

**TUMWATER BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 7, 2017 Page 1**

CONVENE: 5:06 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Pete Kmet and Councilmembers Joan Cathey, Nicole Hill, and Tom Oliva.

Staff: City Administrator John Doan, Assistant City Administrator Heidi Behrends Cerniwey, Volunteer Coordinator Monica Langford, and Recording Secretary Tom Gow.

CHANGES TO AGENDA: Mayor Kmet added a review of a proposed letter to the Legislature.

NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECT AND EVENT GRANT PROGRAM REVIEW: Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey provided some history on the Neighborhood Matching Grant Program.

Jim Diers, a recognized resource for community engagement and building energy to attract people to engage and invest in cities, neighborhoods, and community helped the Council facilitate the groundwork for establishing the City's Strategic Priorities, Vision, and Mission. Mr. Diers is from Seattle and is a national and international speaker promoting neighborhoods. Vibrant neighborhoods and diverse and engaged residents are elements of the City's vision and mission. Strategic Priorities speak to building community recognized for quality. The Council was strategic about placing the program as one of the City's priorities. One of the main goals of the Neighborhood Matching Grant Program was incentivizing new behavior and connections within the neighborhood.

The program was launched in 2015 with a budget allocation of \$10,000 for the 2015-2016 biennial budget. Policies were developed on the goals of the program and the mission and vision for Tumwater neighborhoods. The program included two elements of neighborhood project grants and event grants. The budget allocation was split between the two programs with \$8,500 allocated for neighborhood project grants, which are considered competitively by a review process. Project grants have a limit of \$1,000 with a required match of either in-kind, cash, or volunteer resources. To meet the goals of the program and build community connections, the intent was for neighbors to work together. A component was added to the project grants requiring the development of a work party to accomplish the project.

The budget for event grants is \$1,500. Event grants are awarded up to \$250 with a 50% match to incentivize community connections. Event grants are awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Coordinator Langford reported in 2015, the City opened two project grant

TUMWATER BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 7, 2017 Page 2

cycles. The first cycle was in May 2015. The City received 11 applications with three projects receiving a funding award. The projects included a walking path, landscaping project, and a sidewalk extension. Two of the projects have been completed with one project pending because of unanticipated project complexities. The neighborhood subsequently requested an extension but failed to submit paperwork. The City plans to close the grant application to enable the neighborhood to reapply for another project.

The second project grant cycle was opened in October 2015. The City received two project applications with both projects funded. One project was the Irving Street repair. The project was completed. The second applicant cancelled its project because of the lack of neighborhood support. In 2015, the program funded \$2,599 in projects.

The first grant cycle in 2016 opened in March. The City received three project applications with all three receiving a grant award. Two projects were completed with the third project scheduled for completion by spring.

The second grant cycle in August funded three projects. Two of the projects are neighborhood entrance improvement projects and the third is a playground upgrade to include the addition of picnic tables to a neighborhood park. All three projects are scheduled for completion by summer 2017.

During 2016, the Neighborhood Matching Grant Program funded \$5,900 in projects.

During 2015 and 2016, three event applications were approved for funding with \$700 awarded in 2015 and \$500 in 2016 for two events. The third applicant cancelled the event.

Each program participant completes an evaluation of the programs. Feedback has been very positive with neighbors attesting to neighborhood participation and appreciation of the program to help support the community.

Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey commented on the extensive application process and attention to detail required for each project. The program has provided a venue for cultivating neighborhood leadership. Staff assists each applicant with a goal to afford success in completion of the application process and completion of the project.

Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey reviewed how the programs are promoted and the number of volunteer hours completed in 2015 and 2016. A survey sent to 700 volunteers by mail/email resulted in 32 responses. Some level of knowledge exists about the programs.

