

REPORT on Northfield ARPA COMMUNITY Advisory Project

SUMMARY of COMMUNITY SENTIMENT

On how to spend the ARPA money



Northfield VT received a total of about \$1.9M through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) which was signed into law on March 11, 2021. Some of this original amount was spent to fill the newly-created position of Economic Development Director. Another relatively small amount was budgeted to make up for 'Pandemic Shortfall' and thus moderate water rates in town. Finally, in a decision that reflects well the findings of this Community Advisory Project, funds were allocated to Central Vermont Fiber as part of a match for a separate Federal grant to bring broadband to rural Northfield. Altogether, the ARPA funds at issue here are separate from the money that has gone to the State, and in addition to funds that went to individual employers, etc. during the Covid Pandemic. The Northfield Select Board has discretion over how to spend this money and must "obligate" it by December 31, 2024. The funds must be expended by December 31, 2026 or be returned to the Federal government. The Select Board voted unanimously in late 2021 to get advisement from residents and established the ARPA Community Advisory Project. This project encouraged residents to share virtually, in person and by survey their spending priorities with the Select Board. A committee has directed the advisory process and collected the information. Here is a summary of what happened, how it happened and what we believe are the trends.

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Introduction & credits: HOW IT HAPPENED and WHO MADE IT HAPPEN:

Merry Kay Shernock first presented the idea of an ARPA Community Advisory Project at a meeting of the Select Board (SELEX) in the Fall of 2021. The SELEX gave unanimous approval. Planning started at the beginning of 2022

The following persons; i.e., "the committee," worked together to make it happen by responding positively to a request from Merry Shernock: Rebecca Pearish, Anastasia Rhodes, Stevie Balch, Carolyn Stevens, Mark Fournier, Clare O'Shaughnessy. This committee met virtually 6-7pm almost every Friday evening mid-February to mid-June 2022, and then intermittently thereafter. The meetings were governed by the Open Meeting Law so other individuals joined from time to time; the process was transparent and decisions were made consensually. Merry Shernock also met frequently with individual members of the committee and others in the community to discuss specific problems encountered in the meetings and in analyzing the survey until this report was complete. In September 2022 Leslie Striebe was instrumental in getting survey participation by students at Northfield Middle & High School. The entire committee signed off on the report and it was presented to the SelectBoard on December 13, 2022. Special Kudos to the members of the SelectBoard who demonstrated with their time and energy a willingness to listen: Dave Maxwell, chair (whose help early-on was especially encouraging), Julie Goodrich, Lydia Petty, John Stevens and Charlie Morse.

Thank you also to the following individuals and organizations for their assistance (you know what you did!):

Denise MacMartin, Kaitlyn Keating, Tim Swartz, Kristin Gadbois, Trans-Video/Channel 7 and George and Julie Goodrich, Front Porch Forum,

The Falls General Store and Norma Rooney, the Northfield Senior Center and Marianne Beaupre, the United Church and Rev. Julie Lombard, the Brown Public Library and Sherri Brickey, The Woods at Wihakowi and Lisa Burr, American Legion Post #63 and Sarah Gerdes, the Vermont League of Cities & Towns and Katie Buckley, Director VLCT ARPA Assistance and Coordination Program, the Town of Northfield and Jeff Schulz, Manager, and Ken McCann, Administrative Assistant.

Guiding Principles

The principles the committee adopted for this project were:

1. MAXIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE!
 - a. Offer various means of participation; i.e. in-person, virtually, digitally and by paper pencil
 - b. Offer a variety of sites of participation; out of town, in town, in The Falls and at the school
 - c. Offer a variety of times of participation opportunities
 - d. Find out as best we can the spending priorities of the “younger generation”
2. SPREAD THE WORD!
 - a. Posters at multiple sites
 - b. Channel 7 “crawl”
 - c. Front Porch Forum posts
 - d. Press releases
 - e. Public warning
3. KEEP COMMUNICATIONS CLEAR!
 - a. strive for 12 year-old reading level

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- b. attractive, accessible informational brochure and poster
 - c. QR code to the survey on brochure and poster

THE NUMBERS:

- 1) 478 responses to the survey. Totals on individual questions vary because not every respondent answered every question.
- 2) 58 total participants at six (6) in-person meetings.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS: Where and When and with Whom

The regulations around spending the ARPA money were originally quite complicated. The Community Meetings, therefore, were originally intended as DIALOGUES; to give residents an opportunity to learn about these regulations and restrictions from members of the Select Board, and to give Select Board members an opportunity to hear from residents what their priorities are. In January 2022, however, a modification in the federal rules removed virtually all of the restrictions on spending. Therefore, the meetings became an opportunity for Select Board Members to go into the community to listen and learn. More about Community Meetings is provided below in SUMMARY of IN-PERSON MEETINGS and in Appendix 7.

