



Summary Report
Community Listening Sessions & Survey
Penobscot County
American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
February 2022



LM Strategy LLC

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Overview

Penobscot County is receiving \$29.5 million in Federal ARPA funding. These funds are being paid in two installments of \$14.75 million in May 2021 and another \$14.75 million in May 2022. The Penobscot County Commissioners recognize these funds are a once in a generation opportunity, and a tax payer burden over time. The Commissioners sought input from people who live and/or work in Penobscot County to learn and share their perspective on how the ARPA funds should be invested.



Penobscot County hosted 10 listening sessions that over 100 people attended, not counting those that attended multiple sessions. The County also ran an online survey that 105 people took over the course of December 2021, January, and February 2022. An additional 43 paper copies of the survey were submitted. The County Commissioners also took direct testimony at their regularly scheduled weekly meetings. In addition, emails with testimony were sent to County staff throughout this time period. The purpose of this outreach was to allow as many local people as possible to: Understand the opportunity ARPA funds provide the region; envision a strong future for Penobscot County; share pressing community needs; and identify and prioritize opportunities for ARPA investment.



This report summarizes the listening sessions and survey. The listening sessions gathered input on what participants value in Penobscot County, what their vision is for the county in the next 5-10 years, what challenges are holding the county back, and how they believe the ARPA funds should be invested considering the regulatory limitations on their use.

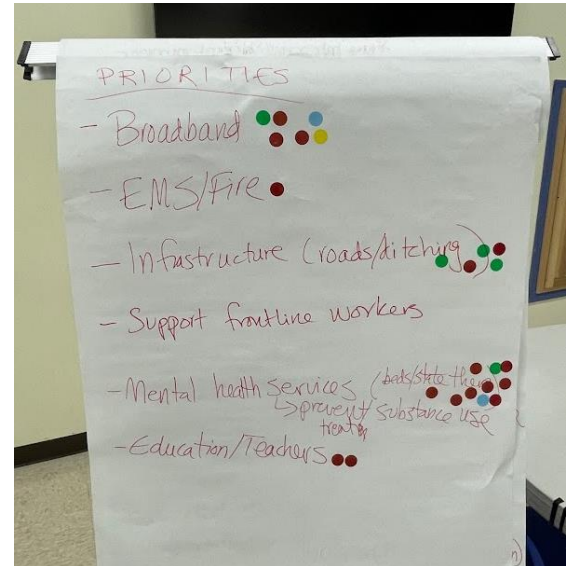
Locations of in person listening sessions covered the geography, population centers, and the three County Commissioner regions. Sessions were held at municipal sites and offered in towns that had availability to host. Additional virtual sessions allowed for participation from anywhere in Penobscot County. Listening sessions were held at different times and during weekdays and weekends to accommodate as many schedules as possible. Listening sessions were located in each County Commissioner District. District one: Brewer, Bangor (switched to virtual due to weather). District two: Dexter, Newport. District three: Old Town, Lincoln and E. Millinocket.



Executive Summary: Priority Investments and Vision

Based on input at all the listening sessions, the recommended priority categories for Penobscot County ARPA fund investment are as follows. More details and suggested guiding principles for investment are later in this report. The County's online survey responses support these findings as well.

1. Housing
2. Mental health and substance use disorder services
3. Broadband
4. Jail rehabilitation and space for services such as mental health care and substance use disorder treatment
5. Transportation
6. Infrastructure
7. Emergency response services
8. Education and training



Vision: Build your future, find your forever in Penobscot County. Welcome to the lifestyle you've imagined, for you and your family. Nationally ranked higher education and public schools. Careers in health care, software, creative, finance, manufacturing, and scientific work on tap. Broadband anywhere to work at home. On a crystal-clear lake, the knife's edge of Mount Katahdin, or in an urban condo with arts and nightlife at your doorstep. A community that cares and supports you. Find it all along the shores of the Penobscot River.

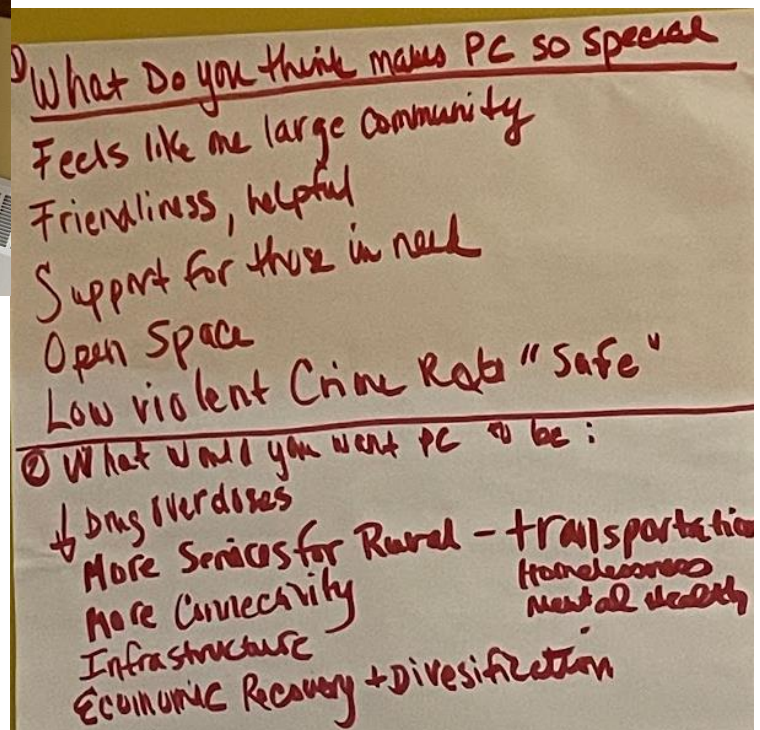
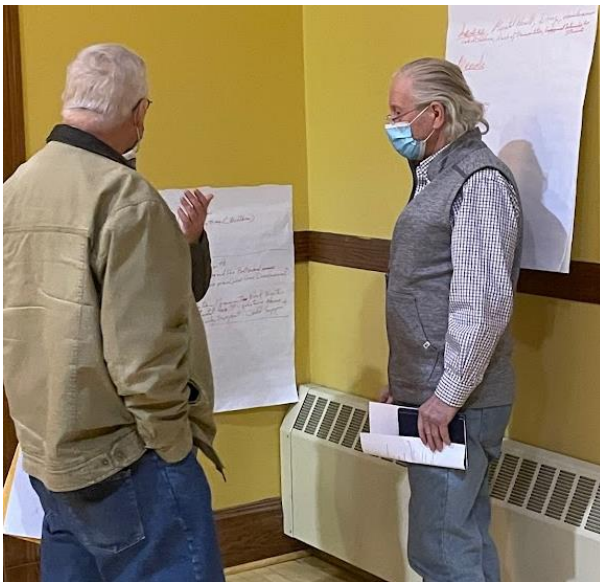


Summary of all Listening Sessions

The following summarizes key themes from all 10 listening sessions and the survey. Details of survey responses and notes from each session are included starting on page 11.

VALUES: What do you find most special, or value the most, about Penobscot County?

- Quality of life and a safe place to live.
- Opportunities for work and economic success.
- Natural beauty and natural resources. Water quality of Penobscot River improved.
- The people. Everyone has something to offer. People are caring and support others in need.
- City services (health care, arts, shopping, restaurants, etc.) and rural lifestyle so close together.
- Great place to raise your children.
- The sense of community and opportunity to get involved.
- Preserve the character and history here – lumber, maritime.
- Diversity across the whole county from Katahdin Woods and Waters through to Bangor and Newport.
Variety of communities. Good collaboration.



VISION: What do you envision for Penobscot County in the next 5-10 years?

- a. Penobscot County is known as the best place to live. Quality of life with education and careers, and quality of place with abundant recreation in nature are found here. There are educational opportunities, employment and homes to support families and build wealth. The County promotes livable, welcoming communities that proactively embrace diversity and population growth.
- b. Sustainable economic prosperity flows throughout the whole county. Penobscot County is the location of choice for businesses and remote workers. The region has innovated into new sectors of the economy and embraced broadband. There is access to diverse and stable employment based here or remotely. All residents can meet their full potential and support thriving communities.
- c. Former mill sites are hubs for employment and training. The mass timber industry reinvigorates the economy of the north woods. High schools and higher education institutions connect their programs to local employment opportunities with degrees, internships and mentoring that encourages youth to work and build roots in Penobscot County. The whole county has the housing, workforce, broadband, and infrastructure for a prosperous, diverse economy. Manufacturing and production of value-added goods supports a diverse economy.
- d. Housing availability and affordability is seen as essential for the County's success. Housing for all incomes is part of the infrastructure to build a diverse workforce, increase growth, and provide economic prosperity for all. New housing development along with rehabbing empty buildings, and embracing innovative tiny homes and motel conversions abound. The whole region has the options and supports to provide safety, security, and stability to all people living in and moving to Penobscot County.
- e. Penobscot County has a ready workforce for today and tomorrow's economy. Residents are choosing to upskill at all ages, with easy access to training. Trades are shared as a career path and education in these fields are easily accessible. State and federal licensing allows National Guard training to be certifiable for civilian jobs – nursing, truck driver, etc.
- f. Critical infrastructure is reliable, consistently maintained, environmentally conscious, and well preserved. Roads, water treatment facilities, sidewalks, and utilities are seen as the foundation for prosperity and development. Public and private transportation opportunities allow for access to services, essentials, and employment for all as needed. Trails and sidewalks promote a walkable, bikeable commute for all.
- g. Access to affordable health care, support for mental health, and substance use disorder is widely available across the region. There is "no wrong door" access to find these services. Substance use and overdoses are rare. People struggling with substance use disorder and behavioral health are embraced with holistic supports to shepherd them to health. Housing, health care, and transportation options provide equitable standards of living that reduce the level of trauma our region has seen from generational poverty, substance use, violence, and incarceration.