TUMWATER BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 7, 2017 Page 3

Initial principles and policies of the programs include:

- Expectations
- Comparables
- Low barrier (definition, application, payment, etc.) Tumwater has defined neighborhoods as three or more homes. Applicants are not required to be a formal neighborhood association.
- Balance risk (contract, insurance, etc.)
- Value neutral – program policies don't differentiate between project types
- Incentivize new connections
- Dual purpose – accomplish neighborhood goals, e.g. storm ponds
- Equitable – grant selection committee
- Communicate success
- Measurement – defining success

Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey invited the committee's discussion on the budget allocation, grant cycle, type of grants, frequency, grant amount, match requirements, selection process, and reimbursement process. One program goal was to incentivize new activities in neighborhoods. The current policy limits a grant to each neighborhood once every three years. Project grants are limited to one project at one time. Applications are not eligible for maintenance on a previously funded grant, as neighborhoods should have a plan for maintaining the project. The match amount includes a requirement for a work party.

Mayor Kmet asked whether any inquires about projects fell outside the scope of the program. Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey said some feedback was on the frequency of the event grants as some neighborhoods host regular events each year. The grant program offers neighborhoods the opportunity to host different types of events. For project applications, the committee previously discussed concerns surrounding the funding of stormwater projects. She referred to an informational sheet prepared by staff to help explain eligibility requirements for stormwater pond projects.

Coordinator Langford added that most groups inquiring about the program are aware of the project grant amount.

Mayor Kmet spoke to the possibility of considering other types of projects completed by neighborhood volunteers that are specific to assisting others, such as building a ramp for an elderly person or replacing windows or yard maintenance, etc. He asked whether those types of projects could be considered, as most would involve an individual's home. Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey replied that

TUMWATER BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 7, 2017 Page 4

program goals speak to the project creating community benefit. Additionally, there are limitations for projects located on private property. However, it is possible during the upcoming evaluation of the volunteer program, to consider needs and challenges in the community and where partnering might be a possibility to solve some community needs. Staff has initiated some discussions with local non-profits and police and fire personnel to determine the scale of the need and how the City's volunteer program and other resources could be utilized to help fill those needs. There are many complex challenges in the community, and as the City explores code enforcement transition over the year, the discussion could likely include ways to help some of those situations to assist neighbors helping neighbors.

Councilmember Cathey asked about tying the program with projects completed by youths for the community or whether the program promotes and encourages youth to identify a specific project within their neighborhood. Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey said discussions have occurred with community groups, such as The Boys and Girls Club about creating an event in a neighborhood and how the event might meet the goals of the program.

Councilmember Cathey asked whether youths participating last summer in the City's youth program were Tumwater residents. Mayor Kmet advised that the youths were students from the Tumwater School District. Councilmember Cathey remarked that the Neighborhood Project Matching Grant Program could be an opportunity to engage youth civic involvement.

Councilmember Hill suggested considering outreach to high school seniors who must complete community service hours. Mayor Kmet said many students are fulfilling the community service hour requirement when they are a sophomore or junior. Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey noted that part of the communications plan for a grant cycle includes contact with schools. Today, it has been difficult to convey information into the schools as more rules have been implemented. Most schools have converted to electronic methods as well. Many of the students engage in short-term volunteer projects.

Mayor Kmet said the match requirement could potentially be a deterrent especially if the project requires a substantial amount of materials. Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey replied that volunteer hours are matched at \$20 per hour. The program requires reimbursement of actual expenses, rather than paying for volunteers.

Mayor Kmet offered the possibility of decreasing the match to a 40/60 formula rather than a 50/50 match as an incentive to attract more project proposals if the match represents a barrier. Coordinator Langford replied

TUMWATER BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 7, 2017 Page 5

that the match hasn't been problematic because most groups have sufficient volunteer hours.

Councilmember Hill commented on aspects of increasing the frequency of grants to neighborhood groups. She's considered the option of affording grants to no more than two during the first two years for start-up projects or no more than one grant every other year for established or regular events.