NORTHFIELD MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL (NMHS) - Leslie Striebe and the principal, Lee Ann Monroe, arranged mid-day assemblies in early September 2022 with students at the Middle School and the High School. Nathaniel Bailey, Instructional Technician, and Lee Ann Monroe, Principal, made it possible for more than 100 students to complete the survey on their laptops.

The responses from these dates are in Appendix 8.

PUBLIC INFORMATION: Pamphlet and POSTER: The committee discussed both the informational pamphlet and the poster for several weeks, developing principles and debating wording and photos. The committee decided that both the Poster and the Pamphlet would contain specific information about the Community Meetings. In addition, the committee decided to use a QR code on both the poster and the pamphlet to send residents to the online Survey via their mobile phones. The committee decided some large-print hard copies of the Survey should be made for residents not comfortable online so these residents could participate, and these large-print hard copies were made available at the Library and at the Municipal Building. (The responses were entered into the online survey manually.) The committee then signed-off on final drafts produced by individual committee members who brought special talents and experience to these tasks. The Poster was printed in two different sizes, and both the Poster and the Pamphlet were placed at busy places throughout the town, such as the pharmacy, the municipal building and the laundromats, starting in the spring of 2022. The supply was renewed specially for the 2022 Labor Day Observances. Printing was paid for out of the ARPA grant. The POSTER and PAMPHLET are in Appendices 1A and 1B. The SURVEY is Appendix 2.

Constructing the survey: The ARPA Community Advisory Project committee wanted to know HOW residents felt the ARPA money should be spent (Questions 1-3). The committee felt it would be equally important to find out both what the residents think is good about their town (Question 5) and what residents think could be improved using ARPA funds (Questions 4,6&7).

The committee sought a balance of both open-ended and forced-choice questions to find out these sentiments. Each committee member submitted some of both types of questions in the process of constructing the survey. The committee opted for both types in spite of the difficulties because each type offers good information.

About Forced-Choice Questions

Specifically, the advantage of forced-choice questions is that the responses are easy to quantify. Forced-choice questions are not easy to construct, however. They must be carefully crafted to avoid biasing the responses. It is also tricky to interpret the responses to forced-choice questions because these do not allow for detail or nuance, and may lack context. The ARPA Community Engagement Survey features forced-choice responses on Questions 1-3.

SUMMARY of Forced-choice Questions: The responses to the forced-choice questions (Q1-3) are presented below and in Appendix 3. The bar graphs for the dichotomous items; i.e. Q1 and Q2, give a good visualization of residents' spending preferences: Northfielders would rather see the ARPA money spent in smaller amounts for more things or uses than to have most or all of it go for a single use, and they would like to see money spent for the "widest benefit" with "lasting impact".

The bar graphs are somewhat less helpful on Question 3, which asks respondents to rank six (6) kinds of spending. The bar graphs show the most support for expanding accessibility via improvements to roads and sidewalks.

Both Cell/Broadband and Jobs seem to be equal and second-most supported. Combining rankings; i.e. 1+2, however, shows “Access” and “Cell/Broadband” almost equal (44.4% and 44%), and “Jobs” coming in third (37%).

About Open-ended Questions: The summary of answers to the forced-choice questions should be considered with the answers to the Open-ended questions; ie., Q4 + Q6 and 7. These answers are summarized below (“TRENDS & HIGHLIGHTS”) and are reprinted in their entirety in Appendix 5A, and WORD CLOUDS of these responses are in Appendix 5B.

These open-ended questions obtain unique insight from respondents who can feel free to express their opinions, priorities, recommendations, or criticism. The committee included open-ended questions (#4,5,6&7) to allow respondents taking the survey to include more information, giving useful, contextual feedback. Further, the committee felt that respondents would resent not having an opportunity to “explain themselves” that open-ended questions provide. Open-ended questions are, however, difficult to analyze and do not easily fit into statistical analysis models.

