



LAH divides community services budget among local agencies

Written by Elliott Burr - Town Crier Staff Writer Wednesday, 07 October 2009

The Los Altos Hills City Council at its Sept. 24 meeting unanimously approved the distribution of \$58,000 earmarked for community services among 22 grant applicants.

The number of agencies requesting assistance increased from last year's 17 and represents the largest number of grant requests in the past five years.

"Compared to five years ago, both the number of applicants and the total funding requests have more than doubled," Finance Director Nick Pegueros wrote in a staff report.

Pegueros attributed the increase to the weak economy.

Funding all of the requests would have totaled more than \$90,000, exceeding the \$58,500 budgeted last June.

"The hardest job as a councilmember is to say 'no' to somebody," Mayor Dean Warshawsky said.

Each councilmember recommended a dollar amount to disburse to each agency based on its request and the councilmember's assessment of its assistance to local residents, as explained in the agencies' applications and presentations at the Sept. 10 council meeting. The amount approved for each petitioner equaled the average of the five councilmembers' recommended amounts. The sum of the disbursements totaled \$58,000, \$500 under the budget approved.

Warshawsky allocated no funds to the Day Worker Center of Mountain View, a new applicant that requested \$2,000. The average of the remaining votes authorized \$1,600 for the center.

"In times like these, let's provide to agencies and groups that have a huge need in terms of food, shelter, clothing and mental-health services," Warshawsky said. "I think donating to the Day Worker Center is a bit of a stretch for the town."

Councilman Jean Mordo recommended \$4,000 for the center. He spearheaded earlier fundraising efforts for the center.

"(Day workers) are the people at the bottom rung of society most hurt by the recession," Mordo said. "Many had to go back to Mexico and essentially have no work or anything."

Non-profit agencies that applied for the largest grants this year included the **Community Services Agency, \$17,000**; the Community Health Awareness Council, \$9,873; the American Red Cross, \$5,300; and Los Altos Legacies; \$5,000.

The council granted \$14,800 to CSA, \$9,200 to CHAC, \$5,100 to the Red Cross and \$2,100 to Town Crier Holiday Fund.

"The thing is, a lot of these organizations provide services we don't," said Councilwoman Ginger Summit. "We rely on the outside community."

Contact Elliott Burr at elliottb@latc.com.