Mayor Kmet said another initial program goal was encouraging more groups to work together to develop projects and events.

Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey commented that one of the requirements for the event grant is expenditure of the funds within the calendar year. Project grants are afforded a year from the date of award with extensions provided when needed.

Councilmember Cathey asked whether the City's communication methods about the program include any suggestions or examples of different types of projects. Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey said the program's brochure includes a list of project ideas.

Councilmember Cathey inquired about the possibility of the Mayor and the Council identifying a project within the City that might qualify for a project grant that could also generate volunteer participation, such as installation of sign or planting trees. Councilmember Oliva added that another project/event could be based on a theme, such as an Earth Day or a Night Out event.

Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey agreed the suggestion would provide a good messaging opportunity for promoting the program to the community based on a specific day or event.

Councilmember Oliva asked about problems encountered that might benefit from a revision to improve the program. Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey recommended continuing efforts of refining the program especially as goals develop that have led to some changes over the last several years. At this time, she doesn't envision a need for any dramatic program shifts. The leadership and clarity afforded by the Council of the program has led to building new connections within the community through the social and physical structure.

Councilmember Hill asked about changes to refine the stormwater projects. Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey said refinements include the addition of the work party element, revisions to the marketing materials, and ensuring that issues are addressed. The application was also updated to reflect any revisions.

TUMWATER BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 7, 2017 Page 6

Councilmember Hill asked for input from the committee on stormwater pond and private road projects. She has some concerns about private road projects because of the different road standards and those types of projects encompassing more infrastructure improvements rather than producing a neighborhood/community benefit. Some private roads require more improvement than a \$1,000 grant could provide.

Mayor Kmet spoke to a private road within his neighborhood and the dissolution of the neighborhood homeowners association. Neighborhood users of the road are struggling with reconstituting the organization to oversee the collection of funds to maintain the road. He suspects the issue is occurring in many other neighborhoods in the City, especially on Tumwater Hill. Many of the newer subdivisions include private streets. While he is reluctant to include private streets as a project option at this point, he is not ready to preclude an opportunity.

Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey commented on a successful road project that dramatically improved the aesthetics of the street.

Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey reported concerns surrounding grants for stormwater ponds were addressed by including a work party element, defining the use of contractors, and sharing resources from Public Works.

Mayor Kmet supported maintaining the course for the biennium for awarding grants for stormwater pond projects. Should the City experience a large demand, the committee could make some refinements.

The committee discussed frequency of projects and events. It was noted that the Carlyon neighborhood sponsors a neighborhood picnic each year. Mayor Kmet noted the neighborhood also includes a small park located on a small piece of City right-of-way that might be eligible for a project grant.

Assistant City Administrator Behrends Cerniwey reported the City accepts event applications during the year and the grants are awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis. Grants are awarded to neighborhoods once every three years. The City is closing the application period for projects following the end of Tumwater University at the end of March.

The committee agreed to maintain the current course for both grant programs.

**OTHER
BUSINESS:**

Mayor Kmet reported the Washington Environmental Council recently contacted the City with a request to consider becoming a signatory to a

**TUMWATER BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 7, 2017 Page 7**

letter seeking support of a surcharge to the Model Toxics Control Act tax measure supporting environmental programs throughout the state. The tax is assessed on hazardous substances (primarily petroleum-based). Because consumption of petroleum-based products has decreased, environmental organizations are concerned that many environmental actions would no longer be funded. The City's legislative agenda supports programs providing continued support to local government. The request falls within that the City's legislative agenda. He asked for feedback on his plan to sign the letter as the City's representative. The letter is to the State Legislature. Tax revenue is split 50% to support state environmental programs and grants for local government environmental programs.

CONSENSUS: **The Budget and Finance Committee supported the request by Mayor Kmet to sign the letter.**

ADJOURNMENT: **With there being no further business, Mayor Kmet adjourned the meeting at 6:16 p.m.**