

Good morning.

It is my desire to share with you my thoughts on the \$30.5 million American Rescue Plan Act city funding. As many of you may know, the first of eight town hall meetings was held at Kingdom Builders Worldwide recently. My understanding is that the City of Battle Creek is seeking community input on how to spend the funds. According to the city, the money used must meet certain federal requirements. As of August 2021, an interim rule said the city could use the ARPA funds in four ways:

- Negative economic impact
- Premium pay for eligible workers
- Government services lost revenue
- Water, sewer, and broadband

Assistant City Manager Ted Dearing said the city has several priorities already, including dependable city operations, improved broadband services, and affordable housing, among others.

"We do want to fund an initiative we've designed to work with our local hotels and motels to try to create an environment that is safer for long-term stays," Dearing said. "The reason behind that is we do have a housing vulnerable population that uses our hotels for housing, but they aren't necessarily configured for long-term stays." I also remembered in January of 2021 the city pushed pause on a housing development for the homeless due to neighborhood concerns. Having a solution-centered personality, I shared my interest in the possibility of building the homeless units on Kingdom Builders' 16 acres of land with some city officials and affordable housing management company, Upholdings, and was told that the Post Addition did not score high enough for this project. So, I ask again today, is housing a priority in Battle Creek or only in certain areas of the city?

The city has also prioritized providing support to BIPOC organizations that are serving a **community need** in Battle Creek, Dearing said. Kingdom Builders not only serves blacks, Indigenous and People of Color, we serve the entire county, and race is not a factor and never will be. My only concern is — as a Black man — am I being penalized and missing out on funds because I do not use my race as a tool? If we want to talk about equity and challenge systemic and structural barriers to achieve growth and prosperity, then please allow me to share with you the meaning of equality? **Equality is everyone having access to the same thing. Equity is giving people what they need to succeed.** Now, these two concepts are often conflated but they go together. It's like peanut butter and jelly. These two concepts are so different in application, yet both are very important in our lives. I find that if we are going to fight for social justice; if we are going to fight for the idea for everyone to be who they are wherever they are, no matter who they want to be, it's important that we understand these two concepts. Let's

break it down. When you look at equality and you look at a concept like equal pay for equal work, there's an element of value and humanizing. So, when you're looking through the lens of equality, you really need to examine how much value you're placing on the people around you and how much you're humanizing them. Do they have the same level of treatment based on the standard that you've created in your city, organization, institution, family or area? And if you look at equity, you're examining the starting place and access points. You know as time evolves, so do we. Opinions become facts and facts become opinions. There should be constant vigilance. The idea of any of these concepts being fixed is fundamentally wrong. It is, in fact, the first mistake that people make. So, whenever we have these clashes that have to do with equality and equity, ask yourself these questions. **Does everybody have access to the same benefits?** Why or why not? Is everyone protected equally? Why or why not? Is everyone paid the same for the same amount of work? Why or why not? Now on to the question you need to ask yourself about equity. What are the power dynamics and how do they influence opportunity? While observing the power dynamics, do you see a noticeable pattern? What is your plan to stay vigilant about the noticeable patterns and the patterns that go unnoticed? What does support look like for everyone in your institution or our city? We need equality. We also need equity. If we want a world where everyone can be who they truly are wherever they truly are whenever they truly want, we must investigate the spectrum between equity and equality.

The BCPS Middle School Bond is a \$44.8 million bond measure to **reimagine** the BCPS middle school experience. Approximately \$32.4 million would go toward funding Northwestern renovations and additions. Approximately \$12.4 million would go toward funding Springfield renovations. What would this look like if Kingdom Builders Worldwide, a former BCPS building, could get some of the \$30.5 million from the American Rescue Plan so that we may update and make renovations as well?

Also, the Battle Creek City Commission approved three projects to use money from the \$30.5 million American Rescue Plan.

City commissioners approved nearly \$2.7 million to repair the McCamly Plaza Hotel, they have approved the purchase of the Dolliver Building and created a loan program to help people staying long-term in hotels.

What would it look like if Kingdom Builders was awarded funding to repair our facility? **Is there a noticeable pattern?**

McCamly Plaza Hotel will receive \$2.5 million for repairs. There will also be a partnership with Grand Valley State University to create a learning space for hospitality management students. I appreciate this and support it 100%; however, the list of partnerships that Kingdom Builders has established are far reaching in the community. With this being said, my only question is, does the city recognize the impact we are offering to our community?

I was always taught that if a person brings value to something, they will be rewarded. Kingdom Builders has hosted most of the larger funeral services in the community without charging any fees. However, our 800-seat auditorium has no air conditioning. We serve a large senior population during the week, and we have grown so much that an elevator is needed. We have thankfully received information for potential funding from (CareWell Services) that will allow our seniors to have access to a plethora of programs that we offer on every floor. However, I have been told by my architect, Cody Newman, that the city will not grant a permit until the second and third floors are code-compliant. Could this be a project that could be funded from the \$30.5 million American Rescue Plan funds?

Below is my input on how we could use part of this \$30.5 million American Rescue Fund.

\$4,292.00 Air control compressor – Hunter-Prell Co.

\$108,196.00 Motor Shop Electrical Construction Co, Inc. – Installation of power and mini-split A/C units in the auditorium

\$145,500 Proposed Otis Elevator System Cost

\$10,000.00 Driven Design Studio for the plans

Total \$267,988.00

The price of the proposed requirement of a Fire sprinkler system on the 2nd and 3rd floor from the city of Battle Creek.

The reality is that the Post Addition once thrived in Battle Creek, and a question was asked in an article in the Battle Creek Enquirer, Will it survive? As Dave Morgan pegged this organization **“Hope on the Hill”** yes it will. With your support.

Working together,

Dr. Bishop Tino W. Smith