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EDMONDS MAYOR NELSON PROPOSES $800,000 TO HELP OUR SMALL BUSINESSES IMPACTED BY COVID-19 CRISIS

Outlines proposals from Federal CARES Act funding

(Edmonds, WA) - Edmonds Mayor Mike Nelson announced today his proposal for allocating the funds to be received by Edmonds from the Federal CARES Act.

The main focus of Nelson’s proposal is a new Business Support Grant program that would allocate up to $800,000 of the federal funds to support qualifying local small businesses through grants of up to $10,000. This program will address the heart of the economic crisis and help the most vulnerable businesses and their employees, many of whom live in our community.

“While most businesses have suffered during this economic crisis, storefront businesses that typically rely on walk-in customers and foot traffic, including those owned by people of color and women, have felt the pain the worst. Business revenue has dropped – in some cases by up to 90%,” said Nelson.

These retail, restaurant/café, personal service and entertainment establishments provide hundreds of jobs in our community for entry-level and lower-skilled workers who earn less than $20/hour.

“These grants will help our most vulnerable businesses stay open, which in turn will help employees get back to work,” said Nelson.

The funds were earmarked for local governments to manage the economic and community crisis brought on by the COVID-19 outbreak and total $1,265,100.

The grant eligibility criteria would include:
• Retail, restaurant/café, personal service, entertainment establishments – with particular consideration of businesses owned by people of color, women, veterans, and other minorities
• 5 to 30 employees
• At least 30% loss in business/revenue year over year in April and/or May
• At least one year in business as of April 1, 2020
• Not already recipients of State or County business support grants

Geographic distribution across the City will also be a consideration in the implementation of this grant program.

Details on the grant application and review process will be announced by the City soon on the City website and City Facebook page.

“Together with the $200,000 Community and Economic Relief Program my Administration put into place in early April, this proposal to disburse up to $800,000 to local businesses will mean a commitment of $1,000,000 to our local community in response to the COVID-19 crisis,” stated Mayor Nelson.

The remaining $465,100 in Cares Fund monies will be used to help defray the mounting, unbudgeted costs associated with the City’s functions, services and support in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, including such things as: extra custodial staff to be in place when public buildings reopen and facilities must be sanitized multiple times each day and other additional temporary staff requirements, additional maintenance and security measures for parks facilities, PPE gear for all public-facing city staff (specialized eyewear, gloves, wipes, etc.), the creation of extra signage, portable restroom rentals, etc.

“In the early days of the pandemic, staff bought their own equipment so they could do their job immediately,” said Public Works Director Phil Williams. “Between that and the much higher threshold of sanitization at every public-facing facility, we, like most businesses and even households, have a raft of unexpected bills.”

Details must still be worked out, and the City Council must approve the program. The Mayor’s proposal will be scheduled for initial City Council discussion and consideration at next Tuesday’s Committee of the Whole Council Meeting, which will be conducted virtually via Zoom starting at 7pm. It is expected that a final City Council decision on the proposal would be made at the following City Council meeting on June 16.

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