

07-29-2020 Town Council Meeting

Responses to Council Questions

ITEM #2: Approve the Miscellaneous Budget Ordinance Amendment to Adjust Various Fund Budgets for FY 2020-21

Council Question:

Have any more details from that fire been uncovered since July 5th, when we last got an update?

Staff Response:

The fire at Town Hall that occurred on the morning of July 5th is still under investigation by our Police and Fire Investigators. We sent evidence samples off to the State Bureau of Investigations (SBI) Crime Lab to attempt to identify the accelerant used to start the fire.

Police investigators have canvassed the area looking for any witness or security cameras that may offer some help in identifying any potential suspects. Investigators did not find video or any further descriptions on potential suspects. We are waiting on the SBI Lab to process blood that was recovered from the glass in the doors where the suspect made entry and the identification of the type of accelerant used from the chair cushion. Depending on lab results, further investigation could include DNA identification and/or where the accelerant was purchased.

An additional fire, intentionally set, at 431 W. Franklin St. #415 is being investigated for similarities. Although the fires do not indicate they are immediately related, soil samples were collected and sent to the State Bureau of Investigations Lab to determine the accelerant used. We do not have a timeframe for when lab results will be available. Results can take several weeks to return.

Council Question:

So far, how many people have applied for the Emergency Housing Assistance Program and how many people have received assistance through it?

Staff Response:

The Orange County Department of Housing and Community Development is doing a fantastic job administering the Emergency Housing Assistance Program on behalf of the Towns and also managing the Housing Helpline. The County staff estimates that 400 households have applied for assistance. Since January, 369 households have received assistance, with 348 of these households receiving assistance from April – July. Of the 369 households, assistance was provided to 182 Chapel Hill residents (49%). Most of the applicants that did not receive assistance submitted incomplete applications and did not respond to the County's request for additional information.

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Council Question:

How many people have reached the maximum that can be disbursed?

Staff Response:

Orange County staff estimates that less than 12 households have reached the maximum disbursement.

Council Question:

How much funding is in the Emergency Housing Assistance program right now?

Staff Response:

To date, \$322,067 of local and federal funds have been allocated for Emergency Housing Assistance. Orange County has approximately \$95,000 available. For context, the County approved \$37,000 for assistance last week.