"Penobscot County innovates, providing a chance for its residents to work and live in the heart of Maine's beautiful countryside."

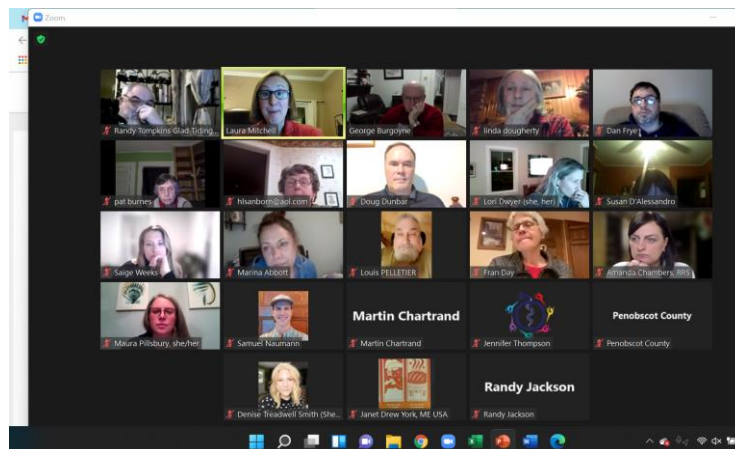
- h. People feel safe and there is the capacity to deter crime. Emergency services and law enforcement are supported in their ability to recruit an effective workforce and have the vehicles for fast response times and safe communities. The jail has space so local law enforcement can arrest people engaged in criminal activity. For people that are incarcerated, there is a path to recovery and reform for a productive reentry to the community. Health care, education, and work are made available to those in the jail system. The courts provide a speedy and efficient process for moving people through the criminal justice system.
- i. Penobscot County's environmental health is a priority. The region is collaboratively addressing climate change and maintaining natural resources in ways that creates jobs and builds a sustainable future. The region leverages innovation and green energy such as solar and wind. Communities bolster existing infrastructure with weatherization and upgrades to reduce electricity, heating and other costs. Penobscot County understands the impacts of forever chemicals (such as PFAS and others to come) and is prepared to reduce and address their impact on the environment. Effective, long-term disposal and recycling exists for all manner of waste such as wastewater, sludge and more. The region and state advocate for local and national clean air regulations so Maine doesn't experience the impacts of being the "tailpipe of the country" that soils Maine's air, streams and lakes.
- j. Regional, collaborative approaches and connections exist up and down the Penobscot River including the Penobscot Nation. Communities are thriving using this collective approach. Regional EMS response is the norm. One shared community group coordinates and facilitates all the connections and resources.
- k. Penobscot County is a place where young people, working professionals, families, and retirees choose to work, go to school and call their home. Superior schools recruit highly rated teachers. Youth raised here are thriving, resilient, and primed for life. Youth are busy with activities for fitness, education and fun. They are making smart choices for their future. Young adults raised in Maine choose Penobscot County to work and build roots. Families and youth support a thriving local business community including bowling alleys, coffee shops, movies, recreation programs, and restaurants. A vibrant lifestyle with nightlife, culture and the arts attracts and keeps a young population and families.



Orono Middle School

CHALLENGES/BARRIERS: What concerns you in Penobscot County? What could get in the way of your vision?

- a. Declining economic prosperity throughout the county outside of a few pockets leading to symptoms of mental health and substance use.
- b. Lack of mental health support services and high levels of youth and adult behavioral health issues including substance use. Staffing these vital support services is challenging as reimbursement rates are flat, so wages are no longer competitive.
- c. Communities, services, and solutions are siloed. We need to work together and make sure people don't get turned away when they seek help. Stigma impacts people accessing these services.
- d. Healthcare access and insurance coverage inequity, particularly for mental health and substance use disorder
- e. It takes a long time to build stability from the ground up from trauma, generational poverty, violence, incarceration, homelessness, or addiction. Can't criminalize the process of ups and downs of recovery.
- f. The trauma from history of indigenous people and the Penobscot Nation is here.
- g. Availability and accessibility of drugs.
- h. Lack of quality jobs that can support a family
- i. Workforce shortage. Need to upskill workforce so they are trained for living wage jobs. This will impact the safety of our communities because EMS (PD and Fire) are struggling to find staff or are volunteer run throughout the county. Need staffing, regionalization and capital investments for EMS.
- j. Spread out geography and desire for local control. Need to think regionally.
- k. Parents are struggling. Lack of childcare. Benefit cliff stops people when they try to move forward to independence.
- l. Youth wellbeing with highest rates of mental health challenges, low fitness levels for active careers, pandemic education losses, and lack of workforce readiness.
- m. Cost of living is high. Unaffordable, aging housing stock, and aging infrastructure (sewer/water/roads). High cost of electricity.
- n. The "two Maines" line between northern and southern areas goes through Penobscot County in the Bangor region. Rural access to services is lacking.
- o. Small population. Gap between wealthy and poor.
- p. This is one-time money. Need long-term plan for sustainability and impact of these funds.
- q. Need to coordinate and organize everything going on. Collaboration can be challenging.
- r. Tax revenue has decreased (loss of mills, etc.)
- s. Lack of broadband. Most of the county isn't connected so people won't move here to work remotely.
- t. Lack of transportation. Local and intercity.





INVESTMENT GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- a. Focus on opportunities that will have a lasting impact
- b. Invest in our people as our key infrastructure for multi-generational impact
- c. Rewrite the narrative of our region as the best place to live
- d. Support economic prosperity and this will reduce needs in other areas
- e. Support innovative approaches and local programs to address our long-term challenges
- f. Regional collaboration in planning, ongoing work, and investments
- g. Bring together local expertise to share solutions in the priority investment areas
- h. Ensure whole county and rural areas are supported
- i. Funds are a one-time investment so don't create future tax demands.
- j. Include social work, diversion and restorative justice in law enforcement philosophy. Jail is not the solution.
- k. Transparent and equitable process

"We need to spend this money on the human infrastructure and support the families and communities to overcome our serious issues."

"Investing in projects with rippling, long term impacts not short-term one-time expenditures. Investing in innovation and new approaches to problem solving. Multi-community projects to address common interests."

"Develop regional collaboration of elected officials, economic development staff and citizens. Address issues all communities have in common - resiliency to climate change, addressing mental health, housing for all, training our workforce, energy efficient buildings."

"Our students lack the opportunities their peers in southern Maine have. Business internships and college tuition support. Connect our youth to potential careers, develop relationships with future employers, and be sure that the students are prepared to fill workforce shortages."

"The jail is often where people end up when they are unhoused, experiencing mental illness, or have substance use disorders. Our communities would be better served by addressing the problems that land people in jail. Invest at least 50% of funds in housing, mental health care, and treatment for substance use disorder- three big areas that people who have been incarcerated say they needed help with at the time they were jailed."

INVESTMENT PRIORITIES (Listed in priority order):

- A. **Housing development** for all incomes and needs: supportive housing with wrap around services, transitional/permanent housing for the unsheltered, affordable housing, public housing tied to upskill training and employment participation, workforce housing for all incomes to fill and attract professionals, remote workers, families. Start with a housing first approach with low barrier access as the foundation for any further stability/success. Need to provide continuum of support through transition to independence.

Respondents to the County's ARPA survey ranked "Affordable Housing" and "Housing the Homeless" as the top two most important areas to support for those least able to recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic. Survey respondents also rated "Services to support those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic" as the most important way that ARPA funds could be invested.

- B. **Mental health and substance use disorder services** that address multi-generational trauma and violence.
- i. Crisis stabilization unit, rural mobile crisis intervention, social work response with police.
 - ii. Need more beds for mental health needs in rural hospitals and at Dorothea Dix.
 - iii. Support evidence-based programs. Youth prevention, early intervention, and diversion. PACE program.
 - iv. Need this holistic, root-cause approach to can help keep people out of jail: pre-booking diversion, drug court.

The County's survey asked what potential ARPA public health investments were most important. Respondents prioritized mental health and substance use disorder. The survey results ranked "Support for nonprofit organizations" as the top priority for addressing the negative economic impacts from the pandemic. Survey respondents also said that "Services to support those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic" was the most important way that ARPA funds could be invested.

- C. **Broadband** as foundational infrastructure for education, employment and health care. *(This was important at all sessions. At some sessions people believed there were other funding sources to cover it so it was assumed to be taken care of. That was not the case at all sessions and it was prioritized as essential.)* County needs to seed and co-invest with other funders in broadband so build out is county-wide and equitable in more rural areas. Truly addresses impact of pandemic. Drives economic prosperity for all, increases taxes and wages.

