

August 31, 2021

Dear Members of the Montana Legislature:

I hope you have enjoyed a wonderful summer and that the interim committees are going well for you!

Before I begin, I urge you to check out our website [arpa.mt.gov](http://arpa.mt.gov). Not only can you find out what is happening with each Advisory Commission on our website, but you can also access a dashboard that shows a map of our state. Clicking on a county will display ARPA dollars in various programs that have been allocated to entities in that particular county. Also, anyone can submit comments and proposals on our website.

Here is a brief update on the activities of the four ARPA Advisory Commissions.

#### **Health Advisory Commission**

The Health Advisory Commission, chaired by HB 632 sponsor Rep. Frank Garner of Kalispell, has addressed a wide range of health and human services funding allocations. They have met five times since mid-May and have recommended to Governor Gianforte the approval of nearly \$350 million of ARPA funds for several programs and areas of identified need including the following: vaccinations, SNAP, TANF, WIC, child care, nursing homes, child abuse prevention, provider rates, family violence and disabled children. The list is longer than that, and you can find more details on our website – [arpa.mt.gov](http://arpa.mt.gov).

#### **Infrastructure Advisory Commission**

The Infrastructure Advisory Commission, chaired by Rep. Dan Bartel of Lewistown, met last week on August 26<sup>th</sup> and recommended to the Governor that 74 water and sewer projects should receive nearly \$125 million of competitive grants. Combining the awards from minimum allocation grants with the competitive grants results in a total of more than \$140 million of ARPA funding for local water and sewer projects. Details about these projects can be found on our [arpa.mt.gov](http://arpa.mt.gov) website or the DNRC website. To learn more about the competitive and minimum allocation grants, please review Sections 1-4 of HB 632.

#### **Economic Transformation, Stabilization and Workforce Development Advisory Commission**

So far, the Economic Transformation, Stabilization and Workforce Development Advisory Commission, chaired by Senate President Mark Blasdel of Kalispell, has recommended to the Governor for approval \$15 million for the Return-to-Work Bonus program, \$5 million for a mortgage assistance pilot project as part of a \$50 million program, and \$15 million for gap financing for affordable housing that will ensure construction of about 1,000 new living units. When this Advisory Commission meets next week on September 8<sup>th</sup>, it will consider workforce development proposals developed by the Department of Commerce, the Department of Labor and Industry, and the Department of Public Health and Human Services. You will be able to view those proposals on September 1<sup>st</sup> on the [arpa.mt.gov](http://arpa.mt.gov) website.

#### **Communications Advisory Commission**

The next meeting of the Communications Advisory Commission, chaired by the sponsor of SB 297 Sen. Jason Ellsworth of Hamilton, will be on September 14<sup>th</sup>. During that meeting, Vice Chair Misty Ann Giles, Director of the Department of Administration, will provide an update on the step-by-step process of preparing to embark on significantly improving the broadband connectivity of Montana, including a key

mapping project. Part of the presentation will be the introduction of the newly hired broadband project manager and attorney.

That's it for now. Our ARPA team continues to work with the four Advisory Commissions to distribute these ARPA funds for the good of all Montanans across our state.

Best Wishes!

Mike

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Director

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