



December 27, 2021

RE: York City Council Bill No. 60, Ordinance No. 60

To Whom It May Concern,

I have submitted a budget to the York City Council that may express the will of the people unlike any other. This budget, specifically the allocation of the first \$6 million of American Rescue Plan funds (approximately 17% of the total funds we will be receiving), was based on a democratic process that has not been used before in York City's history. A survey of York City residents on how ARP funds should be spent was responded to by nearly 600 residents, providing a survey with 95% confidence that this reflects the will of York City residents. This was the highest response rate of any survey known in York City. I then selected 11 other York City leaders, including your elected State Representative, City Controller, and two members of City Council, to participate with me in reviewing 132 applications for funding, both from the public and from City departments. This advisory group was instructed to use the surveys expressing the will of the people to evaluate the proposed programs and projects. From internal calculations we knew we could conservatively spend about \$5,000,000 to \$6,000,000 as a first round of investments into the community's needs. The advisory group narrowed over \$69,000,000 in requests down to \$5,000,000 in projects they advised should be included in the 2022 budget. As mayor, I added additional funding for some projects that ranked very highly, and I believe the city needs. These included lights for Penn Park, and funding to match state funds that need a match so they can repair our fire stations and Penn Market.

The City Council has chosen to ignore all of these facts, and claims that the Administration has not done a competent job of collecting public input. Although the City Administration has been working since March 2021 to prepare and implement the allocation of these funds in the 2022 budget, the York City Council, as a body, has made absolutely no effort to hold public forums, complete surveys, or otherwise gain public input before making their decision to strip the budget of the ARP funded programs and projects. York City Council had 9 months to gather input and they did NOTHING. This is hypocrisy of the highest caliber. City Council

claims the Administration doesn't have enough public input, yet with zero effort to quantify or qualify their opinions, they act to deprive the residents and businesses of York City of desperately needed resources. Four individuals have determined that they are going to override the will of the Administration and the public.

York City Council is stripping from the budget over \$2.1 million to our police department for public safety; \$300,000 to address joblessness; \$300,000 for homelessness; \$125,000 for reentry of those recently released from incarceration; \$350,000 for families and mental health assistance; \$130,000 for food equity; \$200,000 for youth mentoring; over \$400,000 to assist underserved populations and neighborhoods; \$285,000 for park repairs and improvements; \$500,000 for affordable housing; and \$225,000 to assist small businesses. These are the exact uses that the people who took the survey said they wanted. These include every one of the 33 recommendations made by the advisory group. For four years these are the investments that I, and many others, have wanted to make, but we didn't have the money. The thought of leaving this money sit in the bank when we have all of these needs in York City is just unacceptable. For these reasons I am vetoing York City Council Bill No. 60, Ordinance No. 60.

Sincerely,

Michael R Helfrich  
Mayor, City of York