



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 7, 2017

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of the Release of \$90,000 from FY 2018 Contingent Reserves to Institute a Youth Sports Scholarship Fund.

ISSUE: Approve policy and release \$90,000 of FY 2018 contingent reserve funding to Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities (RPCA) for youth sport scholarships for affiliate organizations.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council: (1) approve the release of \$90,000 in contingent reserves included within the FY 2018 Approved Budget to RPCA and (2) approve Section 2 of the attached proposed Financial Assistance Policy in order to establish a Youth Sports Scholarship Fund for affiliate organizations to increase participation by underserved and low income youth by approximately 600 additional youth participants annually.

BACKGROUND: Agreements with Sports Group affiliates are critical to Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities' mission to support the well-being of Alexandria residents by providing access to a variety of quality recreation and sports experiences. Through the FY 2018 budget process, \$90,000 was placed in contingent reserves to potentially establish a youth scholarship fund to augment scholarships offered by affiliate sport groups and expand participation for lower income youth. This funding was placed in contingent reserves pending the completion of a proposed plan/policy and agreement with affiliate sport groups. Affiliate operated programs are fee based programs and must generate the revenue to sustain their program. Many families are challenged with limited resources and seek financial assistance to support their children's participation in sports.

This presents a challenge for the sports program providers in sustaining programs to meet the growing demand for youth sports opportunities. Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) data indicate more than 58% percent of the 15,111 students enrolled in ACPS receive free or reduced lunch. In FY 2016, over 1,100 youth were provided fee assistance in RPCA and affiliates sponsored youth sports programs. Affiliate organizations are

expected to provide financial assistance to participants in addition to funding all the operational costs associated with their program. As tax supported funding continues to decrease and fees increase for recreation and sports programming, many youth may not have the opportunity to participate in organized sports. This proposed policy and funding initiative will allow affiliate organizations the ability to provide financial assistance and outreach activities to underserved families and children.

DISCUSSION: Certain organizations exist within the City whose purpose is to serve and enhance recreational opportunities for specific purposes and groups. These organizations are separate and independent from the City and provide their own leadership, organizational and operational structures. Although the stated missions of these organizations may differ, investment in public recreational facilities and programs creates a mutually beneficial partnership in which to provide quality recreation opportunities for all the individuals served by the parties, as well as the general public.

RPCA fosters strong relationships with its Sports Group Affiliates in accordance with the City's Athletic Facilities Community Allocation Policy. RPCA works closely with existing organizations on such matters as field and facility assignments, usage, scheduling, and administrative matters. The programs and services of City affiliated groups are considered an integral part of sports offerings and opportunities within the City. The relationship between the Sports Group Affiliates and RPCA is intended to enhance the athletic opportunities and enjoyment for City residents.

RPCA encourages resident participation in City programs and affiliate Sports Groups Affiliates programs. A scholarship fund policy and process has been developed and is proposed to maintain and increase low-income youth participation in Sports Groups Affiliates programs. The proposed Youth Sports Scholarship Fund is proposed to be used to provide a meaningful incentive for Sports Group Affiliates to increase low income youth registration in their recreation level programs.

RPCA recognizes that it is in the best interests of the community that it work with outside non-profit organizations in coordinating the planning and provision of recreational facilities and programs when: 1) the organization's vision and purpose are aligned with the City's vision and purpose, 2) the organization provides a service that RPCA would otherwise deliver and 3) a public benefit may be obtained through working relationships with outside organizations because each party can contribute to greater public service without relinquishing their separate identities or responsibilities. Qualified organizations sign affiliate agreements with the City. Additionally, Affiliates must offer a financial assistance program to ensure equitable access to recreational level programs.

The purpose of the proposed Youth Sports Scholarship Fund is to incent the youth affiliates to provide more scholarships to those students qualifying for free and reduced lunch assistance, which is a proxy measure for youth living in low-income households. This proposed Fund was discussed and endorsed by the Alexandria Youth Sports Advisory Board and the Alexandria Recreation and Parks Commission. Based on the reimbursement level outlined the proposed fund would allow for a 50% increase to current scholarship levels or about an additional 600 players. In discussion with the Youth Affiliates, there were several important variables discussed:

1. Participation is now hampered by the knowledge that families lack understanding of some of the sports, there are communication challenges to some families, and some players need to overcome concerns about ability before enrolling. The solution was to allow a small portion of the Scholarship Fund to go to community outreach programs in the form of clinics, classes, workshops, and demonstrations. All of these would be targeted events to specific areas of the City. The agreed upon amount of total funding of

this initiative was \$8,000 a year. Affiliates could apply for this funding up to a maximum of \$2,000 per year. Regardless of the City contribution, the affiliate still would expend resources in terms of volunteer staff and materials to host a program.

2. In order to provide scholarships the affiliates must pay the City \$12 for each player as the field use participation fee. This means that the affiliates would need to pay the City \$7,200 in total, to receive the benefit of an additional funding source for scholarship offsets. To remove this disincentive the recommendation was to start the first year of the Fund at 80% of the prior participation level. The affiliates would receive benefit for the current scholarship level they produce but the field use fee would still be charged. This is thought to be a better solution than waiving or reducing the field use fee.
3. The other point of discussion was whether to start scholarships with a base year level. For instance, scholarships apply when an affiliate exceeds the scholarships provided the previous year. This could be done with a base year that resets or it is calculated solely on the prior year total. After discussion, it was recommended that the 80% level stated in #2 above worked the best and would always be based on the prior year level. Each affiliate would need to keep increasing the number of scholarship in order to qualify for use of the Fund.
4. The last point was how to calculate the fee assistance provided from the Fund. This could be done on some percentage basis, a different amount for each league based on cost or some common number. After discussion and in light of current program pricing for each league the discussion settled on \$100 per scholarship. This allows partial reimbursement for scholarships The Affiliate program will cover the costs for administration, uniforms, officials, and insurance. The \$100 per scholarship would be efficient to administer.

FISCAL IMPACT: Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities will use the \$90,000 funding to provide reimbursement to eligible affiliate sports organizations that meet the requirements set forth in Section II of the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Financial Assistance Policy. Section I of this policy was previously approved by City Council. The funding will cover the costs of outreach programs to introduce sports to youth in underserved areas and provide individual scholarship opportunities for sports league participation. Total cost of the program will not exceed the \$90,000 threshold. The program goal is an increase of 50% low income youth participation in Sports Group Affiliate's participation numbers.

ATTACHMENT: Financial Assistance Policy

STAFF:

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