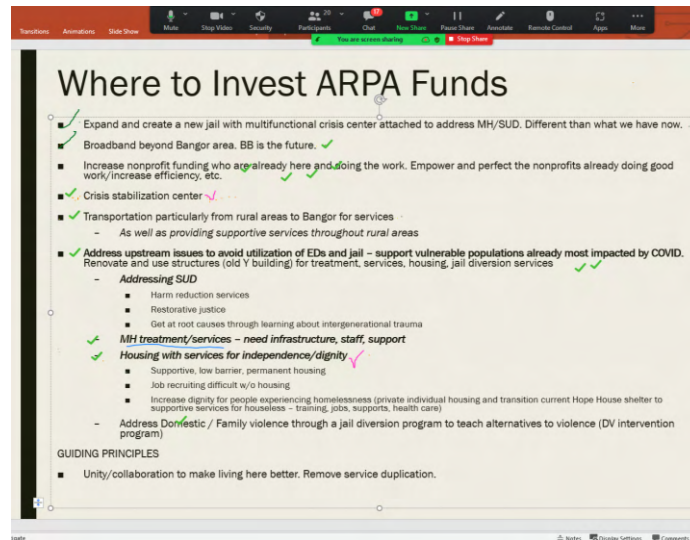
"The state is in the midst of a population influx. People are choosing to move to areas that have broadband where you can work from home. Throughout most of Penobscot County you cannot work remotely due to lack of broadband. All the other issues we are seeing are because of Penobscot County's economic decline (e.g. mill closings, wages, and the businesses they supported). Broadband can make Penobscot County match up to other areas as a place to live and host businesses. Broadband will increase tax base and wages."

- D. **Jail rehabilitation and space for mental health and substance use disorder treatment, diversion and restorative justice options.** Availability of space is impacting town's ability to arrest people as a crime deterrent and prevention measure. Systemic changes needed to address short and long-term costs for transportation, boarding, and overcrowding.

- E. **Infrastructure** as the foundation for all development, growth, sustainability, or tourism – roads, road ditching, wastewater, etc.
- F. **Transportation**, particularly in rural areas and to services in central areas. Rail for freight.
- G. **Emergency response services (fire, medical and law enforcement)**. Capital investment and staffing, particularly in rural areas. Helps everyone.
- H. **Education and training** opportunities for all ages and careers in need. Train and attract the best teachers. Youth trades education, mentoring at local businesses, internships. Catch up at school from the pandemic. Provide stipends for undergraduate students to do research in needed areas for work readiness. Childcare and early education for long-term impact.

Survey respondents ranked “Job Training” as the second most important way to address the negative economic impacts of the pandemic. Survey respondents rated “Services to support those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic” as the most important way to invest ARPA funds. Respondents also ranked services for those “least able to recover from the economic impacts” of the pandemic at the top. Beyond affordable housing and housing the homeless, the third most important investment was “Early Childhood Education / Childcare”.

- I. *(Suggested recommendation that wasn’t necessarily tied to funding)* **Regional group of all towns to foster collaboration** and address the cross-border issues of economic development, housing, mental health, and workforce. Need synergy so money is leveraged effectively and innovatively.



Where to Invest ARPA Funds

- Expand and create a new jail with multifunctional crisis center attached to address MH/SUD. Different than what we have now.
- Broadband beyond Bangor area. BB is the future.
- Increase nonprofit funding who are already here and doing the work. Empower and perfect the nonprofits already doing good work/increase efficiency, etc.
- Crisis stabilization center
- Transportation particularly from rural areas to Bangor for services
 - As well as providing supportive services throughout rural areas
- Address upstream issues to avoid utilization of EDs and jail – support vulnerable populations already most impacted by COVID. Renovate and use structures (old Y building) for treatment, services, housing, jail diversion services
 - Addressing SUD
 - Harm reduction services
 - Restorative justice
 - Get at root causes through learning about intergenerational trauma
 - MH treatment/services – need infrastructure, staff, support
 - Housing with services for independence/dignity
 - Supportive, low barrier, permanent housing
 - Job recruiting difficult w/o housing
 - Increase dignity for people experiencing homelessness (private individual housing and transition current Hope House shelter to supportive services for homeless – training, jobs, supports, health care)
 - Address Domestic / Family violence through a jail diversion program to teach alternatives to violence (DV intervention program)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Unity/collaboration to make living here better. Remove service duplication.

Penobscot County ARPA Eligible Funding Categories Survey

The following survey was run online and printed copies were made available at Listening Sessions for attendees to complete. A summary of the online survey that 105 people took is provided by Survey Planet. Another 43 surveys were completed by listening session attendees. A summary of those 148 responses is as follows:

1. *The first broad category this money could be directed toward is Public Health. This category covers lots of different uses. Please mark these uses within Public Health that matter most to you. You may choose up to 4.*

<input type="checkbox"/> Substance Use Disorder Services	(88 votes)	#2
<input type="checkbox"/> Covid Vaccination and Testing	(40 votes)	#4
<input type="checkbox"/> Covid Prevention in close settings	(23 votes)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Capital investment to make Public Settings safer	(46 votes)	#3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Intervention Services	(108 votes)	#1
<input type="checkbox"/> None of these are important to me	(15 votes)	

2. *Covid has had negative economic impacts on our community. This is one of the areas that ARPA funding can be spent. Which of these do you think is most important in this area? You may choose up to 3.*

<input type="checkbox"/> Job Training	(73 votes)	#2
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Aid to Nonprofit Organizations	(85 votes)	#1
<input type="checkbox"/> General Small Business Economic Assistance	(71 votes)	#3
<input type="checkbox"/> Aid to Tourism, Travel, or Hospitality	(28 votes)	
<input type="checkbox"/> None of these are important to me	(14 votes)	

3. *In many cases, Covid affected those least able to recover from the economic impacts. Thinking about that group of people, which of these are important to you? You may choose up to 3.*

<input type="checkbox"/> Housing the Homeless	(92 votes)	#2
<input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education/ Child Care	(85 votes)	#3
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Healthcare Workers or Benefits Navigators	(43 votes)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Affordable Housing	(99 votes)	#1
<input type="checkbox"/> None of these are important to me	(13 votes)	

4. *Of these three areas which is the most important to you? Please choose one.*

<input type="radio"/> Public Health	(44 votes)	
<input type="radio"/> Negative Economic Impacts	(37 votes)	
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Services to Disproportionally Impacted Communities	(62 votes)	#1
<input type="radio"/> None of these are important to me	(6 votes)	

5. *What Penobscot County town do you reside in?* _____

6. *Is there anything else you'd like us to know?* _____

The results of the paper survey had the same priorities as the online survey results. Paper surveys were completed by residents from Dexter (16), Lincoln and surrounding towns (11), Brewer (2), East Millinocket and Millinocket (10), Bradley (2), and Veazie (1).

Dexter Listening Session Notes – 19 people in attendance at Dexter Town Hall, Dec. 14, 2021

VALUES/MOST SPECIAL

- Small, rural nature. Lake.
- Outdoor recreation, on Moosehead Trail
- People care about each other
- Family/kid oriented
- Opportunity for community involvement

VISION

- Sustainable economic growth and jobs. Need broadband for this. No people or jobs will exist without broadband.
- 4 season recreation area (rail bed house moved for snowmobile club)
- Affordable housing
- Solar panel array to reduce electricity prices
- Weatherization to mitigate heating costs

CHALLENGES

- Need childcare
- Reduce crime
- Need for nightlife to attract and keep younger generations
- Lack of space for youth recreation activities

INVEST ARPA IN (Listed in priority order)

- Broadband. Affordable for all.
- Youth recreation/meeting space in the downstairs of the town hall
- Help mental health for all
- Solar panels and incentives for them to be used more
- Rebates/free weatherization
- Airport investment. There is 3 phase power there for solar array
- Move snowmobile club to IPS trail
- Improve lake/beach area providing infrastructure of water/sewer/electricity for campers

Guiding Principles

- Invest in projects that don't need future tax dollars

Bangor Zoom Listening Session Notes – 45 people in attendance, Jan. 5, 2022

VALUES/MOST SPECIAL

- People
- Education opportunities
- Walkable/trails/Natural beauty
- Diverse economy
- Cultural assets
- Support people in need

VISION

- Promote a livable and welcoming community / Shift the narrative – Penobscot County best place to live.
- Strong workforce. Encourage trades careers.
- Healthy, resilient, youth ready for life. Young people bring their higher education to the workforce and raise their families here.
- Community comes together to end homelessness, overdoses and suicides. We are a model for other communities. We lead in reversing poverty, homelessness and diseases of despair. Root causes of problems identified and addressed. Need space for healing.
- Housing for all. Employment for all. Broadband for all.
- Medical services available for all
- Residents return to education and are paying off loans
- County is taking innovative approaches and taking risks
- Regional approaches to the issues
 - o Towns along Penobscot River are thriving and taking the lead on climate change that will create jobs, build green housing, energy efficiency, solar energy. Think connection along the river.
- Proactively create diversity and bring people to the region
- Economy thriving
- Better infrastructure
- No wrong door access to services
- More equity and less trauma from generational substance use, violence, and incarceration

CHALLENGES

- Lack of housing, particularly affordable of housing (for most incomes). Need more sober housing. No vacancies so there's a gap in availability of rent vouchers, but no apartments for them. Need more public housing
- Takes a long time to build stability from the ground up (homelessness, generational poverty, recovery). Need low barrier housing, no benefit cliff until full stability/independence. Can't criminalize ups and downs of recovery
- Little medical coverage for affordable care, unequal access to: counseling, substance use disorder treatment, and mental health
- Services are siloed, and people get turned away
- Gap between wealthy and poor
- Lack of career jobs that pay a living wage
- Lack of regional collaboration
- Long term impact of criminal record. Need to expunge records
- Reimbursement for services are flat so positions are hard to fill and services are hard to access

Bangor Zoom Listening Session Continued – Jan. 5, 2022

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Take innovative approaches.
- Take risks
- Rewrite the narrative of our region
- Don't invest in the jail
- Keep in mind how large and diverse Penobscot County is. There are a lot of areas of need.

