



## Agenda Report

20-1020

Agenda Date: 10/27/2020

### REPORT TO COUNCIL

#### **SUBJECT**

Action on the Help Your Neighbor Program for City Matches and Approve Related Budget Amendments

#### **COUNCIL PILLAR**

Enhance Community Engagement and Transparency

#### **BACKGROUND**

In 1990, the City Council approved a Give a Little... Help a Lot Donation Campaign. This campaign provides residents with a simple way to support various community and recreational services. Within the campaign, there are various programs with specific purposes including the Help Your Neighbor program (Program). This Program provides emergency assistance with utility bill payments for Santa Clara residents who may be experiencing financial hardship.

The Help Your Neighbor program is a one-time option for Santa Clara residents in need of assistance with paying their utility bill. In order to qualify for the Program, the resident must have exhausted and provided proof of the following options:

- Establishing a payment plan/arrangement with the City; and
  - If a payment plan is established and financial assistance is still needed, the resident can request an extension for one year.
- Proactively seeking assistance through other programs such as the Financial Rate Assistance Program, Medical Rate Assistance Program, and the Household Energy Assistance Program.

If City staff determines the resident has gone through the above options and assistance is still required, staff will gather the appropriate documentation and submit a memo to the Director of Finance and City Manager for approval.

In addition, as approved by the City Council on January 14, 2020, the City's false alarm fees were updated as a result of an agreement with a new residential and business alarm management system. With this new agreement, additional fees under the false alarm category were approved. To address resident concerns regarding these increased/additional fees, donations from the Help Your Neighbor Program can also be used for residents who are experiencing challenges paying for their false alarm fees.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The Help Your Neighbor program is currently operating through Santa Clara resident donations. The use of these donations is subject to the approval by the Finance Director and the City Manager. The City recommends expanding the Program to provide a City match for each donation received, up to

\$100,000. Residents interested in making a donation can send in a check or money order payable to the City of Santa Clara, with the Help Your Neighbor Program designation in the memo. The City is also accepting donations online.

It is recommended that the City match of up to \$100,000 be funded by available balances in the utility funds, including the Electric Operating Grant Trust Fund (\$50,000), the Sewer Utility Fund (\$25,000), and the Water Utility Fund (\$25,000).

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The action being considered does not constitute a "project" within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(4) in that it is a fiscal activity that does not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potential significant impact on the environment.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

A City match of up to \$100,000 is proposed to augment donations from residents to support the Help Your Neighbor Program. The Electric Operating Grant Trust Fund has sufficient budget in their advertising and community promotion allocation to cover the proposed \$50,000 City match. The budget amendment below allocates the remaining funding needed from the Sewer Utility Fund (\$25,000) and the Water Utility Fund (\$25,000), both amounts from unrestricted funds, to support this Program, appropriated in the Public Donations Fund.

#### **Budget Amendment FY 2020/21**

	<b>Current</b>	<b>Increase/ (Decrease)</b>	<b>Revised</b>
<b>Public Donations Fund</b>			
<u>Transfers From</u>			
Sewer Utility Fund	\$0	\$25,000	\$25,000
Water Utility Fund	\$0	\$25,000	\$25,000
<u>Expenditures</u>			
Help Your Neighbor Program	\$0	\$50,000	\$50,000
<b>Sewer Utility Fund</b>			
<u>Transfer To</u>			
Public Donations Fund	\$0	\$25,000	\$25,000
<u>Fund Balance</u>			
Unrestricted Fund Balance	\$415,971	(\$25,000)	\$390,971
<b>Water Utility Fund</b>			

<u>Transfer To</u>			
Public Donations Fund	\$0	\$25,000	\$25,000
<u>Fund Balance</u>			
Unrestricted Fund Balance	\$1,083,335	(\$25,000)	\$1,058,335

**COORDINATION**

This report has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.

**PUBLIC CONTACT**

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall Council Chambers. A complete agenda packet is available on the City's website and in the City Clerk's Office at least 72 hours prior to a Regular Meeting and 24 hours prior to a Special Meeting. A hard copy of any agenda report may be requested by contacting the City Clerk's Office at (408) 615-2220, email [clerk@santaclaraca.gov](mailto:clerk@santaclaraca.gov) <<mailto:clerk@santaclaraca.gov>>.

**RECOMMENDATION**

1. Approve the expansion of the Help Your Neighbor Program to provide City Matches;
2. Authorize the City Manager to Distribute Funds for the Help Your Neighbor Program; and
3. Approve the FY 2020/21 Budget Amendments in the Public Donations Fund to recognize transfers of \$25,000 from the Sewer Utility Fund and \$25,000 from the Water Utility Fund and appropriate the \$50,000 to the Help Your Neighbor Program; in the Sewer Utility Fund, transfer \$25,000 to the Public Donations Fund and reduce the Unrestricted Ending Fund Balance by \$25,000; and in the Water Utility Fund, transfer \$25,000 to the Public Donations Fund and reduce the Unrestricted Ending Fund Balance by \$25,000.

Reviewed by: Kenn Lee, Director of Finance

Approved by: Deanna J. Santana, City Manager