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### **Eagle Journal Candidate Questions**

#### **Mike Donovan Response**

**No. 6 - Currently the city provides approximately \$1.4 million in community grants to various civic organizations throughout the city. Should the grant program continue and if so, at what level?**

##### Donovan Response:

Yes, I believe we should continue the community grant program. Community grants should be made to organizations that use the funds to improve our community and serve the residents of Coronado. The grant process should be as objective as possible and provide clear direction on what information is needed from the requesting organization for evaluating the request.

The current process starts with submittal of a Community Organization Grant Funding Application for a given fiscal year. In addition to requesting information on the organization itself, other information submitted includes the organization's total operating budget, amount of funding requested from the city, metrics and measurements to be evaluated in the decision process, an explanation of what was accomplished with the previous-year grant funds (when applicable) and how they benefited the community, and how the newly-requested grant will positively serve the community.

During the overall budget planning process (usually during a May city council meeting), the grant applications are provided to city council members and made available to the public for review and comment. City staff also provides a summary table with the list of applicants, the previous two years of grant funding, amount requested, total operating budget for the organization, and the grant request percent of the organization's total operating budget. The public can provide written input to the council prior to the meeting. At the council meeting, representatives from each requesting organization are given the opportunity to present their request and field questions from council members, and the public is invited to comment. Then the council makes the final decision on which grants are approved and at what level of funding, and staff incorporates them into the city general fund budget.

One way to improve transparency and visibility of the funding received by community organizations is to also include the costs to the city for support of major special events associated with some of the organizations receiving city grants. The major special events funding is reviewed at an October council meeting when most of the city costs for these events are waived, meaning the organization involved is not required to pay for the city services (security, police,

public services, and other miscellaneous costs). This in-kind support constitutes an additional grant. This is public information during the October council meeting, but better transparency would be accomplished if these costs were presented along with the grant fund summary in May, so a complete financial picture could be seen at one time. Another improvement to the process could be for the city to conduct spot-check financial audits on requesting organizations.

Depending on how the funds provided to the Coronado Unified School District are accounted for, the total amount of annual community grants is 2-3% of the general fund budget for FY16-17. This seems to be a reasonable amount but we could benchmark this with other similar cities as a comparison check

In general, the current grant process provides comprehensive information for evaluating requesting organization's activities and operating budgets, and allows for the transparency needed in the granting of funds by the city.