INVEST ARPA IN (Listed in priority order)

- Housing with wrap around services for mental health, workforce development, trauma, substance use disorder, etc.
 - o Housing first as the foundation for any further stability/security/success and provide continuum of support through transition to independence
 - o Public housing tied to training programs/skill up and job prep
 - o Turn empty homes into permanent homes
- Support agencies that provide services / Trauma response
 - o Support evidence based programs now that need support
 - o Address increased domestic violence issues
 - o Address mental health in and out of the jail / Trauma is community wide
 - o Take holistic approach – issues are so interconnected. Address root causes.
 - o Trauma informed care training for all staff
 - o Make mental health addiction services more available
 - o Penobscot Nation and indigenous people's experience adds to trauma in our region
 - o Keep people out of jail through prebooking diversion, drug court, crisis unit/intervention
- Broadband to attract people and jobs (*prioritized here because people assumed funding was available elsewhere for this*)
 - o Pay for education
 - o Incentivize people to take helping jobs
- Development of collaborative group of all the towns so all towns are supported
 - o Foster multi-community collaboration on issues (no pocket investment). Need synergy for money to work together and innovatively.
- Rural transportation to access services

Zoom Listening Session Notes – 22 people and 1 commissioner, Jan. 8, 2022

VALUES/MOST SPECIAL

- Want to preserve the character here
- Beautiful
- People dedicated to their communities
- Diverse career opportunities
- History of lumber and shipping capital and renowned for manufacturing
- Proximity to medical services and help
- Challenging times economically

VISION

- Bring back forest products industry. Mass timber in Norther Penobscot County.
- More housing. Everyone deserves housing.
- Penobscot County has found a supportive, innovative way to help all their residents meet their full potential
- Coordinate investments across towns and counties
- Broadband / Fiber optic infrastructure. County needs to seed investments in broadband. County is needed to co-invest. Increase availability of internet/remote jobs
- Entire county has a more prosperous economy
- Renovate jail and add services so people can transition back to society
- Launch large engineering firm that builds parts for large structure (ship pieces down the river)
- Invest in childcare/early childhood education
- Need more job opportunities and training for all abilities (expand trades training)
- Address workforce shortages. Lift up people on the margins.
- Better system of referrals from jail to recovery residences
- Need more services to help with substance use: detox, recovery residences

CHALLENGES

- Lack of collaboration/coordination across county, town, cities and across organizations trying to help
- These are one-time funds
- Mental health treatment shouldn't be a city/county funded issue. This is an issue the state should be funding.
- Not having broadband impacts every aspect of people's lives. Need to fix this to address impact of pandemic. Addresses telehealth, housing, education, work. Will have a tangible impact helping people.
- Need to invest in people so people perceive their community as good and just.
- Stigma/pigeon hole people. Makes it difficult to access help for poverty, mental health or substance use disorder
- Need implementation plan for crisis services

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Invest in our people. Recovery and bringing back their independence and integrity. Will have multigenerational impact.
- Collaborate across county and towns on where things are invested to avoid duplication
- Don't fund programs that require ongoing investment
- Prioritize creating opportunities for the citizens prosperity. Would reduce need for funding in other areas.

Zoom Listening Session Continued - Jan. 8, 2022

INVEST ARPA IN (List in Priority Order)

- Housing with wrap around support services.
- Crisis stabilization unit
- Treatment for mental health and substance use disorder
- Broadband: A 10% increase in internet connectivity translates to 1.2% increase in GDP in developed countries. (source: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2021/08/18/the-benefits-and-costs-of-broadband-expansion/>)
 - o Address impacts of pandemic by providing broadband. Meets telehealth, housing (apply for units, mortgage, search for listings, etc), education, work. Will have a tangible impact helping people.
 - o Can't assume broadband will be covered elsewhere. This is critical
- Childcare/Daycare/Afterschool Care
 - o Investment in Early Childhood Education is an investment in the future. Many childcares have closed during the pandemic or can't find workers because they can't compete with wages and benefits of business. Average wage is \$12.99 per hour. Partnerships between schools and childcare is one way ARPA funds can be spent.
- Mass timber

Newport Listening Session Notes – 1 person, 1 Commissioner in attendance at Newport Town Hall, Jan. 11, 2022

Due to the low attendance at this session, the normal structure of a listening session was not followed. The individual completed the survey and we had a conversation. Some general themes shared were:

VALUES/MOST SPECIAL

- Natural resources
- The people

VISION

- Regional approach to emergency/essential services
- Affordable housing
- More jobs/economic growth
- Broadband connectivity

CHALLENGES

- Staffing emergency/essential services
- Substance use
- Youth wellbeing and engagement leading into lack of workforce readiness
- Mental health
- Poverty

INVEST ARPA IN *(Not in priority order and includes guiding principles)*

- Support for essential services and the jail is important
- Housing
- Invest throughout the county
- Regional approaches
- Need long-term impact

Old Town Listening Session Notes – 5 people and 1 commissioner in attendance at Old Town City Hall, Jan. 12, 2022

VALUES/MOST SPECIAL

- The way life should be
- Great place to live if you are well off
- People are friendly, kind, resilient, invested in their community, and have a strong work ethic
- Long history including Penobscot Nation
- Low crime/safe
- Natural beauty/resources/clean water
- Great place to raise kids – educational opportunities, including higher education
- Lots of available services
- Hospitals
- Law enforcement

VISION

- Broadband for all will reinvigorate the economy
- Penobscot County can match up to other places as a host to their business/home for remote work. Broadband, workforce and housing for all incomes.
- Grow viability of county's communities outside Bangor with broadband that provides economic and educational opportunity.
- Quality of life includes being able to work here. We have quality of place, but if you can't work here and support your family, the issues won't go away.
- The state is in the midst of a population influx and people are moving into areas where you can work from home. Penobscot County mostly is NOT where you can work remotely due to lack of broadband. Broadband expansion will increase tax base and wages that will support local home improvement and spending. Employees at local organizations are taking remote jobs and staying here making out of state pay.
- Keep youth out of detention and into diversion programs. Identify risks early.
- All schools in the county have good ventilation so kids can stay in school

CHALLENGES

- Issues we are seeing now (mental health, substance use) are a symptom of Penobscot County's declining economic opportunity. (Mill closings, etc.)

INVEST ARPA IN (In priority order)

- Broadband
 - o Need local funds for access to broadband funding
 - o Profitability of build out only works for dense areas. This leaves out large areas of the rural community even in the City of Old Town. Need to incentivize full build out.
- Programs to address mental health and substance use disorder and keep people out of jail
 - o Youth prevention is critical
 - o Use restitution processes for youth in jail
 - o Penobscot PACE program works
 - o Use Dorothea Dix as jail alternative
 - o Don't invest in expanding the jail. State will continue to fine for overcrowding regardless of new facility

E. Millinocket Listening Session Notes – 12 people in attendance at E. Millinocket Town Hall, Jan. 19, 2022

VALUES/MOST SPECIAL

- Natural resources and open space
- Quality of life/safety. Rural nature of Northern Penobscot County.
 - o Still have access to vibrant city in Bangor (duality of the county)
- People are friendly, helpful, and care about and support each other
- Opportunities for work and economic success

VISION

- Economic growth with broadband access throughout the region allowing for diverse and stable employment opportunities
- Quality infrastructure: roads, bridges, airports
- Regional approach to mental health, childcare, substance use disorder and family supports around E. Millinocket/Millinocket/Medway
- Quality of life that supports young working families so they can succeed and thrive. This means quality childcare, education, arts and support for youth
- More arts
- Reduce drug overdoses
- Root cause is poverty. Need economic growth.
- Increase transportation and services to address poverty

CHALLENGES

- Need to upskill workers for this economy and to address the underlying poverty and wellbeing of community members
- Need long term plan for sustainability/impact of these funds
- Lack of childcare
- EMS services (PD and Fire) are struggling throughout the county. Need staffing, regionalization, and capital investments.
- Lack of regional approach to essential services
- Lack of rural access to health care, mental health and substance use disorder services
- Housing isn't affordable
- High cost of electricity

INVEST ARPA IN (Listed in priority order)

- Service to address mental health crises with social work response. Ride along social worker with police for the region (\$180k for 2 years). Mobile crisis unit in N Penobscot County. Could reduce EMS needs, keep people local and out of jail. Expand hospital beds available for mental health response
- Infrastructure and capital investments to prepare for increased tourism with Katahdin Woods and Waters and Baxter State Park (roads, regional ambulance and PD (N. Penobscot and covers Aroostook))
- Broadband
- Mentorship opportunities for high school kids
- Support for families so kids can get back into school after the pandemic and succeed
- Transportation between 3 area towns
- Homeless shelter

Zoom Session – 5 people, Jan. 27, 2022

VALUES

- Rural character and access to city services. Have both kinds of experience.
- Diversity of county (Katahdin Woods and Waters to Newport and Bangor), politics, socioeconomic.
- Variety of communities.
- Good collaboration.
- People. Everyone has something to offer.

VISION

- Roads/ditches/Department of Transportation realm are very important. People need to be able to get around in efficient ways. Infrastructure not taken care of for the last 20 years.
- Want the whole county doing well (mill towns – Lincoln, Millinocket), aqua farm in Bucksport (out of county), but Bangor needs the whole county to do well to succeed.
- Broadband is a growth opportunity for the county.
- It's a booming economy and we have new jobs available. The things that used to exist that we've hung onto and we can have new and improved things coming in with broadband.
- Want "10,000 people moved to Penobscot County and poverty rate dropped."
- Housing: The ability to house new people coming in and do it efficiently and throughout the whole area. All of Penobscot County has housing. Housing to address poverty

BARRIERS

- We all need to work together on the same page in our communities. We are all separate, but need to be together. Need look at local task force for local economic development.
- Homeless issue.
- Ability to employ enough county and state resources. E.g. sheriff's office. Bradley relies on county for this. County having difficulty staffing these positions. If Penobscot County can move ahead, we need to be able to staff the positions and staff the fire/ambulance rather than volunteers.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Group of economic development professionals / experts collaborate to share what is most needed. Look at overall health of Penobscot County and how to invest any funds.
- See county funds leveraged and coordinated with City of Bangor's ARPA investments. Shared investment in broadband and partner and leverage more money for those towns. Can't be ongoing programs. One shot deal with a big impact – look around the country at innovative ways.

