

Fund *from A1*

pandemic-related expenses.

It was reported that state auditors found that, of the \$91 million in reimbursements that governments requested by Sept. 22, 65 percent was for payroll or leave costs.

Kip Memmott, director of the state Audits Division, was reported to have summarized the findings in a letter to the Department of Administrative Services, which is tasked with distributing the funds.

"Spending on more direct services to affected populations — such as homeless services, food delivery to residents, and quarantining individuals — has been relatively low by comparison," Memmott wrote.

Local Spending

Comparatively, Cottage Grove has used the funds largely for items other than payroll and employee leave.

In all, payroll expenses, which were geared toward employee hours substantially dedicated to COVID-related work, came to about \$9,656, which paid for tasks such as the building of sneeze guards and installing sanitation stations.

The largest personnel-oriented funding went to paid sick leave and paid family medical leave, which is required by law, at almost \$41,000.

Other categories of the city's spending included \$3,505 for medical and protective supplies, \$4,218 in communication and enforcement and \$15,450 for the application of public safety measures.

An amount of \$29,692 also went toward disinfecting public areas and facilities, which involved the sanitation of bathrooms and playground equipment as well as the installation of REME HALOs, an in-duct air purifier technology.

The purifiers were installed in public buildings such as City Hall, the Community Center, the city jail and the water and sewer plants.

About \$30,414 was also dedicated to small business interruption grants, which targeted local businesses suffering from the effects of COVID-related restrictions.

A considerable portion of the allocated funding, about \$135,305, was spent on care for homeless populations. This category included the purchase and maintenance of portable toilets and site preparation for the newly established Community Sharing Warming Shelter.

Tents, a defibrillator and a forthcoming mobile shower trailer were included in these expenditures.

The city had originally intended on purchasing the Pallet Shelters currently on site at the warming shelter. However, it later came to light that because

the county had already purchased the shelters using CARES Act funds, Cottage Grove could not use the same funds to procure them from the county.

Currently, the county retains ownership of the shelters and is lending them to other cities such as Florence and Oakridge as well.

Around \$59,000 in remaining funds are being requested in the current window of reimbursement for other expenditures such as technological improvements to the city's telework equipment, which allows for public access to virtual public meetings.

The equipment upgrades are planned to continue offering virtual meetings and online streaming as a new option for the public.

As no additional federal funding for municipalities has yet been authorized, Meyers is detailing other related expenditures in hopes of making the case to higher levels of government that cities could use

more aid. "We are going to actually document and say, 'Here's where we're using all the coronavirus money that you provided to us. But here's another 100 and some thousand that we've spent that we also need — that we spent our own money to take care of COVID-related stuff,'" he said.

In the meantime, a resolution to appropriate the federal relief aid reim-

bursments back into the budget is scheduled for the Feb. 8 Cottage Grove City Council meeting.

City council meetings can be attended online by clicking on the GoTo-Meeting link provided on the corresponding agenda page at www.cottagegrove.org/meetings.

Note: Some expenditures were rounded off for the purposes of this article and may not reflect exact dollars upon calculation.

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COVID-dominated landscape. "We kind of took the approach of spending [the funds] on things and we tried not to spend as much as we could have on actual salaries or wages, which were already in the budget," he said.

Some examples of such spending included the purchase of portable toilets and sanitizing stations for public use and technological upgrades to the city's virtual public meeting equipment.

Although the U.S. Department of the Treasury changed its policy months ago, allowing the relief money to be used for emergency and public safety staff, Meyers said the city opted instead to stick with what he interprets as the original intent of the relief package.

Meyers estimates that police officers, for instance, spent more than \$68,000 worth of time cleaning vehicles, jails and extra disinfection which was required by new COVID-related standards, but such staff hours were already budgeted and so left out of the requests for reimbursement.

However, staff who took leave because of COVID, such as those needing childcare for children no longer in school or those caring for someone with COVID, were reimbursed with the relief funds.

As reported by *The Oregonian* in October, state auditors found in a review that cities, counties and other local governments had used the majority of federal coronavirus relief money available to them for payroll and employee leave costs.

Congress sent \$1.4 billion to Oregon last year as part of the national relief fund to help states pay for

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