

Alton Police To Receive \$200,000 In ARPA Funds For “Homeless Services”

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
February 12 2024 8:32 PM



ALTON - The [Alton Committee of the Whole](#) on Monday voted 5-2 to preliminarily approve \$200,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds which will reportedly help the Alton Police Department assist the city's unhoused population with various services.

After much discussion between city officials, and an unsuccessful attempt to table the item, details about exactly where and how the money would be spent were still unclear moments before committee members were called on to vote.

The item appeared on Monday night's agenda as a resolution to authorize "the Disbursement of American Rescue Plan Act Funds in the amount of \$200,000.00 for priority projects within the City of Alton, Illinois." According to the resolution itself, this is "funding for homeless services" in the amount of \$200,000. The agenda item and resolution both contain no mention of the Alton Police Department, but Mayor David Goins said at the meeting that he requested the funds be given to the department.

"I requested that the \$200,000 be set aside to help assist the Police Department in helping the homeless in any manner they can, and I know Chief Ford can explain that in greater detail," Mayor Goins said.

Chief Ford said it's difficult to pinpoint exactly where and how the money will be spent at this time, because "everybody has different needs" - instead, he offered "general categories" of shelter, transportation, hygiene, and more. He added that the funds were for a term of two years and that "every single penny would be 100% tracked and go towards exactly what it's supposed to be going towards."

"It's going to greatly help all those that are living out here on our streets and suffering from mental illness and drug addiction and you name it," Chief Ford said of the \$200,000. "Our intention is to go out there and help as many people as we can."

Alderwoman Betsy Allen raised concerns that Alton isn't allocating this money to outside agencies as originally intended. Back in [December of 2022](#), Overnight Warming Center Operations Director Tyler Dreith asked the Alton City Council to consider allocating some of their ARPA funds towards addressing the issues of affordable housing and homelessness, because at the time, the city had not listed either issue as a "priority project" eligible for ARPA funding.

"I agree, infrastructure's important, we need HVAC systems, we need to keep these buildings warm, we need to keep the Police building warm - but we need to keep our own unsheltered guests warm as well, and right now we have zero dollars going towards the different organizations that are helping keep people alive," Dreith said at the time. "Without Overnight Warming Centers in Alton, people would be dying on the streets."

The city then [passed a resolution in April of 2023](#) which allocated up to \$1 million of ARPA funding to each of three categories: housing and homelessness, youth skills and development, and economic development. When that resolution was introduced by former Ward 7 Alderman Nate Keener, Chief Ford said at the time that it would be better to know what each category's projects would cost, then allocate the amounts accordingly.

“I just think if you’re going to allocate a certain number, maybe you should have a plan in place and see what that plan costs you before you actually put a dollar amount on these three pretty important topics,” Chief Ford said at the time.

At Monday night’s meeting, Alderman Raymond Strebel asked Mayor David Goins if any other organizations had submitted proposals for some form of homeless aid, to which the mayor replied that while there were other proposals, “some of them didn’t fall under the guidelines of ARPA.” He reassured Strebel that additional proposals would be presented to the council in the near future, but did not specify an exact date as Strebel had requested. He later indicated they would not be ready by their next meeting.

Chief Ford added that the police department will already be receiving a \$400,000 grant on March 1, 2024, which would “be good, but this extra \$200,000 actually makes it great.”

“I’m not here to pressure or rush it,” Ford said of the \$200,000 proposal. “You guys make your decision when you’re ready, but I just wanted to let you know that it’s going to start March 1 with the grant, and we’re going to go with or without this money, so it would just help greatly to assist people if we had it.”

Allen and Alderwoman Carolyn MacAfee voted against approving the ARPA funding, with all other committee members voting in favor. MacAfee unsuccessfully attempted to table the item after it had been passed - it now goes to the Alton City Council for final approval on Wednesday, Feb. 14, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

For additional context, see Riverbender.com’s previous coverage of this topic from [December 2022](#) and [April 2023](#). A full recording of the Feb. 12, 2024 Alton Committee of the Whole meeting is available at the top of this story, on the [Riverbender.com Facebook page](#), or on [Riverbender.com/video](#).