INVESTMENT PRIORITIES (Listed in priority order)

- Housing (affordable housing, homelessness, supportive housing)
- Jail renovation with expanded health services (MH, MAT, SUD)
- Broadband
- Infrastructure/roads
- EMS ambulance / fire. Help local fire depts, ambulance service, sheriffs. Will benefit all of the population. EMS support is crumbling. Support these services so smaller communities have this support.
- Training to support workers in needed fields (nurses, mental health).
- Mental health services (support for SUD recovery/reduce overdoses)

Lincoln Listening Session Notes – 12 people in attendance at Northern Penobscot Technical Center, Feb 2, 2022

VALUES/MOST SPECIAL

- Home by choice
- Work is here
- Nature/Natural resources/Beauty
- The people and the close-knit communities
- Quality of life

VISION

- No more COVID
- Housing for all
- Economic stability and job growth: better infrastructure, streets, sidewalks, utilities, broadband
- Controlled utility costs
- Superior educational opportunities for all ages
- Maintain environment/lakes/natural resources ensuring shoreland quality
- Maintain and expand access to medical care: hospital (keep it open), Health Access Network)
- State support to address poverty in Penobscot, Washington, Piscataquis and Aroostook County (cost of energy and taxes)
- Lincoln mill is a training and employment center (classes by EMCC)
- UMaine expand training for jobs so businesses will invest here
- Improve work ethic of youth and focus on education, family, and faith as drug use prevention with robust criminal justice response support. This is vital for the success of your workforce.
- Allow licensing of National Guard training to qualify for civilian jobs (truck driver, nurse, etc.)
- School choice: home/parochial/public with tax investment
- Need to have capacity to deter crime (drug dealing, domestic violence). Penalty for crime of jail time is lacking because there is no jail space so police can't arrest people.

CHALLENGES

- There are two Maines from North to South. The divide happens in Penobscot County. Lincoln is in N. Maine.
- Lack of mental health services and space at the hospital for help
- Local access to higher education (UMaine and technical college are too far away)
- Lack of higher income jobs that can support families
- Parents are struggling to make ends meet and this is impacting our youth. The benefit cliff from working jobs below a living wage job cutting off other supports is challenging and disincentives moving forward.
- Low population
- Limited transportation (local and intercity)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Set community priorities for the future (in each town and regionally)
- Highest and best use for the benefit of everyone
- Equitable transparent process for investing
- Political impasse of party over people in Augusta
- Need to think regionally

Lincoln Session continued – Feb. 2, 2022

INVEST ARPA IN (Listed in priority order)

- Mental health services (prevent and treat substance use). Need beds and state involvement.
- Broadband
- Infrastructure so it's a community of choice for business (sidewalk, roads, road side ditching, utilities)
- Education/teachers, so we can attract the best teachers (trades and more)
- Safety and services (EMS/PD). Support frontline workers. Train frontline workers. (PPE, vehicles, education, equipment). Training academies are closed. Need EMCC to train and offer education locally.

Brewer Listening Session Notes – 4 people in attendance at Brewer Community Center, Feb. 8, 2022

VALUES/MOST SPECIAL

- Sense of community. Good for kids and families. People care about one another.
- Bangor draws people as service center and tries to help them with services
- History and beauty of architecture in Bangor (need to renew this)
- Quality of life
- Water quality in Penobscot River (improved), more accessible for recreation

VISION

- People are safe and there is a deterrent to crime of being arrested. Addition to jail that will offset costs of boarding and transporting people that have been arrested to other facilities because the PCJ census is well over the limit. Brewer and Lincoln are struggling because they can't arrest everyone they need to due to the lack of space and the jail. This means there is no deterrent for smaller crimes. Need separate space by gender at the jail as well as space for mental health, substance use and recovery services.
- State allow more beds at Dorothea Dix to take in people with acute mental health challenges
- Bangor on the map to house homeless
- Better water quality. Able to address new contaminants like PFAS. Support aging water treatment facilities.
- Identify long-term disposal methods for sludge/landfill items, waste water
- Upgrade waste water facilities along Penobscot
- Improved air quality – we are the tailpipe of the country. This impacts local stream and lake water quality.
- Rehab empty buildings
- Children taught more life skills and engage them in helping the homeless population with gardening and more
- Use restorative justice in schools
- Need one shared community group to coordinate and facilitate connections and resources

CHALLENGES

- Small population
- Desire for local control at each community level
- Funding structures for water treatment, which is the foundation for development in towns
- So many options to invest in
- Benefit cliff/loss of supports as you earn a small income toward being able to support your family

INVEST ARPA IN (Listed in priority order)

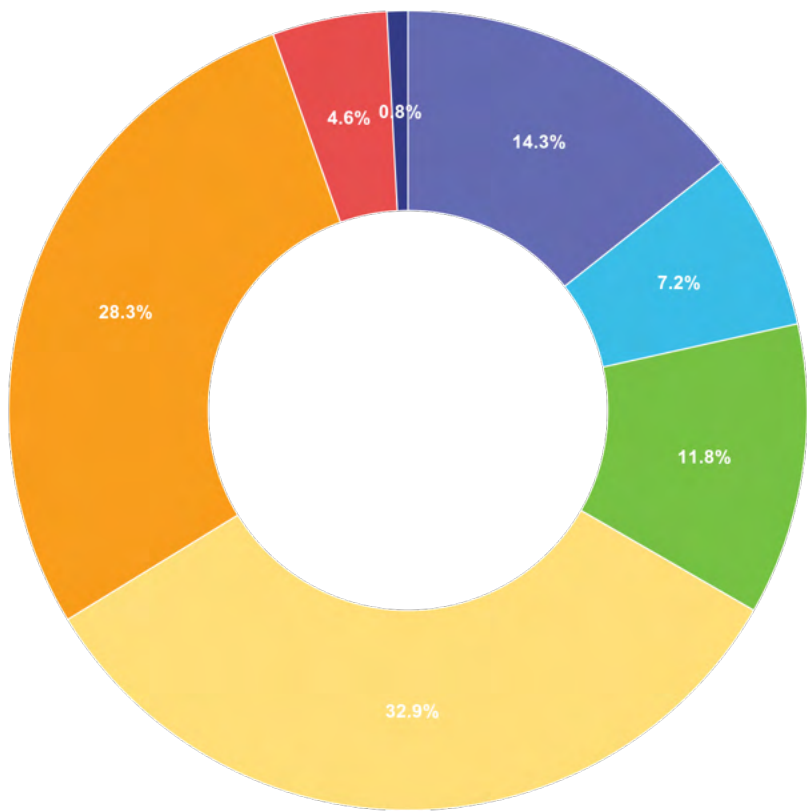
- Housing and mental health: workforce housing, affordable housing and supportive services such as mental health supports so people can reestablish their dignity and integrity. Small tiny home units for homeless population, low-income residents in need
- Waste water infrastructure
- Spread funds across the county
- (Broadband, but it was assumed this would be covered with other funds)



How Should Penobscot County ARPA Funds Be Spent?




Penobscot County is looking for community engagement to help direct how these "once-in-a-generation" funds should be spent. There are rules for what the money can and can't be used for but there is still some leeway within those categories. We'd want to hear how you would like that money directed.

Q1 The first broad category this money could be directed toward is Public Health. This category covers lots of different uses. Please mark these uses within Public Health that matter most to you. You may choose up to 4.*

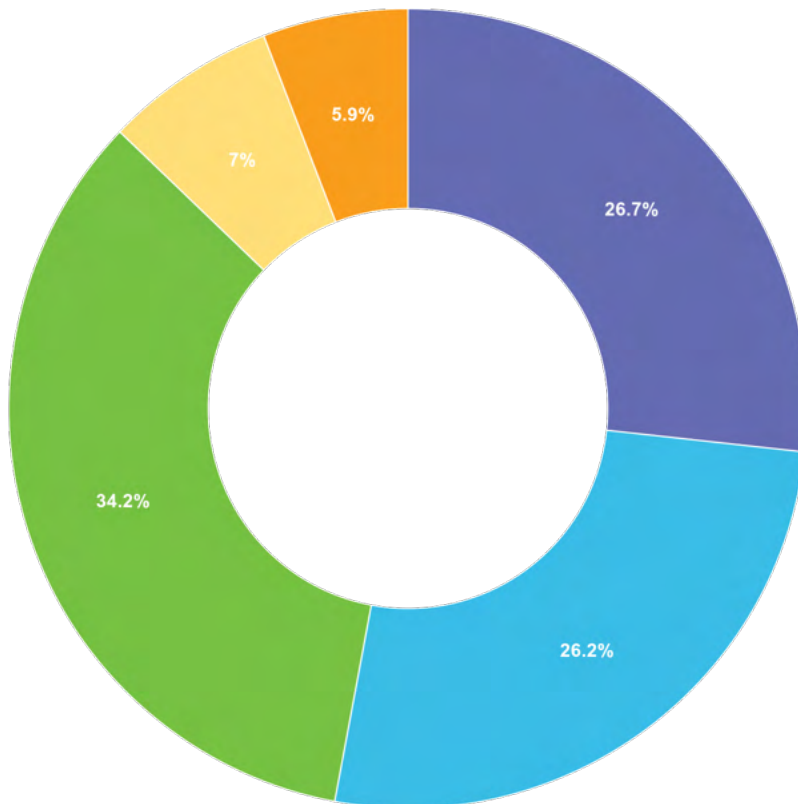


Answered: 105 Unanswered: 0





Choice	Total
<div></div> Covid Vaccination and Testing	34
<div></div> Covid Prevention in close settings	17
<div></div> Capital investment to make Public Settings safer	28
<div></div> <u>Mental Health Intervention Services</u>	78

