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Subject: Fwd: Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form
Date: Tuesday, April 27, 2021 5:42:58 PM

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From: "HarrisonburgVA.gov via HarrisonburgVA.gov"
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Date: April 27, 2021 at 5:42:17 PM EDT
To: "Michael E. Parks" <Michael.Parks@harrisonburgva.gov>
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Submitted on: Tuesday, April 27, 2021 - 5:42pm

Name: Beth Bland, Representing Valley Program for Aging Services
Type of Meeting: Harrisonburg City Council
Date of Meeting: Tue, 04/27/2021
Agenda Item Number: 6a Budget Hearing
Comment:
Comments on the Proposed Budget for FY2021-22

Good evening, I am Beth Bland, Director of Senior Services for Harrisonburg and Rockingham County with Valley Program for Aging Services (VPAS). VPAS empowers adults 60 yrs and older with the resources and opportunities they need to lead engaged lives. We are requesting level funding of \$26,190.

During FY19-20 VPAS served 465 City residents and experienced increased needs in the following areas:

- Individuals seeking information and assistance – 34%
- Individuals receiving meals on wheels – 36%
- Number of meals served – 11%

Transportation to medical appointments remained level despite being in the midst of a pandemic and many medical offices going to telehealth appointments.

As a result of COVID-19 older adults were being told to stay home as they were most at risk for harm from the virus. Many independent older adults that never thought they would need our services suddenly did.

In March of 2020 VPAS, like many others, closed our doors. However, our hearts remained open. Here is what happened over the last 13 months.

- All services were offered by telephone, including case management and M/care counseling services.
- Volunteers were told to stay home as most were older adults themselves.
- Staff took over meal delivery – we kept our staff employed.
- Meal delivery was reduced to all 5 meals being delivered at one time.
- For those needing extra food support we provided fresh produce boxes that included meat, eggs, and shelf stable items.
- All senior center members were offered meals on wheels.
- A telephone checking service was implemented and our clients were called on a regular basis to ensure their wellness, address needs, and reduce social isolation.
- Hygiene bags were delivered with items such as toilet paper, tissues, soap, lotion, etc.
- Adult undergarments and nutrition drinks were delivered.
- Emergency groceries were purchased.
- Activity kits were provided to keep minds active.
- Wellness and caregiver programs were offered virtually.
- Additional caregiver support services were implemented as our caregivers have struggled during COVID-19.
- We worked with the CSHD to get our clients vaccinated.
- We worked with Rockingham County Fire and Rescue to get older adults in our community vaccinated.

And when life gave us lemons we made lemonade. Over the past year the VPAS Board of Directors and senior leadership team have been working on a new strategic plan to guide our direction through 2024. We learned a lot through COVID-19. We learned that we can do things differently and, in some cases, better. Currently we are working on our re-opening plans which we hope will be sometime in July 2021. When we do reopen we plan to have a broader reach throughout the community by offering VPAS Cafes and Aging with Confidence programs in more locations. We are actively working to secure the designation of being a Dementia Friendly Harrisonburg Rockingham and held our first steering committee meeting today (April 27). Please feel free to contact me with any questions or if you need additional information.

Thank you,
Beth Bland

Contact: No

Contact Info: beth@vpas.info
540-810-5231

Hello Madam Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council,

My name is Diane McCarthy. I am representing the Harrisonburg Rockingham Child Day Care Center.

First, I would like to thank the City Manager and City Staff for their work to make the application process for Civic and Community Grant funding more equitable and for developing the review procedures.

Providing affordable high quality childcare and early learning is the mission of Harrisonburg Rockingham Child Day Care Center. As you know the pandemic has changed the landscape of work but the need for child care remains. COVID regulations limit out enrollment allowing us to serve at half of our former capacity and thus significantly reducing our tuition revenue. Women have dropped out of the workforce at an alarming rate, yet families on the front lines have continued to work. Typically, these essential workers fall on the lower end of our sliding fee scale and depend on the reduced rates. We are requesting funds for overall agency support. Without funding at some level, we will be forced to raise tuition fees to make ends meet, creating a hardship for our most vulnerable families.

While our capacity is half of what it was, our budget is not able to be cut by half. We are grateful for your support this fiscal year, the local and state CARES relief grants, and the generosity of the community which have kept us afloat through these unusual times. As we look forward, affordable childcare is a critical component of economic recovery.

We appreciate your continued dedication to the children and families of our community and thank you for considering our request.