They aren’t even easy to tally; the complications are outlined below.

COMPLICATIONS OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS: What do the answers mean?

ALL responses to the open-ended questions were considered and all are presented in Appendices 5 and 6. (In addition, these responses are presented as WORD CLOUDS in Appendices 5A and 6A,) Tallies of word searches on groups of related keywords; i.e. subsections, appearing in answers to Q4,6 and 7 are presented as three digits in parenthesis in the text below.

Determining what residents intended in their open-ended responses is complicated as each of these presentations has shortcomings.

A manual tally is subject to individual interpretations of intent. What did the respondent mean when using words like “access”? “Access” can refer to broadband, or to natural assets like forests or the Dog River; “Access” can also refer to public transit. It can mean a trail or a bike path or a sidewalk to the pool.

Intent is also not captured in the Word Clouds because respondents used synonyms . For example “*the green*,” “*the town center*” and “*the depot*” or “*depot square*” all refer to The COMMON. Word-Search tallies are also problematic because the context is not considered; i.e. is “*things*” a reference to “*things to do*” or “*things to buy*”? The reference is not clear except in a context. Similarly, some words can refer to more than one thing and are therefore misleading for both keyword search tallies and for Word Clouds.

For the analysis presented here, synonymous keywords to open-ended questions are grouped together into *subsections*. These subsections are defined in the text; for example, the need for recreation for youth includes the following keywords: “recreation” “activities” “ youth” “hangout” “things to do” “sports” and specific sports such as basketball or a skate park.

The likely intentions formed trends which emerged in a manual review of the responses to the open-ended questions. The Word-Cloud feature also provided indications of trends and generated the “key words” .

Word-searches on these key words were tallied and grouped together.

Thus, the tally for sentiments about The Common include “*the green*,” “*the depot*,” “*square*” and “*the downtown center*,” and the manual totals for these

keywords identified in the answers to Questions 4-7 are given in parentheses after the subsection. **The Common**, itself, is a subsection of the category **DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION**. **Parks**, another example of a compound of synonyms, is a tally of that keyword plus all the different parks mentioned, and is a subsection of the category **INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE**.

The main trends are presented below. They are not exact tallies because of the problems outlined above; they are, however, impressions of a strong direction. This analysis is intended to reflect those directional trends. Survey Questions 4, 6, and 7 focus on possible improvements paid for with ARPA funding. Advocates of particular ARPA-spending initiatives are invited to create new categories and figure tallies using the information provided below and in the Appendices. Nearly 500 responses were received in total. While this is a lot for a local survey, it represents only about 1/10th of the Town's population. The results summarized below, therefore, are necessarily limited to the opinions of the respondents who chose to participate and are not a scientific sample.

"TRENDS & HIGHLIGHTS" SUMMARY OF Open-ended Responses to Q 5 and 4,6&7

Q5: IN YOUR OPINION WHAT IS NORTHFIELD'S BEST FEATURE?

One thing is far-and-away what Northfield residents think is great about our town: **THE PEOPLE & THE SENSE of COMMUNITY THEY FOSTER**. (118) This sentiment includes the words "people" and "community" and phrases such as "the small town feel and "the quiet vibe," plus words like "close-knit", "kind" and "helpful". Respondents also mention the DIVERSITY (3) in Northfield; specifically that there are

many talented people here and a VARIETY (8) of ages, opinions and lifestyles. In other parts of the survey, though, a few more negative words appear, such as “polarizing” and “loss of cohesive feel,” and references to “new people” in town.

The COMMON (including synonyms “green” “square” “depot” “center”) (85) **and the businesses nearby** (20) were also cited frequently as good things about our town. Particular mention was made almost a dozen times of the businesses on East Street, as well as the Farmer’s Market.

NATURAL ASSETS (78). Respondents frequently said things like “the river” and its “swimming holes” and “bridges”, the “mountains” and/or “mountain views” or the “scenery”, the “forests: and the “trails” and “easy access” to the “outdoors”. Also included in this category were the words “rural” and “remote” as some of the best Northfield characteristics.

SOCIAL AMENITIES Words like the “pool”, the “library”, the “schools” and “parks” were cited as attractions 62 times.

NORWICH UNIVERSITY including ‘use students as resource’ (44 + 4) was frequently mentioned as an asset, although a couple individuals argued elsewhere in the survey or in meetings that Norwich should be paying more to the town coffers.

Finally, less frequently than the other options above , people cited **“location”** and **“history”** (22) as assets to the town, and a few specifically mentioned easy access from Northfield to I-89 and to the State Capitol.

How can ARPA money be used to make Northfield better?

Questions 4, 6&7

The following open-ended questions were selected to capture ideas on how residents think the ARPA money should be spent.

Q4. Discuss your vision for your #1 pick from the previous question (#3)

Q6. What Northfield feature(s) could improve and how?

Q7. If you have other thoughts about spending Northfield's \$1.9 million in ARPA funds please what would they be?

Most of the recommendations stated or implied in responses to Questions 4,6 and 7 fall into four (4) general categories:

INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE

IMPROVE OUR SOCIAL AMENITIES

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

INVEST IN OUR NATURAL ASSETS

It follows that things people mention that they like about Northfield are also where they would like to see the Select Board to invest the ARPA funds.

1. INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE

A. IMPROVE GETTING AROUND TOWN; i.e. giving Northfield residents better access to each other. Given that the PEOPLE of Northfield are cited as one of its best features, it is no surprise that the people of Northfield want to

get around easily so they can see each other and interact. While a couple folks cited the compactness of the town as an asset, a very large number of respondents said the ARPA funds should be spent to improve walkability; i.e.,

SIDEWALKS (60+43+12) and **CROSSWALKS** (8+5+1), plus **WALKING/WALKABILITY** (31+22+5) and **ROADS** (46+43+21).

BIKES (Lanes and/or Paths) - (28+30+12) were specifically mentioned as investments we could make. Many respondents suggested bike paths and bike lanes, and even “walking paths”. Closely related is the frequent mention of **SAFETY**, and the pleas to control **SPEEDING** and **TRAFFIC** (50+20+9 mentions in Q4, Q6 & Q7). This trend amplifies the forced-choice ranking for SAFETY and raises its importance.

B. IMPROVE OUR SOCIAL AMENITIES

PARKS (18+30+19) Including all the parks already established, plus suggestions for special recreational themes, such as a dog park, a skate park and a water park.

Playground & Playing Fields (18+18+19) These cites include several mentions of the inadequacy of the playground at Memorial Park and the playground at Dog River Park, plus a need to build outdoor recreation options suited to school-age kids. Options mentioned for teens included basketball courts or a skate park. As might be expected, things young people like were often mentioned by the students who completed the survey at the end of September, but, surprisingly, these things were also mentioned several times by older respondents.

SCHOOLS (17+19+18) Included in this category were mentions of improving/maintaining the Auditorium as well as buying musical instruments.

POOL (3+11+7) Including suggestions to make it bigger, to expand hours of operation, to give free admission and/or swimming lessons to residents. Also to connect it to the Downtown with a bridge over the Dog River behind the Cetrangolo Lot or a sidewalk., or a bike lane.

LIBRARY (2+2+1) Spending money on the library in general was mentioned at least five (5) times. In addition, 10 people cited the library as an asset to the town.

CONNECTEDNESS (23+18+7): Northfield is almost 6 miles long North to South, and Routes 12 & 12A connect a string of “hamlets” (as one respondent called them), or neighborhoods. Sidewalks, of course, are frequently mentioned in this context, but so is using ARPA funds to create a connection between (in order of frequency of mention)

The Falls and the Downtown Center.

The Pool/Memorial Park and the Downtown Center

South Northfield and the Downtown Center

Tangential to the theme of being together are the mentions of **GATHER/“SHARED SPACE”** (2+3+4)

ACTIVITIES/EVENTS (16+25+7) In particular, activities and events for **“Young Families” and Families** were mentioned often (12+12+12) as well as activities in the various arts. Activities for **YOUTH** (or “teens” or “young adults”) were mentioned 12 + 11 + 11 times in Q4, 6, and 7. In fact, many Northfield residents are concerned that there is not enough for residents in this age group to do; i.e., “hang out” “things to do” “sport” “basketball” and “skate” were mentioned in Q4, 6, and 7 16+18+10 times.

ARTS (7+10 +10): Some Northfield residents wished to use some of the ARPA money to support the arts, and made multiple references in Q4, 6 and 7 to this general topic using the words “art/s” or “culture,” “music,” “theater,” “dance,” or “galleries. The need for local government support of the arts was also passionately discussed to a greater or lesser degree at each of the in-person meetings.

2. DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

The COMMON and its synonyms “common” “green” “square” “center” “depot” (26+54+25) Related to this are the specific expressions of appreciation for the FARMERS MARKET (11). Other amenities proposed in Q4, 6 and 7 for a revitalized downtown were

AMTRAK/TRAIN STOP (1+4+0)

FOUNTAIN (0+17+5)

EV CHARGING STATION (4+5+1)

LODGING (hotel or motel) = 3+2+2

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT (“business” “shopping” “stores” excluding dining options) were mentioned 52+71+36 in Q4, 6 and 7. The businesses on East Street were mentioned approvingly almost a dozen times in this context

INCREASE DINING OPTIONS (EAT/FOOD/RESTAURANT/BAKERY or DONUT/CANDY = 15+45+17). Suggestions ranged from having “fast food” in town to having a bakery/donut shop or a candy store on The Common.

“Shabby” appearance plus **REPAIR & REFRESH** (5+4+5) When respondents thought about spending money for the common good, many participants in both the community meetings and in the survey negatively mentioned current appearances. At the community meeting at the Senior Center, for example, we heard that the downtown looks “shabby” and in a survey we read the phrase “run down,” Commenters both in person and on the survey wished that ARPA funds could be used to ameliorate the situation; e.g. urge landlords to spruce up and then use ARPA money to subsidize rents, perhaps, or otherwise campaign with property owners to “show pride”

3. INVEST IN OUR NATURAL ASSETS

This category includes mentions to **“protect,”** as well as to improve **“access”** (51+43+11) which includes references to **“clear signage”** and to **“trail access”**. Survey respondents cite “trails” specifically 22+15+6 times and “mountains, forests & rivers” 16+18+18 times.

This category also includes references to **“outdoor/s”** and **“recreation”** (6+25+15).

4. INVEST in our INFRASTRUCTURE

NOTE: As there are other sources of money for specific infrastructure projects; e.g., water quality money and broadband money, the ARPA funds could be (and, in the case of BROADBAND, already has been) used as "match" funding for these improvements.

INFRASTRUCTURE ("Infrastructure" "utilities" "sewer" "sewer" "water" and "electric") = 37+27+32.

HOUSING (19+21+17)

JOBS (58+14+4) *Caution: searching this keyword brought references to "job description" of local town officials, plus a reference to the "beautiful job done with flowers on The Common" and doing a "good job on improving infrastructure"*

CHILDCARE ("childcare" "daycare" "early childhood education" = 1+2+2)

IMPROVE BROADBAND (BROADBAND and COMPUTERS together = 27+10+5. This is not as much as we expected and not so great as the desire to be able to get around town on a bike (42 compared to 70).

IMPROVE CELL RECEPTION (27+7=3) Again, not so many as we expected.

SUMMARY of IN-PERSON MEETINGS

The in-person meetings with individual members of the Select Board at different times and in various sites around town have been the heart of this project. The Committee helped to arrange them for easy access and to fit the schedule of any resident who might wish to participate. A total of fifty-eight (58) residents participated; the attendance at specific meetings is noted in parenthesis below.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS - Where and When and with Whom

The goal of the community meetings originally was to inform residents of constraints on the spending, as well as to hear the residents' priorities for spending. After the rules were modified to remove virtually all constraints, however, the objective became simply to facilitate community discussion and hear residents' ideas, not to educate them.

Care was taken to select the right locations. Each needed to be

- * Accessible to all
- * Neutral and familiar space
- * Decent acoustics so people can hear
- * Scheduled at a variety of times to make participation convenient

Because WiFi was not available at all the locations selected, a separate VIRTUAL MEETING was held at the Community Room of the Brown Public Library using the set up generously offered there by Trans-Video , Inc. for the use of the Select Board.

