

Montpelier Community Fund Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 14, 2015, 4:40 to 5:45
City Manager's Meeting Room

Attending: Bernie Lambek, Judy Stermer, John Van Deren, Ron Wild, Christine Zachai, John Hollar and Jean Olson

1. Group gathered to discuss how MCF and the City deal with outlier requests for large grants and to what extent should MCF continue to honor the historical pattern of grant amounts.
2. The MCF policies state that the board will consider, among other criteria: Prior sums the applicant has received through ballot initiatives or other city funding sources.
3. Jean talked about the changing landscape and questioned if it makes sense to have the same criteria. Most applications are asking for program money but what about capital expenses? Also suggested the idea of limiting applications to organizations with budgets of less than a certain amount.
4. Mayor Hollar suggested that our criteria for applications are very general and perhaps creating more specific guidelines might help the MCF process.
5. This question was posed to the group by Jean, "If we could start from scratch, what would this process look like?" The following ideas emerged:
 - a. Two grant rounds: one round with smaller grants, one round of grants for new initiatives (focused on economic generation, that might span multi-year funding support)
 - b. Creating a maximum ask amount for applications
 - c. The City takes some of the larger asks and deals with funding these directly, instead of these applicants going through the MCF process.
 - d. Giving preference to new/one-time projects
6. Ron suggested that there might be applicants to the MCF that are actually core city services, such as Just Basics, County Diversion and the Teen Center. Mayor Hollar said the city doesn't provide these services and that the MCF process is the city's way of supporting these social services. But Ron worried that if we don't spin some of these services off (to be dealt with directly by the City), the MCF will need more funding.
7. The group came back around to the idea of beefing up the funding priorities and application guidelines. Discussed what funding priorities the MCF should have and if these priorities would change and how often. The idea was suggested that the MCF could focus on basic human needs, arts/vitality and economic generation. Many in the group worried about the criteria getting too narrow. Jean mentioned her desire to keep criteria broad.
8. After discussing priorities and the process, the group came around to the idea that there aren't huge changes needed to the MCF funding and application process.
9. Moving forward, the group agreed that the following is important:
 - a. Not in favor of spinning off groups/organizations from the MCF process
 - b. Preserve the process, meaning organizations apply to the MCF for funding of projects
 - c. No cap on application requests
 - d. Remove criteria (B) from MCF policy: Prior sums the applicant has received through ballot initiatives or other city funding sources. Bernie suggested that Council could make a motion to remove this criterion from the MCF policy.
 - e. MCF board should fine tune priorities and work on more specific guidelines for applicants to follow. MCF should come back to council with recommendations.

10. On the topic of more funding to keep up with the number/dollar amount of requests, Mayor Hollar and Jean Olson suggested that the MCF should consider the rate of increase in the overall City budget as a guideline for how much funding MCF can expect to grant to applicants.
11. Group set next meeting date for July 12th from 4:30 to 5:30PM, location TBD to review/discuss funding criteria for FY18.