



Published September 2nd, 2020

Coronavirus Relief Fund Grant helps town during pandemic

By Vera Kochan



Moraga's town council voted unanimously to accept the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act's grant during its Aug. 26 meeting. The town's portion of the \$500 million federal aid package awarded to the State of California's cities comes to \$209,235. This figure is based on population size.

The town submitted the Local Government Certification Form in early July to the Department of Finance and expects to receive the anticipated funds by September.

Federal law specifies that the funds can only be used for unbudgeted COVID-19 costs incurred between March 1 and Dec. 30. The CARES Act funds must be spent by the end of the year.

According to the staff report by Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg and Administrative Services Director Norm Veloso, "Expenditures using Fund payments must be 'necessary.' The Department of the Treasury defines this term broadly to mean that the expenditure is reasonably necessary for its intended use in the reasonable judgment of the government officials responsible for expending CARES Act funding." Battenberg and Veloso added, "Funds may not be used to fill shortfalls in government revenue to cover expenditures that would otherwise qualify under the statute."

The breakdown of costs in the utilization of the \$209,235 are as follows: Expenses incurred to date totaling \$52,965 include payroll (paid emergency leave) of \$9,000; public health and safety procurement of medical safety supplies of \$21,000; facility enhancements - technology, social distancing and sanitation of \$22,965.

Additional recommended investment in town facilities and operations totaled \$97,750. This includes telework enhancement/infrastructure of \$16,000; facility enhancements - social distancing and sanitation of \$67,750; and public health and safety of \$14,000.

Also, payroll expenses for police officers substantially dedicated to COVID-19 responses and public health emergencies came to \$28,520.

The hardest hit sector was and continues to be small businesses. With that in mind, staff has established a Small Business Relief Program containing \$30,000. The following guidelines will pertain: Businesses must operate out of a storefront or other physical space that depends on foot traffic for business. Home-based businesses would not be eligible for the program; businesses must have at least three employees and no more than 20 employees as of March 1. Franchises, chain stores, nonprofit organizations and corporations would not be eligible; grants would be awarded for between \$500 - \$2,000 and would be exclusively for the reimbursement of expenses that enable businesses to continue to operate and comply with public health regulations related to COVID-19; and the program would award funds on a first-come, first-served basis until the \$30,000 in grant funds is awarded or Dec. 30, whichever comes first. More details and an application are available at the Planning Department's website: www.moraga.ca.us/planning or by emailing: planning@moraga.ca.us or phone: (925) 888-7040.

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