

Council Budget Talking Points: BIG EASY DEAL

Background:

The Mayor and Council have already appropriated \$334M of the total \$388M in ARPA money. What is left now is \$54M. However, there are also potentially hundreds of millions in unspent ARPA money in another account called the Fund Balance. We've asked the Council and Mayor to do two things: 1) spend as much as possible of the \$54M on community needs, and 2), once the City completes its audit of the Fund Balance this summer, fund community priorities first.

Talking Points:

- This funding will help ensure that some of our most vulnerable residents can make it to work, get paid what they are owed, meaningfully participate in democracy moving forward, and access essential city services in their own language.
- [Speak on your preferred priority and why we need more funding for it: affordable housing, youth development programs, community violence intervention programs, food security, resilience, and sustainability planning, and direct cash assistance to people who were ineligible for COVID relief checks.]
- Until now, community requests and needs have not been reflected in the decisions made about these funds. The result has been that law enforcement and the criminal justice system have been the largest beneficiaries of ARPA funds: receiving at least \$82.5 million, including, among other things, \$32.5 million for recruitment and retention and \$15 million for vehicles.
- We're asking for balance: public safety also requires investing in preventative public health approaches, housing, youth development, and other proven programs that provide long-term solutions to poverty and violence.
- We're asking City Council to do two things today:
 - Rebalance our priorities and fund more housing, transit, and other community priorities before giving more funds to the NOPD for police cars, dogs, kennels, and horse trailers. We urge you to put homes for people before homes for animals.
 - Second, commit to funding the urgent and unaddressed community needs in the Big Easy Deal later this summer when the City announces what is left in the Fund Balance.

Things to Avoid:

- Please avoid calling out or criticizing individual items in the \$54M ARPA package that are not our immediate priorities, such as the funding for the Six Flags Redevelopment. It will put us at odds with one of our strongest allies, CM Thomas, and it could alienate us from dozens of community groups in New Orleans East, who are very supportive of this.
- In that specific package, there are no longer any law enforcement funds.
- Consider calling out law enforcement funding in general or the specific ask for police dogs, horse trailers, and vehicles being made in other ordinances.