel-ready projects.

Meja Handlen discussed funding for rental assistance. Meja said the state is working on a program that would clear the way for possible evictions to help landlords whose tenants have chosen to decline repayment programs, etc.

The commissioners said they would like to use focused meetings to outline potential allocations.

Becky said the schools will receive substantial funding separate from the amounts the county and cities will receive.

Becky said the county could be considering hiring lobbyists to help seek funding for its specific projects.

Richard asked if the schools could use the money toward construction projects. Richard volunteered to help determine what state-level funding pots the county should focus on. Becky said the county could partner with the EDC.

Becky asked to permanently reclassify her vacant Budget Tech position to a financial analyst position. The commissioners approved the request.

Becky said the commissioners also will need to consider creating a temporary grants administrator position. Grace Jimenez said at least one grant administrator will be needed. The commissioners directed Becky to move forward with efforts regarding the grant administrator position.

The group using federal monies as a match for state grants and vice versa.

The group said they'll focus on infrastructure and crossover pots during their next meeting. The commissioners said they'd like to start meeting weekly.

Richard said the EDC's Economic Summit will be 1 to 5 p.m. May 6 at the Jester Auto Museum. He said he'd like the commissioners to provide a State of the County update during the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.