

02-24-2021 Town Council Meeting Responses to Council Questions

ITEM #11: Consider Amending the Criminal Justice Debt Program and Enacting a Budget Ordinance Amendment

Council Question:

With a provision to allow the Program to pay debts for CH residents due outside of the county, can those jurisdictions also be added to the data for evaluation metrics?

Staff Response:

Yes, we can add data collection for debts paid to outside jurisdictions to our evaluation metrics to include types and amounts of debt held by applicants and participants.

Council Question:

At an earlier meeting, Council expressed interest in having the Debt Fund Committee create standards to apply when considering whether someone convicted of a violent felony would be eligible for funding. I don't see these standards in the packet – when can we expect to see them?

Staff Response:

The Committee plans to evaluate the age of the felony conviction, severity of the crime, and an individual's ability to manage any mental health and/or substance use issues as a way to determine eligibility for program funding. The overall analysis of these factors coupled with the information collected through an individual interview will be used by the Committee to make a collective decision on whether to approve funding requests for those with violent felony convictions.

Council Question:

Similarly, we asked for more standards around when someone would be eligible for funding more than once in a three-year period, and for some standards around how often someone can expect to receive funds in total. Will these standards be provided?

Staff Response:

The Committee plans to offer re-application to those individuals who have DMV hearing costs associated with their license suspension but were not eligible to apply for the hearing at the time of the original application due to other debts being owed. The committee sees this as a continuance of the original application. The Committee would also allow individuals to re-apply if they were unable to pay all fines owed at the time of their initial application and were unable to submit partial payments to the Clerk. The Committee would also like to allow individuals to re-apply when the possibility of license suspension arises on new offenses if there is not a

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pattern of endangering public safety. Lastly, they would like to allow re-applications for program participants who had pending court matters that resolved since these were not eligible during their original application.

Council Question:

Is there a substantial difference in the amount of court fees likely to be levied in a violent felony vs. a nonviolent felony or misdemeanor? Would the former likely consume a disproportionate amount of funding, allowing us to serve fewer people in total?

Staff Response:

Oftentimes a person with a violent felony will have served jail time which would lead to having no owed costs or fees. This would likely not lead to a disproportionate amount of funding being allocated to certain individuals.