Choice	Total
 <u>Substance Use Disorder Services</u>	67
 None of these are important to me	11
 __archived__	2

Q2 Covid has had negative economic impacts on our community. This is one of the areas that ARPA funding can be spent. Which of these do you think is most important in this area? You may choose up to 3.*

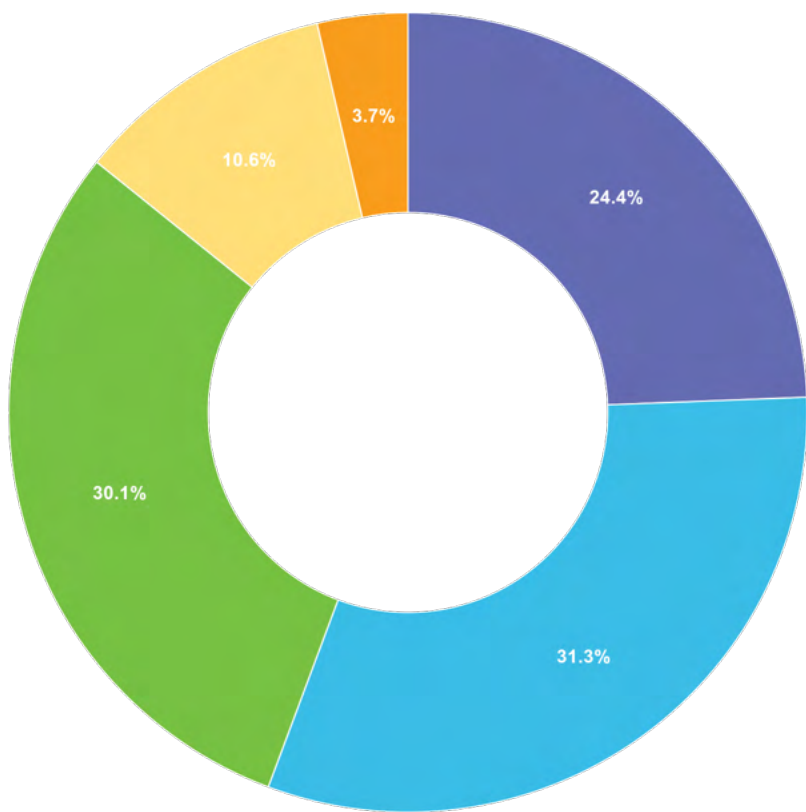


Answered: 105 Unanswered: 0





Choice	Total
 <u>Job Training</u>	50
 General Small Business Economic Assistance	49
 <u>Aid to Nonprofit Organizations</u>	64
 Aid to Tourism, Travel, or Hospitality	13

Choice	Total
 None of these are important to me	11

Q3 In many cases, Covid affected those least able to recover from the economic impacts. Thinking about that group of people, which of these are important to you? You may choose up to 3.*

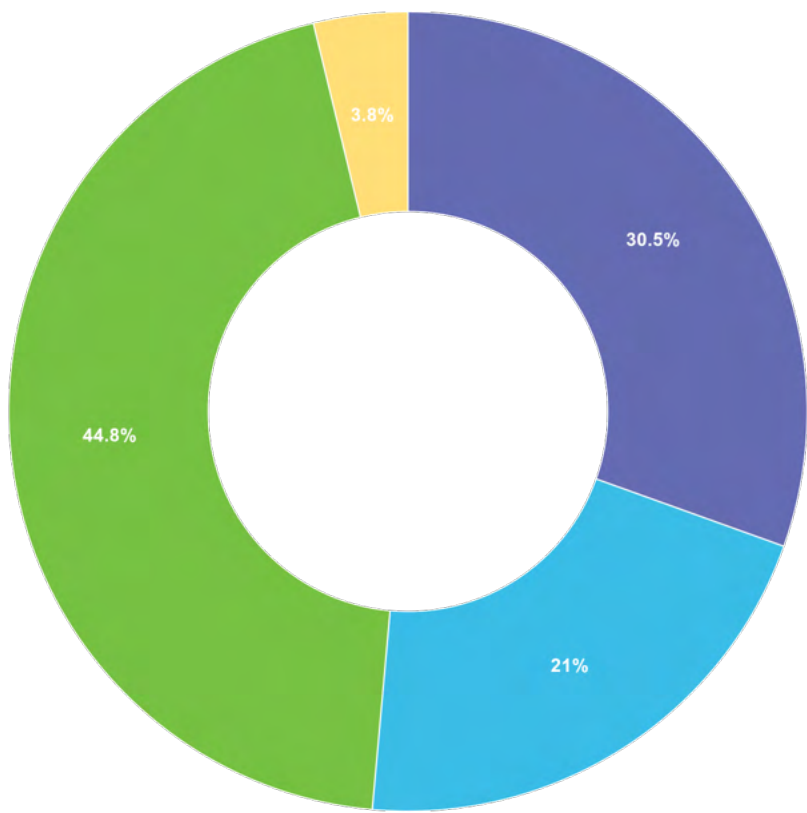


Answered: 105 Unanswered: 0

Choice		Total
	Early Childhood Education/ Child Care	60
	<u>Affordable Housing</u>	77
	<u>Housing the Homeless</u>	74
	Community Healthcare Workers or Benefits Navigators	26

Choice	Total
 None of these are important to me	9

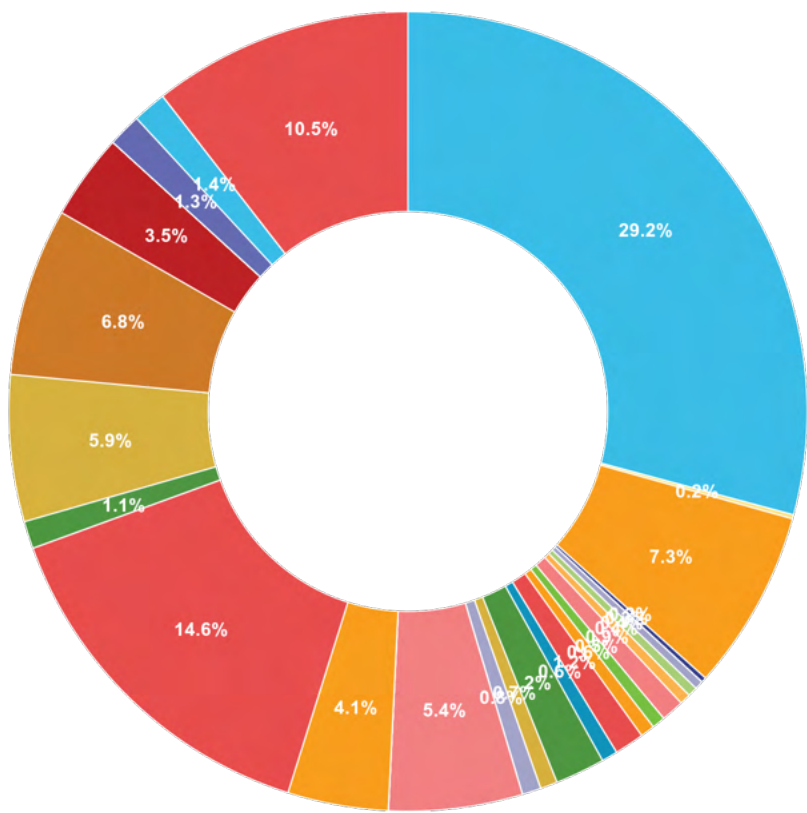
Q4 Of these three areas which is the most important to you? Please Choose One.*



Answered: 105 Unanswered: 0

Choice	Total
<div></div> <u>Public Health</u>	32
<div></div> Negative Economic Impacts	22
<div></div> <u>Services to Disproportionally Impacted Communities</u>	47
<div></div> None of these are important to me	4


























Q5 Which is your home town?*



Answered: 104 Unanswered: 1 Average Rating: 42 - Maxfield

Choice	Total
5 - Alton	0
36 - Bangor	35
6 - Bradford	0
7 - Bradley	1
63 - Brewer	5
8 - Burlington	0

	Choice	Total
	9 - Carmel	1
	10 - Carroll Plantation	0
	11 - Charleston	0
	12 - Chester	0
	13 - Clifton	0
	14 - Corinna	0
	15 - Corinth	1
	16 - Dexter	0
	17 - Dixmont	1
	18 - Drew Plantation	0
	19 - East Millinocket	1
	20 - Eddington	2
	21 - Edinburg	0
	22 - Enfield	0
	23 - Etna	1
	24 - Exeter	0
	25 - Garland	1
	26 - Glenburn	2
	27 - Greenbush	0
	28 - Hampden	1
	29 - Hermon	3
	30 - Holden	1
	31 - Howland	0
	32 - Hudson	0
	33 - Kenduskeag	1
	34 - Lagrange	0
	35 - Lakeville	0
	37 - Lee	0
	38 - Levant	0

Choice	Total
 39 - Lincoln	6
 40 - Lowell	0
 41 - Mattawamkeag	0
 42 - Maxfield	0
 43 - Medway	0
 44 - Milford	4
 45 - Millinocket	14
 46 - Mount Chase	0
 47 - Newburgh	0
 48 - Newport	1
 64 - Old Town	4
 49 - Orono	6
 50 - Orrington	3
 51 - Passadumkeag	0
 52 - Patten	0
 53 - Plymouth	0
 54 - Seboeis Plantation	0
 56 - Springfield	0
 57 - Stacyville	0
 58 - Stetson	1
 59 - Veazie	1
 60 - Webster Plantation	0
 61 - Winn	0
 62 - Woodville	0
 65 - Not listed/ Unorganized Territory	7

Q6 Is there anything else you'd like us to know?

