

Funding from A1

year when \$100,000 was set aside to assist businesses impacted by the pandemic.

Cuts to a planned “visioning” project, city layoffs and taxes from alcohol, cigarette and marijuana sales contributed to the city’s ability to establish the fund, said City Manager Richard Meyers in an interview at the time.

About a quarter of the funds were set aside to be used as a matching grant with Business Oregon and the remaining \$74,500 were to be loaned through the city’s program.

While the matching grant fortuitously ballooned to \$85,000 and was spent on aiding 11 local businesses, the loans saw only a lukewarm response.

With a little more than \$30,000 still in the program, half of the remaining funds were approved to be funneled to the Community Sharing program.

The remaining funds in the emergency loan program will be converted to a grant program, also managed by Community LendingWorks, to cover a portion of water, wastewater and

stormwater bills for small local businesses that were closed or restricted by state orders.

Meanwhile, Commu-

fers utility assistance to Cottage Grove ratepayers who are in jeopardy of having their water shut off by the city due

will be shut off to qualify. Those who do qualify may receive a one-time payment of up to \$300 to cover costs. The pay-

program, highlighting a deep need for utility bill assistance in the community.

Both the residential and business assistance programs are anticipated to be ready in mid-March.

In addition, the city is automatically processing credits for the turn-on fees for businesses which turned off their city utility service when they were ordered closed.

Another of the assistance package proposals will see parklets installed for downtown restaurants.

Parklets are extensions of sidewalks into parking spaces and provide a small space for people to dine or relax.

Plans were in motion last year to initiate a pilot program for up to three parklets on Main Street, though financial and logistical issues delayed the project.

However, Travel Oregon announced late last month that the City of Cottage Grove has been awarded a \$30,000 investment through Travel Oregon’s Destination Ready program, which will go directly toward the parklet development project.

Originally announced as a \$250,000 opportunity, Travel Oregon re-

ceived more than \$4 million in requests through 135 applications.

In response to this high demand, the agency reviewed internal program dollars and reallocated resources to increase the award amount to \$913,000, which allowed 34 projects to be awarded across the state.

The \$30,000 award will fund the installation of all three parklets in downtown Cottage Grove and city staff have already begun efforts to install the facilities as quickly as possible.

Though the names of the businesses receiving parklets have not yet been released, downtown restaurants Jack Sprats and Axe and Fiddle had previously expressed interest in the idea.

In a more modest bid to relieve the stresses of pandemic restrictions, the City of Cottage Grove is also working with the local Oregon Liquor Control Commission office to waive 2021 city liquor license renewal fees for those businesses which were closed by state orders.

The move is intended to benefit mainly small and local businesses.

“It’s not a lot, but every little bit helps,” said Meyers of the plan.

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nity Sharing Executive Director Mike Fleck said the \$15,000 going into the H2O Program will make a significant impact on the community.

“This will be a dramatic increase in the amount we normally would be giving out,” he said.

Fleck, who is also a city councilor, stated in a Feb. 22 city council meeting that he did not have a conflict of interest in the matter.

“Community Sharing is where I am employed, but every dollar of the H2O Program goes directly to the client,” he explained. “Our agency does not receive any sort of administrative fee for doing that.”

The H2O Program, which has served the area for nine years, of-

to outstanding bills.

The program is funded almost entirely through donations from ratepayers, who produce an average of about \$1,000 in assistance per year.

On the 15th of each month, Community Sharing opens up available funds and distributes payments on a first-come, first-serve basis until funding is depleted. Leftover funds roll over into the following month.

Normally, one would have to earn less than 185 percent of the federal poverty level to be eligible, however that number has increased to 300 percent during the pandemic.

One must also produce a notice from the city warning that utilities

ment is limited to once per year.

The program’s level of impact varies year to year.

Typically, between six and 10 households are aided through the program per year, according to the nonprofit’s register. Though last year saw only three payouts, five households have already qualified for aid this year.

Fleck noted that the numbers were not reflective of actual demand, however, and that additional funding would yield a much higher turnout.

Staff at Community Sharing estimated that, were funding unlimited, an additional 15 households per month would likely benefit from the

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South Lane Mental Health
“Alas”

 South Lane Mental Health, located in Cottage Grove, Oregon, is now providing mental health services for Spanish speaking individuals. Our program, Alas, serves children and adults, individuals, couples, and families. Our services include case management, group therapy, individual therapy and peer support services. We offer in-person services or remote services via telehealth. We can assist with your computer needs if you prefer Telehealth services. For more information and/or to make an appointment, please call 541-942-3939
 South Lane Mental Health, ubicado en Cottage Grove, Oregon, ahora ofrece servicios para gente hispanohablante. Nuestro programa, Alas, apoya a jóvenes, individuos, parejas y familias. Nuestros servicios incluyen el manejo de casos (navegación de recursos y educación comunitaria), terapia de grupo y terapia para individuos. Ofrecemos servicios en persona, por teléfono y por video. Nosotros podemos ayudar con sus necesidades de tecnología si prefiere recibir servicios por teléfono o video. Para más información o para hacer cita, por favor llame a 541-942-3939.

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To our valued readers:
Help small businesses affected by coronavirus right now, including ours.

Businesses of all sizes have been hit hard in this challenging new age of social distancing and self-isolation, but the blow has been catastrophic for small operations that rely on in-person transactions. There are many ways to help, like purchasing gift certificates or memberships, and yet there are many service-type businesses that don’t have that option.

As we look to a new year, we’re celebrating what connects us as a community, and what we can do to support our local businesses!

THAT’S WHY WE CREATED THE SUPPORT LOCAL TOGETHER CAMPAIGN.
 The Support Local Together campaign will help local businesses who have to choose between promoting their business and paying the electric bill. It will also help support the *Cottage Grove Sentinel*, who has seen a strong decrease in advertising revenue, but an increase in readership.

IT DOES TWO THINGS.

- 1. Funds advertising dollars for local businesses**
 Your financial support will go directly to fund advertising that our local businesses need to stay top of mind.
- 2. Supports local journalism**
 By becoming a supporting member, you are helping to replace some of the advertising revenue the *Cottage Grove Sentinel* has lost due to the pandemic.

HERE IS HOW TO SUPPORT:

- Call 541-942-3325 x 1200
- Make a donation of your choosing.
- Choose a specific local business that you would like the advertising credit to go to, or leave that blank and we will designate it to a business we know needs help.

Our community is small but generous and we recognize there are many great organizations, like ours, that could use your help.

We believe the vast majority of our readers have always shared our view of the value and necessity of a strong local media and are willing to provide support equal to two or three cups of coffee a month to secure its future.

Thank you in advance for doing your share to secure a strong local economy in the community we are proud to serve.

Gary Manly
 General Manager
 gmanly@cgsentinel.com
 541-942-3325 x 1207

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Yes, I would like to become a 2020/21 Support Local Together Sponsor
Call 541-942-3325 x 1200
 Mail sponsorship form to: **Cottage Grove Sentinel Supporter**
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