


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 18, 2007

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF A REQUEST TO PROVIDE FUNDING TO
CONTINUE YOUTH PROGRAMS AT ESSEX HOUSE

ISSUE: Consideration of stopgap funding for the Essex House Youth Program.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council allocate \$40,000 from the FY 2007 General Fund Contingent Reserves to provide funding to the Alexandria Olympic Boys and Girls Club so that their Essex House Youth Program can continue.

DISCUSSION: The Alexandria Olympic Boys and Girls Club is requesting stopgap assistance from the City to meet a current financial shortfall to support their Essex House Program that serves youth. The initial request for funding was made in a letter to Mayor William Euille in October 2006. A response was provided in City Council Request #06-209E, stating that no funds were available through the Department of Human Services in FY 2007. In addition, due to a mistake on their part, the Boys and Girls club did not apply for a Youth Fund grant for FY 2007.

The Boys and Girls Club's FY 2005 Youth Fund application, in the amount of \$50,000, was not funded by the Youth Policy Commission Grant Review Committee. However, after making an appeal to the City for funding, the Boys and Girls Club did receive \$25,000 funding from the Department of Human Services in FY 2005. In FY 2006, a Youth Fund Grant of \$25,000 was awarded to support the program.

Over the past several years, funding for the Essex House Youth Program from other sources has also continued to decline. The financial support from Homes for America, the organization that manages Essex House, ended approximately two years ago. The Alexandria City Public Schools previously contracted with the Boys and Girls Club to run the Parent Resource Center at Essex House. ACPS has since opted to staff the Resource Center themselves, providing 1.0 FTE after school during the year when school is in session.

In almost all circumstances providing City funding to fill in financial gaps created when non-profits do not submit timely funding requests is not a policy that the City should follow. However, in this instance the Boys and Girls Club is operating a much needed program in a high rise building which houses many low income households. It is estimated that there are some 208 children living in the building. If the City does not provide this funding, the Boys and Girls Club will have to terminate the program – just as the summer months start with the highest program demand. As a result, the City is faced with a dilemma in which it has to decide which has the higher value – the one of appearing to reward a group that does not seek available funding in a timely way – or one that ensures that a needed program for low-income at-risk children continues.

Although the Boys and Girls Club established the Essex House program based on a request from the City several years ago to provide services on site, future operations should be based on solid financial commitments. Human Services staff will work with the Boys and Girls Club staff to develop a program at Essex House that can be administered based on a realistic assessment of possible future funding. The agency has complied with all requests for financial information by the Office of Management and Budget and the Department of Human Services regarding this request. The Alexandria Community Trust provided a consultant who conducted an organizational assessment, which was completed in March 2007. Information from this assessment will also be helpful as they continue to make critical decisions regarding the operation of the program. The objective of the City and the Boys and Girls Club is to meet the critical needs of the youth at Essex House in a proactive fashion, rather than responding in an ad hoc manner to various complaints, nuisances or illegal activities.

The emergency funding of \$40,000 should stabilize the program in the short term. The Boys and Girls Club has been awarded a two-year grant for FY 2008 and FY 2009 from the Youth Fund, with funding at \$22,000 for each fiscal year. The second year of funding is contingent upon City Council approval of funding for the Youth Fund in the City's FY 2009 Budget. Additional non-City sources of funding will be solicited.

FISCAL IMPACT: The requested allocation would require \$40,000 from the City's General Fund Contingent Reserves. The contingent reserve now has \$330,000 available.

STAFF:

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager
Debra R. Collins, Director of Human Services
Suzanne Chis, Director of Family Services, DHS
Ronald Frazier, Director of Youth Services, DHS