

To: Town of East Montpelier Selectboard
RE: Letter of request for ARPA funds
From: Janice Walrafen on behalf of AllTogetherNow! Community Arts Center
Date: November 10, 2023

Since 2004 AllTogetherNow! Community Arts Center, located in the 1800s farmhouse at 170 Cherry Tree Hill Road, has been the home to a 5-star preschool; a community arts center hosting educational programs, art workshops and classes to people of all ages, seasonal events, and summer camps for youth; the art studio of co-owner Janice Walrafen; and long-term affordable housing residence for 4 people. We have served the East Montpelier and central Vermont community for decades and provide stellar programs. Visit our website to read more about us. <https://alltogethernowvt.org>

Our future is now threatened because of sudden (and unexpected) action by the Department of Fire Safety. Beginning in 2020, more stringent codes were applied to our building. We had been in compliance with all previous reports from the DoFS (Dept of Fire Safety) and have been in conversation with the inspector to get clarity on what exactly we need to do to be code compliant. Given the challenges of the pandemic in 2020 & 2021, our progress was slower than desired, but we maintained communication with DoFS. With the loss of our co-director, Ellen Leonard, in November of 2022, and then the flood of 2023, it became very challenging to secure materials, trades people, and other resources to move forward. Throughout all of this, we continued to provide services to our community.

We weren't completely clear what triggered the DoFS's sudden and initially unexpected actions (although we have since learned that it partially had to do with changes since the passing of Ellen Leonard), they are shutting down the preschool (as of November 13th), and were threatening the occupancy of the residents and the future of our programs unless we can attend immediately to identified upgrades. A large and public outcry of community support and our assurance that we are working towards meeting compliance has encouraged them to continue working with us as long as we make immediate and continued progress, along with weekly report updates.

Our request to the Selectboard for local ARPA grant funding is as follows, in order of immediate need:

- 1) Boiler replacement—estimated cost: **\$30,000** Our Plumber, Gary Gulette of Allways Plumbing & Heating has been servicing the current boiler & is prepared to replace it once funds are available.
- 2) Installation of Egress windows in the four upstairs bedrooms. Purchase & install estimate is **\$6,500**
- 3) Fire rated boiler room, walls, ceilings & doors in the basement. Estimated cost for materials and labor is **\$18,000** Fortunately, we have a contractor who will work with community volunteers to help with planning and installation of this complicated and multifaceted project, upgrading an old farmhouse
- 4) Legal and administrative costs – Start up estimate is **\$9,000**

Total Projected Expenses = \$63,500

We are seeking funding from several sources to complete additional work for the building to be brought into full compliance:

- We are launching a GoFundMe campaign.
- We have been in communication with Downstreet to begin the process to access funding from the Revolving Loan Fund acquired by the Town of East Montpelier

We can do this with support from the Town of East Montpelier & community support to make it happen.

AllTogetherNow! Corp is our 501(c)3 non-profit organization which can receive these funds and allocate them to these repairs and upgrades. Our EIN Number is 03-0299675.

We deeply appreciate the Selectboard's support of the Community Arts Center that houses our programs, small businesses, and residences that allow us to continue providing a valuable resource for East Montpelier and the surrounding community.

Thank you,
Janice Walrafen, Co-Owner, Resident Artist, Program Director