Tuesday, February 8, 2022, 11:20 PM UTC

Because these are one-time funds, I would like to see infrastructure investment. First, we need more space for services and wraparound services for people who experience chronic homelessness and co-occurring SUD/mental health. Second, we need more investment in prevention. Third, we need childcare to support economic development.

Tuesday, February 8, 2022, 11:15 PM UTC

The greatest impacts I have witnessed are those trying to navigate overworked systems with already vulnerable situations. I would like to see supports and services be invested in to assist to offer people supports to navigate safety and services.

Tuesday, February 8, 2022, 11:15 PM UTC

I believe the ARPA funds should be directed toward those most disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and not fund other things the county could otherwise pay for with other funds, such as the jail or capital improvements.

Tuesday, February 8, 2022, 8:13 PM UTC

Mental health and the opioid crisis are foremost on my mind. These services have been lacking in rural Maine. Bringing these services into the rural community is important. Imaging driving and hour each way for a 15-20 min appointment. The time of driving and transportation issues will not be such a burden to those afflicted.

My other concern is the lack of a cultural community in Millinocket. The value of a community theater and avenue of artistic expression is an important part of the overall health of a community. Please think about the cultural arts in our recovery as well. A child with an introduction to the arts becomes becomes a patron of the arts.

Sincerely,
Randy Jackson

Tuesday, February 8, 2022, 3:06 PM UTC

Support communities with programs for vulnerable
Housing, Crisis support, mental health case mgmt

Goal: Reduce arrests & jail of ppl who lack needed social & financial supports to Live. Stop punishing illnesses of despair. TY

Monday, February 7, 2022, 7:31 PM UTC

Can we invest in healthy activities for our youth, specifically teenagers? There is no movie theater, bowling alley, skate park etc for them to do. Investing in places like this would help a lot to keep kids off drugs so we don't have to deal with homelessness and addiction. When there is nothing to do, what do we expect?

Thursday, February 3, 2022, 8:30 PM UTC

we need money set aside to help get every home access to broadband

Thursday, February 3, 2022, 12:22 PM UTC

Spend wisely on helping those who need a hand up. Housing is number one in my book! After thought. Consider buying a hotel for homeless that are working or trying to find a job. No offense intended but also as a sober house. With counseling and support staff. Strict rules. Some could even work there. Or do many things in the area to help out, paid or unpaid. Free laundry. A place for clothing donations, social room, library of donated books. Rooms have to be kept clean. Police/alcohol/drugs, your out. And a agreement to be signed. No hanging around. Support of police, city, mental/physical health. Yes it is a huge project but if greed/payroll is kept under control IT IS doable and could be the starting point for others to follow. Maine pride. Contest of high schoolers for name and logo. This idea benefits many. I'm not sorry to say, this is a heck of a good idea. You are welcome to contact me. Thank you.

Monday, January 31, 2022, 9:07 PM UTC

I believe the top public health issues to be addressed/supported with these ARPA funds are mental health, substance use disorder and (affordable) housing. Many, if not all, systems in our rural communities are impacted by these issues and we need help! These systems include rural hospitals, police departments (municipalities) and recovery homes/recovery support services... to name a few. Let's strive to create healthier communities by addressing the social determinants through creating stronger systems and creating greater capacity at the local level to do so. Please invest in people and communities working to help those struggling with mental illness, substance use disorder and those housing insecure.

Sunday, January 30, 2022, 8:35 PM UTC

Millinocket is much in need of many important services. Affordable housing, substance use disorder treatment/counseling services, sober living housing, mental health services. Thank you for your potential help in these areas.

Friday, January 28, 2022, 8:25 PM UTC

I think this funding is a once in a lifetime chance to make an impact on the region's future. I heard about Aroostook county businesses getting together & using rail to ship their product. We know we have workforce shortages in the trucking industry as well as other. I believe our proximity to Canada, the ocean and our regions truck hub, rail might be the answer connecting us to Canada and Europe to the north and by rail to the southern markets. I am not sure of climate impacts but perhaps this is a help? Our region would be in the center vs the end of the line

Thursday, January 27, 2022, 7:23 PM UTC

Thank you for asking the community for it's input and for hearing the feedback that you will receive. It is much appreciated.

Wednesday, January 26, 2022, 10:03 PM UTC

I would like to see a small lots of land developed with self contained small homes designed for single individuals to families. That people can be assisted in buying in a manner that is similar to Section 8 funding for rent. The individuals can eventually own them and either remain long term or sell back to program and use money as down payment for other long term housing. And allow for them or their value to be left in a will. And allow for them to be built on land individuals already own or is owned by a family member. This creates wealth in ownership , creates stability and allows for better mental health. Each unit needs to have access to water and sewer in each unit and should be built in a manner that allows for use of solar to help reduce costs for utilities.

Sunday, January 23, 2022, 10:17 PM UTC

Public housing should be the biggest priority. Housing is the first step to helping solve the issues that people experience, whether it is substance use addiction and mental health. Using ARPA funds for the jail should not be an option given how harmful incarceration is to our communities.

Tuesday, January 18, 2022, 12:45 AM UTC

Money for homeless could be used to set aside a parking lot at BIA away from businesses. Allow agencies and organizations to fund raise or donate to build the buildings recently advertised and set aside a lot of a particular size to set one of those small "pallet" buildings or units on. Send the City Bus around for transportation, a soup kitchen, showers and bathrooms. Use the site as an address for homeless. Give \$\$ to schools for special programs for children. Do not give money for handouts.

Monday, January 17, 2022, 7:54 PM UTC

Improving public health includes abundant and accessible outdoor spaces - I'd like to see funds going toward pedestrian and bicycle paths and trails, connectivity between green spaces (connector trails), and restoring/creating/protecting more green space, trees, forests, and waterfronts in Penobscot County.

Saturday, January 15, 2022, 8:39 PM UTC

Early childhood intervention and education is at the top of my list. Has proven to lower crime in adults. A long-term plan needs to be in place, not a band-aid that falls off.

Saturday, January 15, 2022, 4:40 PM UTC

I feel it is very important to help our community in the following ways- support children that are behind due to covid due because of missing so much instruction due to quarantines, they are behind and need support to catch up and be at grade levels, housing for the homeless, renovate/build a new jail, help with mental health and substance abuse. Homeless and substance abuse disorders also play a role in Student inability to attend school and progress as desired therefor increasing the likelihood that they will follow in their parents footsteps and repeat the cycle of homelessness, incarceration and substance abuse.

Thursday, January 13, 2022, 8:17 PM UTC

I believe that the funding should go towards substance abuse programs and jobs training/education to help the state recover from the effects of the pandemic. Mental health programs will also be crucial to this recovery.

Thursday, January 13, 2022, 3:21 PM UTC

We need someplace to put mentally ill people. I can think of at least 6 people currently housed at the jail who are clearly only there because they are seriously ill. Between this issue and the courts moving like snails it is no wonder the jail is always overcrowded.

Wednesday, January 12, 2022, 1:05 AM UTC

help for those with substance abuse that are seeking inpatient treatment and support
peer support is invaluable
assistance programs and supports for families of affected others
programs and education for children to teach resilience and offer hope and opportunity
community reentry support for those that are in recovery or incarcerated
feed the hungry and teach nutrition to children of all ages
programs to promote inclusion
childcare support for working parents
community garden, child drop in center, library or other supports for Capehart area
homes for homeless where people in need of a home can work to renovate empty and abandoned homes that the city has taken over to gain ownership

central hub for ease of gaining information about programs available as it can be hard to find info on specific program

Tuesday, January 11, 2022, 3:47 PM UTC

In 1994 I began working with homeless youth for the Bangor School Department and then moved to Community Health and Counseling Services in 1995 working then as an Adult Mental Health Integration Specialist and then as an Adult Mental Health Case Manager. From the mid 1990's to early 2000's there was much more funding to address the mental health needs of local residents. There were less adults in the Penobscot County Jail and who were homeless then mainly because mental health services had a healthy level of funding. As the funding dropped off more individuals became homeless, hopeless with more and more ending up at the jail. If ARPA money is provided for mental health services, addiction treatment and housing the people who receive these increased service opportunities will have better outcomes than jail time.

Putting ARPA funding into building a new jail will only result in putting more downstream people in jail instead of taking the approach to fix the upstream issues of above.

Saturday, January 8, 2022, 1:29 PM UTC

Many people realize that when it is said that "Penobscot County has received 30 million in funds" that it means the Bangor and Brewer have received this money. Nobody has any illusion that the rest of the county is going to be fighting over maybe 25% of these funds while the rest is given out to bandaids projects that will not have half the impact they should.

Low income housing is an issue, granted. Why are we looking at making ghettos instead of legislation to force landlords to take section 8 vouchers? Substance abuse is a blight on communities across the county, but it's not something we can throw money at and have it magically go away. There's plenty of programs out there and the people that want help get it.

Many people I've talked to in rural communities don't have many hopes for this money since it likely won't be used in our communities. Do what you will with it, rural Maine will continue on as we always have.

Friday, January 7, 2022, 11:20 PM UTC

These funds are DESPERATELY needed for mental health care & substance abuse issues in my opinion mainly for the youth! Towns (especially Millinocket) are being over run by dealers zeroing in on teens! Also, it would be nice for small communities to be able to have driver's education offered locally at an affordable rate.

