



Legislation Text

File #: 20-0800, Version: 1

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 8, 2020

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

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

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of an Additional Allocation of City Funds to the ACT Now COVID-19 Response Fund and for ALIVE! to Maintain Adequate Food Availability.

ISSUE: None

RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council:

1. Authorize the allocation from City FY 2020 snow removal funds for an additional \$100,000 of City matching funds to the ACT Now COVID-19 Response Fund;
2. Authorize the allocation from City FY 2020 snow removal funds of \$220,000 to ALIVE! to ensure adequate food supply and support for distribution efforts through the end of May; and
3. Authorize the City Manager to execute all necessary documents required.

BACKGROUND: The City and ACT for Alexandria (ACT) recognized the necessity of responding rapidly to the growing needs of our community due to the many impacts of COVID-19 and in response reinstituted the ACT Now Fund in March 2020. Council authorized that \$100,000 should be invested in the Fund as a match to community contributions. Since that time, more than \$625,000 has been raised. This includes \$20,000 from ACT and \$200,000 from Amazon.

A rapid response grants process has been put in place with community-based non-profits submitting streamlined applications each Friday, with notification and approval being provided the following week. A total of 68 grants have been awarded to provide critical supports at this time, including: emergency food, rental assistance, financial assistance, childcare, household supplies, medicine, medical supplies and medical bills, employment assistance, staffing, and educational supports for students. The total amount of funding awarded has been \$524,910. This additional funding by the City of \$100,000 will make it possible for \$200,000 in

additional grants to be provided and ongoing fundraising to continue.

City Council previously approved \$20,000 for ALIVE! to carry out large scale food distribution. These distributions took place on March 28 and April 4. The equivalent of 20,000 meals were distributed each week.

In an effort to secure adequate food supply to families across, Alexandria, ALIVE! has tried to keep pace with increased demands of supporting the COVID-19 response and has increased its assistance efforts to the city residents as requested. This has included:

- Purchasing an additional 40,000 meals for mass distribution to 8,000 people and designing a new method of distribution to increase social distancing. Doubled ALIVE!'s normal Last Saturday Food Distribution in two consecutive weeks.
- Revising methods of using volunteers to keep volunteers separated to pack food.
- Delivering extra shelf-stable food in the week preceding the initiation of city-wide closures to NPO partners, Alexandria City Public Schools (providing weekend bags to students) and others.
- Responding to a 3x (tripled) increase in the number of referrals for home delivery of groceries since March 13.
- Offering any additional support as requested to ARHA properties and an increasing number of local nonprofits.

To limit spread of the virus, ALIVE! has had to suspend individual food donations - this allows for residents to stay home. Instead, it has been sourcing food and continues to source food as best it can from local donors at low cost and from bulk donations.

Currently, ALIVE! has been able to purchase food at extremely low cost from Capital Area Food Bank, (CAFB). However, because of increasing supply chain issues, CAFB has reduced ALIVE!'s allowable amount of food for purchase to 11,000 pounds per week, which limits supply. ALIVE! does not believe this is enough to sustain current needs, nor does it have funds to sustain purchases at this level.

ALIVE! anticipates continuing the following services and will attempt to provide as much food as possible through each mechanism:

- Regular (monthly or bi-monthly) mass drive-thru food distribution
- Home delivery on referral basis
- Shelf stable quarantine food delivery in partnership with city
- Delivery to pantries and community partners/meal kitchens weekly or upon request
- Food to people moving from community shelter to hotels and to people in transitional shelters required to shelter in place
- Delivery to senior apartments

Should ALIVE! continue at this same rate, it is expected that the same level or more of food will be needed. They anticipate their costs for food to approach \$220,000 above what they have currently raised. To date, ALIVE has raised about \$70,000 in online contributions. These monetary donations have largely been supporting staff, truck rentals, bags for food, and restoring food supplies that were depleted. Without additional dollars, it will not be possible to respond to the rising needs across the community. ALIVE! Serves as the City's

primary food distribution organization so it is key that the City be financially supportive of ALIVE!'s effort.

FISCAL IMPACT: It is proposed that the City allocate \$100,000 to the ACT Now Fund and \$220,000 for the ALIVE! for adequate food distribution from unused FY 2020 snow removal funds.

ATTACHMENTS: None.

STAFF:

Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager