

09-30-2020 Town Council Meeting

Responses to Council Questions

ITEM #13: Consider Enacting a Budget Ordinance Amendment for the Second Allocation of CARES Act Funding

Council Question:

How does the laptop lending program work?

Staff Response:

The laptop lending program will be targeted to adults who do not have sufficient computer access at home, including job seekers, low-income residents, and historically marginalized populations.

Laptops will be managed similar to other Library lending materials. Staff is currently designing library procedures, COVID safety protocols, a communications plan, and loan processes to manage the program.

Council Question:

What kind of vital documents have been translated, and into what languages?

Staff Response:

This project will expand language access by translating vital town information in line with the Language Access Plan. The project team will rapidly create a prioritized list of Town documents, forms, and other communications that residents have requested or used most frequently during the pandemic. Funds will be used to pay contractors to standardize and translate this list into the Town's primary languages: Burmese, Mandarin Chinese, Karen, and Spanish.

Council Question:

Regarding the economic portion of the budget, how are we incorporating minority-owned local businesses into the long-term recovery process? Who have the small business grants gone to thus far? What are our local businesses saying would be most impactful to them right now? I've heard that small dollar grants aren't super helpful at this point.

Staff Response:

We have diverse representation on our advisory board who will help to steer our recovery planning process and share their feedback. We have BIPOC business owners and non-profit representation. Specific strategies to assist our minority owned businesses will be a component of the recovery plan and are yet to be determined. We convened our first advisory board meeting on 9/25.

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We have not yet distributed grant funds, but applications have closed and funds will be dispersed soon. Of the 86 applications we received, 80 were determined to be eligible (must be located in Chapel Hill corporate limits). Over \$150,000 in funds were requested. Our initial program allocation was \$50,000 and we have requested additional funding to ensure all eligible businesses receive an award. Of the 80 eligible applications, over 40% are women or BIPOC owned businesses.

We know our businesses are hurting and wish we had more funding available. While these grants are small, there was still overwhelming interest in the program and funds will help offset the cost burden of purchasing PPE.

Council Question:

Can the CARES funding item be on consent agenda?

Staff Response:

Items of a routine nature that don't require a public hearing may be included on the Consent Agenda for the Council to vote on in a block. The Mayor and Manager regularly review upcoming items to decide which ones to place on the Consent Agenda. In this case, because the Council expressed an interest in receiving an update on the first round of CARES funding, and because staff is seeking feedback from the Council on the allocation of the second round of funding, this item was included on the Discussion agenda.