Friday, January 7, 2022, 9:54 PM UTC

The Penobscot Jail is often where people end up when they are unhoused, experiencing mental illness, or have substance use disorders. Our communities would be better served by actually addressing the problems that land people in jail. Penobscot County should invest at least 50% of rescue funds in housing, mental health care, and treatment for substance use disorder - three big areas that people who have been incarcerated say they needed help with at the time they were jailed.

Friday, January 7, 2022, 7:36 PM UTC

These one-time funds should be invested in a way that bring benefits for generations to come. They should not be spent in a way that delivers immediate relief but has no or little longterm impact. In simple terms, don't eat the seed corn.

Friday, January 7, 2022, 4:38 PM UTC

I think Bangor needs the most assistance because it is a "service center" for the county

Friday, January 7, 2022, 1:36 PM UTC

I want the funds used to support those most in need - the homeless, mentally ill or those with substance use disorder, along with supporting public health measures like ventilation improvement in public spaces & providing tests/PPE/support for those quarantining. I do not want to see the funds used to expand our jail.

Friday, January 7, 2022, 7:18 AM UTC

Thank you for taking public comments. The three crises of our time relate to a lack of affordable housing, insufficient mental health care services, and inadequate substance use disorder treatment. Those crises have extensive ripple effects throughout our county. They result to pressure on our jail, hospitals, law enforcement, and damage our overall quality of life.

Friday, January 7, 2022, 12:30 AM UTC

This is a once in a lifetime chance to finally help the "human Infrastructure", families & communities that are suffering, especially rural areas that are left out & need support the most & geographically isolated. There's plenty of funding for broadband and other projects. Presently we don't solve problems, we cage people we view as problems. Drug treatment courts should be expanded and could be done soon while other solutions may take longer. After 2 years the recidivism rate is 6% vs 41% w/o treatment/support. No matter how much towns try to work on economic development, we won't have a workforce. SUD & brain disorder treatment & housing is needed more than gilded sidewalks. And I fear for the next generation who is also reeling. We're supposed to be the land of opportunity....we need the opportunity, this is our chance.

Thursday, January 6, 2022, 9:55 PM UTC

We must address the needs of homeless people in our County. We must also address the factors most likely to lead to lack of housing or inadequate housing-- substance abuse, untreated mental health issues, and economic inequality. Please address the lack of affordable housing for low-income, disabled, senior and even middle income people in this city and county.

Thursday, January 6, 2022, 12:20 PM UTC

No jail expansion. Jobs not Jails.

Thursday, January 6, 2022, 2:39 AM UTC

Alternatives to jail, particularly for those who have Substance Use Disorder, are badly needed. Currently, the courts are hearing cases from nearly two years ago and are frequently sentencing people to jail for [mostly drug] crimes committed by people who have done a 180 degree change in their lives by entering recovery. Why are these people not given alternatives to jails -- particularly overcrowded and dangerous ones like PCJ -- such as house arrest and community service?

Thursday, January 6, 2022, 2:27 AM UTC

This funding should be invested into the community. It should not be spent to expand the jail.

Wednesday, January 5, 2022, 9:51 PM UTC

I think that the extra food stamps benefit should be increased as the food prices go up. As a diabetic, with high blood pressure and congestive heart disease/failure, I NEED to eat a high protein diet but I have to settle for pasta and butter towards the end of the month. Also known as not very good for me. My husband also has health issues, and allergies to high protein foods. Please consider us

Wednesday, January 5, 2022, 6:50 PM UTC

These funds need to go to people and services, no money should go to the jail. The sheriff needs to forget expansion

Wednesday, January 5, 2022, 5:53 PM UTC

Small businesses, in my case a small medical practice, have half the normal income, two to four x the cost for supplies. No help from the state whatsoever, but I did get the \$285 bucks, thanks, see the problem, I'm a doctor but still qualified for the \$285 aid with my current income. Maybe we should support those who pay taxes instead of more free money for those hanging out watching Netflix everyday.

Wednesday, January 5, 2022, 5:04 PM UTC

Consider doing grants to local non profits who are helping people recover from being homeless

Wednesday, January 5, 2022, 2:33 PM UTC

Availability of home testing is crucial. Many people feeling ill may not have the time, ability, or inclination to go to a public testing site, and may just dismiss their illness as a cold or the flu. Prices of home testing kits are rising. The county should acquire home test kits and get them to schools, towns, and NGOs for distribution.

Wednesday, January 5, 2022, 10:16 AM UTC

Why isn't Winter

Port listed?

Wednesday, January 5, 2022, 1:12 AM UTC

Please also consider that our area is on the edge of wonderful eco tourism, outdoor adventures, and we value our natural world. Visitors and new residents can enjoy the variety of experiences that are particular to our area plus creative and scientific work and other efforts on tap. We are blessed with a beautiful natural territory, indigenous knowledge and history, and maritime heritage. These are things that set us apart and we can own as a "place based culture". The Penobscot River paddling culture, forest industry... Thanks.

Monday, January 3, 2022, 5:13 PM UTC

Please use these funds to address root causes of societal dysfunction: homelessness, poverty, addiction. Instead of expanding capacity at the jail, use this financial windfall to help alleviate these underlying causes of criminal behavior. Start at the source in a grass roots fashion by funding innovative programs and services to underserved populations. Do not squander this once in a lifetime opportunity on ineffective status quo programs and policies. If we keep on doing what we've been doing, we'll keep on getting what we've been getting.

Thank you,

Sandra Cyrus
Orono

Wednesday, December 29, 2021, 8:17 PM UTC

I think the public health crisis of opioid addiction and the homelessness associated with it is the biggest problem we need to tackle. Adding beds to an overcrowded jail isn't tackling the problem at the root of WHY the jail is overcrowded. I would wager that jail overcrowding would go down if opioid abuse and homelessness went down first.

Wednesday, December 29, 2021, 6:00 PM UTC

I'd like to see a Crisis Stabilization Unit. This would be a place where people could stay for 1-4 days to stabilize and be referred to needed social services or hospitalization. This would divert people from the jail.

Wednesday, December 29, 2021, 5:17 PM UTC

Please consider using some of the funds to provide grants for equipment, research supplies, or undergraduate research stipends at UMaine. Faculty were adversely impacted by the pandemic, spending large amount of timing re-working our courses for online, coming up with safety plans for our labs, etc, and time for applying for federal grants was curtailed. Many of us professors do research related to biomedical science and public health, and we could use some of these funds to buy research supplies, replace aging equipment, and support undergraduate workers with stipends/wages. The workers would get job experience and would assist the professors' research effort.

Wednesday, December 29, 2021, 4:27 PM UTC

Do not fund jail expansion, or remodeling. In Troy Morton's most recent submission to the Bangor Daily News he said that all jail services, and programming has failed to keep the population at PCJ at a minimal. He has said that it is time to build a new jail. He is wrong. There is another avenue. Since the sheriff has failed, he should be replaced.

I also wanted the Penobscot commissioners to please describe what happens to the money that is raised by auctioning off patrol cars and such. This year 9 cars are to be auctioned with other equipment. The money raised should not go back to the jail. If the sheriff did this every year and he does. This should be a huge number. Fire the sheriff, and make PCJ more visible. The public needs to know what happens there. FIRE THE Sheriff if he cant do his job.

Wednesday, December 29, 2021, 4:20 PM UTC

We shouldn't be investing in programs that require continued funding (unless we plan to change our tax structure to include county tax). This is a great opportunity to do capital projects that help people in the long run. I would love to see a better fiber to home infrastructure in Penobscot County.

Wednesday, December 29, 2021, 2:17 PM UTC

I agree with expansion of the jail with 100 new beds

Wednesday, December 29, 2021, 1:24 PM UTC

I strongly believe these funds should be directed only towards long term capital expenditures. I think a portion should be set aside for housing infrastructure (affordable and homelessness), public health & safety infrastructure (Police, Fire, EMS, Jail, Mental Health beds), Water and Sewer (aging water and sewer infrastructure and dealing with the evolving PFAS in water and soil issue) and finally for Broadband (establishing and expanding fiber infrastructure in each community). For projects that do not benefit the region as a whole, but rather a single or small group of communities) I think there should be a requirement that the community provide some form of a matching contribution through its own ARPA funds. I also think that wherever possible, County and Local ARPA funds should be further leveraged with Federal and State funds and where applicable private investment. An example of this is a Broadband project that uses State, County, Local and private investments.

Wednesday, December 29, 2021, 1:22 PM UTC

The county's attempts to expand the jail is despicable. The solution to our communities dire needs is to help the people in need, not to lock them up.

Wednesday, December 29, 2021, 12:47 PM UTC

Broadband access in Eddington is HORRIBLE!

Wednesday, December 22, 2021, 10:20 PM UTC

Do not use any money towards jail expansion. It would be a shame to waste our money for this. The sheriff's office is only thinking of themselves. The problem of overcrowding can be solved through education and mental health services. Much like the Maine state prison reducing offenders reoffending through the use of educational services they offer at the facility.

Tuesday, December 21, 2021, 2:26 AM UTC

Stop stealing from the people and cut it out with the covid BS and let the world move on. Taxation is theft.

Tuesday, December 14, 2021, 12:43 PM UTC

We should address the overdose crisis which has worsened during COVID.

Monday, December 13, 2021, 11:15 PM UTC

We look forward to applying and seeking funding to support our community programs under our non-profit organization.

With Appreciation,

Connor J. Archer

Founder & Chairman/CEO

The Courageous Steps Project, Inc.

Answered: 55 Unanswered: 50