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PRESS RELEASE

City of Winter Park approves \$1.9 million of funding for community support in response to COVID-19

WINTER PARK, FL, an internationally recognized, award winning city with multiple accredited agencies (April 10, 2020) On April 8, in a focused effort to assist the physical and financial needs of our community, the Winter Park City Commission and Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Board approved \$1.9 million of funds to help during this unprecedented COVID-19 crisis. Below are the areas identified as community hardships and where funds have been assigned to assist:

Emergency utility assistance (EUA)

- In partnership with Heart of Florida United Way® 211 Program, the city approved up to \$50,000 in direct and matching grants to help customers pay their electric utility bills. The city approved a direct contribution of \$25,000 and another \$25,000 in dollar for dollar matching funds to match community contributions over the next 90 days.
- If you are a Winter Park electric utility customer who is need of assistance please:
 - Call United Way [2-1-1](tel:2-1-1)
 - Text your zip code to [898-211](tel:898-211)
 - Chat with a 2-1-1 representative by going to HFUW.org/Chat
 - Start the process online by going to HFUW.org/GetHelp
- The city will not disconnect service for non-payment until further notice. Customers in need should contact [407-599-3220](tel:407-599-3220) to establish a repayment plan.

Electric fuel rate reduction

- The city approved a temporary suspension of electric fuel costs on residential and commercial customer's bills for one month. Fuel costs make up approximately 18% of residential customer's bill and 22% of commercial customer's bills. This fuel rate holiday is a \$750,000 savings to the city's electric customers overall.

Small business utility assistance

- The city approved a \$500,000 small business utility bill assistance program that will credit the equivalent of one month's water, sewer and electric bill up to \$2,500 on the utility bill of any Winter Park business that:
 - was closed due to COVID-19 OR
 - is a restaurant that had to limit operations due to a government order, AND
 - has less than 100 employees, AND
 - is defined as a small business by the Small Business Administration
- Interested businesses can apply for this assistance at cityofwinterpark.org/SBUA

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Residential food support

- When residents suddenly find themselves unemployed, providing meals often becomes challenging. Realizing this hardship, the city has partnered with two organizations to help provide food and meals to Winter Park neighbors in need. A \$25,000 contribution was approved to Second Harvest Food Bank and \$75,000 contribution was approved to Feed the Need Florida.
- Feed the Need Florida is a program of 4Roots & the Florida Department of Agriculture that partners with local restaurants and caterers to offer free meals to residents in need.
- A limited number of meals will be available for Winter Park residents to pick up beginning Tuesday, April 14, and every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, from 3 to 5 p.m., while funding lasts, at the Winter Park Community Center located at 721 W. New England Ave.
- Each meal is served cold, in a reheatable container and will include one starch (i.e. rice, noodles or similar) and one protein (i.e. beans, sausage or similar).
- Winter Park residents can pick up meals via drive thru or walk up at the Community Center. Social distancing of 6' will be required.

Microloan program

- In partnership with the Winter Park Chamber of Commerce and the Winter Park community, the city approved a \$250,000 contribution in matching support for locally raised funds.
- These funds will support up to \$5,000 micro-loans to struggling small businesses.
- Details for this program are still being finalized and will be presented for CRA Board approval at a future date.

Energy efficiency

- Under the city's Sustainability Division, \$30,000 was approved to be distributed in \$500 payments to businesses willing to apply to the Green Business Program. This program promotes energy audits and offers suggestions to save money through energy efficiency with no requirement to make changes.
- Applications for the Green Business Program can be accessed at cityofwinterpark.org/GreenBusiness

How you can help – please donate

- If you would like to join the city, CRA and its partners in assisting our neighbors in need during this pandemic, you can help by making donations in the following ways:
 - Heart of Florida United Way 211 Emergency Utility Assistance (EUA) Program at cityofwinterpark.org/EUA
 - Feed The Need Florida at feedtheneedfl.org
 - Second Harvest Food Bank at feedhopenow.org

"This unexpected pandemic has impacted all of us in different ways," said City Manager Randy Knight. "Whether it has affected our physical health, financial health or both, many of us are facing hardships that we never thought we would. During tough times, we always see our Winter Park community come together," continued Knight. "I'm so proud to live and work in a city that has thoughtful leaders who care, and supportive organizations that rally around us. Thank you to our residents, businesses and partners – we are in this together and we will get through this together."

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