

To: Public Health and Public Safety Committee

From: Erica Satin-Hernandez, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Specialist

Date: 1/23/23

22-1757 That the ARPA Specialist update this Council on the City's plans to use ARPA funding to address the issue of chronic homelessness in our community, particularly through the building of a center through which individuals can receive sustenance, shelter, and showers.

The City of Somerville plans to use ARPA funding for the Engagement Center to be run by the Somerville Homeless Coalition. The city has approved their request (\$471,797.26 for year one) to fund a physical space for persons experiencing homelessness to receive services and resources. This project expands physical space to create an indoor service center during the day, replacing the current model of service provision occurring outdoors in all weather. The Engagement Center will serve as a place where persons experiencing homelessness can receive services, obtain referrals to needed supports, and have a safe space to rest and regroup. This project does not include a sleeping area or shelter beds. Shower and laundry service as well as clinical services at the Engagement Center are still being planned. Food available at the center is primarily packaged for immediate consumption while clients are being referred to longer-term, more stable food access supports. The city is still in the process of getting the proper agreements signed, but the project has been approved, and the Somerville Homeless Coalition is preparing for the new service. Other ARPA-funded projects that may serve persons experiencing homelessness amongst their clients include the various programs increasing capacity at the Office of Housing Stability, the hiring of a Food Access Coordinator, the hiring of an additional Veterans Services Coordinator, and the increase in staffing at 311 to assist residents with their concerns.