The Woods Lodge Tuesday, May 31, 2022 Co-hosted by Lisa Burr, owner, and John Stevens, SelectBoard. Notes by Clare O'Shaughnessy. (7)

The Falls General Store Saturday June 4, 2022 Co-hosted by Norma Rooney, owner, and SelectBoard Member Lydia Petty. Notes by Kaitlyn Keating. (7)

American Legion Post # 63 Tuesday June 7, 2022 Co-hosted by Sarah Gerdes (with help from Carly Quinn) and SelectBoard Chair David Maxwell. Notes by Anastasia Rhoades. (8)

VIRTUALLY Thursday June 9, 2022. (from the Community Room of BROWN PUBLIC LIBRARY) Co-hosted by SelectBoard Member Julie Goodrich and Merry Shernock of the ARPA Committee. Notes by Tim Swartz. (12)

United Church Sunday September 11, 2022. Co-Hosted by Mark Fornier and SelectBoard Members Charlie Morse and Lydia Petty. Notes by Denise MacMartin. (14)

Senior Center Wednesday September 14, 2022. Co-Hosted by Mary Ann Beaupre, Director and SelectBoard Members John Stevens and Lydia Petty. Notes by Merry Shernock (10)

The discussions were informal, friendly and lively, and quite far-ranging. All the notes from the Community OUTREACH meetings are available on the Town Website (<https://www.northfield-vt.gov/select-board-subcommittees>) and in APPENDIX 6.

SUMMARY of NMHS Students' Response

While it is beyond the scope of this project to examine and characterize the views of specific segments of the Northfield community, even assuming we could accurately identify them, it seems worthwhile to try to discover as best we can, what the younger generation thinks is important. At two separate assemblies at NMHS on September 28, Students were asked to log on and complete the survey. A few students did not have their laptops available that day so the responses collected 28-30 September are considered to be entirely or almost entirely from the NMHS students. The responses to Q1-7 are summarized below and in Appendix 7.

It is interesting to note how NMHS students and the respondents in general are alike and how they are different.

Q1 "What factors are most important to you when considering allocation (spending) of our ARPA funds?"

NMHS students, like the respondents as a whole, cite **LASTING IMPACT** and **WIDEST BENEFIT** as most important.

Q2 "Would you rather spend ARPA funds on: *choose one?*"

NMHS students, like the respondents as a whole, say they would rather the Town spend ARPA funds on: **smaller amounts on several projects.**

Q3 " What could the Town of Northfield do to help our community grow and thrive? "

In contrast to the respondents as a whole, NMHS students ranked **Jobs and Recreation** (46% & 41..6%) most frequently as the #1 or #2 priorities for ARPA spending. **Access**, which was ranked highest by respondents as a whole, was ranked #1 or #2 by only 19% of the NMHS students.

Q4. “Discuss your vision for #1 pick from the previous question.”

Like the rest of the community, local students think investing in **people** (23) is important, but spending to stimulate the creation of **jobs** (18) is nearly as important. A combination of **recreation/sports** (13) is third. Notably, this question elicited many comments on the theme of **Safety** and students frequently made mention of **sidewalks** and **roads** (safety/sidewalks/road = 19) in this context.

Q5 “In your opinion what is Northfield’s best feature?”

The NMHS students responded similarly to the rest of the community on Q5 “WHAT’S BEST THING...i.e., **Natural Assets** (65) and **Our People** (63). Our **Social Amenities** (“pool library, schools, parks, the Parade and the Senior Center) were cited as attractions 63 times. Almost a third (33) cited **NORWICH UNIVERSITY** as a good thing in our town, and 22 mentioned The Common. Seven (7) mentioned the **FARMERS MARKET** and there were 25 mentions of various **Social Amenities**

Q6. “What feature could Northfield improve and how?”

Sidewalk, roads and safety (14) was most often mentioned by NMHS students and might reasonably be added to the mentions in Q4 thus making it the dominant theme among our young residents (total =33).

People (9; total = 32) and this emphasis mirrors that of general respondents.

Jobs (6; total = 24)

recreation/sports (4; total = 17)

Q7 “If you have other thoughts about spending Northfield’s \$1.9 million in ARPA funds please share what would they be?” Unlike the respondents in the general population who used Q7 to expound on various themes, NMHS students had very little extra to say by the time they got to the end of the survey. A dozen (12) students responded with **None/[can’t]think**. Another dozen (12) responded about **things [to do]** and about **school** (e.g., make school shorter or bigger).

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY: The ARPA Community Advisory Project set out to let Select Board members, who must decide how to spend the money, hear how their Northfield neighbors and friends would prioritize the expenditures. By unanimously authorizing the project and then participating in the Community Meetings, the Select Board plainly demonstrated their genuine interest in what residents think is important. We look forward to seeing the preference trends our work has identified reflected in new projects for the betterment of our town.