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From the Town Manager's Office

To: Colchester Selectboard

From: Renae Marshall, Deputy Town Manager

CC: Aaron Frank, Town Manager; Lara Aley, Finance Director

Date: November 17, 2022

Re: External Funding Requests – Analysis and Recommendations

Each year a number of external organizations request funding through the municipal services budget. This year, the Manager's office has reviewed the requests and offers recommendations in three categories, for the Selectboard's consideration in the FY 24 budget: 1) Recommended without qualifications; 2) Recommended with qualifications; and 3) Not recommended.

Not recommended is not a value judgement, but rather a consideration of Town-wide budget pressures, similar to a department asking for funding for a new service to the community. This next fiscal year will be challenging as we continue to experience the impacts of COVID and as the costs of providing municipal services escalate with high inflation.

Below is an analysis of the requests with context for the recommendation. Attachment A is provided, showing the full request from relevant agencies.

Public Safety Requests

Police Department

- A. **Howard Center Community Outreach:** This program began in 2018. It is funded partially by the State of Vermont, University of Vermont Medical Center and the remainder is funded by collaborative towns (South Burlington, Colchester, Essex, Williston, Winooski, Shelburne, Richmond, Milton and Hinesburg). The current program has been increased from four to six community outreach staff members during the week, with on-call service outside of normal hours available through additional staff, and Colchester's FY24 share is \$39,970. The FY 24 Howard funding is an 8.4% increase over FY 23 which was planned in an updated agreement in FY 22 to expand the service to additional communities and give them access to fair shares a grant from the State and a grant from UVMMC which did not expand when we extended the services to these communities. The Howard Outreach funding is included in the Police Budget under miscellaneous as it is a service contract vs a direct funding.

The program has been well received by all participating towns and their respective Police Departments, which have first line contact with individuals in need of services. Colchester Police Department would like to continue this service.

Manager's Recommendation: Recommended with no qualifications.

- B. **Essex Community Justice Center:** This is a diversion program that addresses some criminal charges in a way that potentially resolves issues without a permanent criminal record. The Essex Community Justice Center is staffed by Town of Essex employees and is legally part of the Town of Essex. It is overseen by a Director who reports to the Essex Police Chief. The Center serves Essex, Colchester, Milton and a number of smaller communities on the Rt. 15 corridor. Their primary funding source is through the State of Vermont Department of Corrections. After starting this program, recruiting local communities to operate Justice Centers that serve surrounding communities and providing funding for the full costs, including cost increases over time, the State of Vermont froze funding. This shifted funding responsibilities for all increases to the host community, in our case the Town of Essex. Essex covered these increases for a few years entirely itself but then, asked Colchester and Milton to contribute.

Essex currently provides in-kind oversight and services as well as cash to fund their facilities rental costs of \$16,200. Colchester agreed to provide \$13,300 in past years with the potential to go to \$16,200 based on justifications about the costs and that the Town of Essex either receive funding from or discontinue service to the non-paying communities. Milton did not fund Essex Community Justice Center in FY20, FY21, FY22 and doesn't plan to do so into the future. The Center does not wish to stop providing service to the non-paying communities. Colchester's Town Management has made recommendations to the Essex Town Manager about how to remove non-paying communities from Essex Community Justice' grant application and grant agreement. No action has taken place. Therefore, we recommend keeping our funding the same as it is a Town of Essex decision to provide Community Justice services to Milton and the Rt. 15 communities at a loss. However, these losses should be borne by the Town of Essex. This is not a direct contribution but rather a contractual contribution where costs are included in the Town of Colchester's Police Department Budget as the relationship is between the Police Department and the Justice Center.

Manager's Recommendation: Recommend funding at \$13,300 for FY24.

Intergovernmental Requests

- A. **Winooski Valley Park District:** WVPD requests \$56,415 for FY24, which is a \$3,342 (6.3%) increase over the current year. This is significantly more WVPD's proposed, and our maximum recommended FY24 increase of 3.9%, when they reached out ahead of finalizing their budget, understanding they had increased their FY23 request by 6.7% from the previous year.

Accepting this request would provide additional revenue to WVPD to meet expanding personnel costs.

A reduced funding amendment to this proposal would force WVPD to develop alternative funding sources or cut expenses and it is unknown how this would be accomplished. We are aware that WVPD offers additional fee-based services to some of its members and they may be able to adjust these relationships.

Manager's Recommendation: Recommended FY24 funding of \$55,143 or 3.9% increase over FY23.

WVPD is a member organization which Colchester formally joined and provides a Selectboard appointed representative. Given this relationship, we feel that it is more appropriate for the Selectboard to determine funding levels.

- B. **Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation:** GBIC is level funded at \$3,000.

Approving this request would allow GBIC to continue to offer Colchester services the same or similar as in recent years. GBIC is helpful regionally in economic development, and owns the Fabtech and Hayward Tyler buildings on Hercules Dr. and Roosevelt Highway, respectively. Colchester does not have significant ongoing business with GBIC.

A reduced funding amendment to this proposal may diminish future business assistance services.

Manager's Recommendation: Recommended without qualifications.

- C. **Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce:** LCCC does not have a specific request, however, the Town has funded them in the past at \$1,500 per year with an additional \$500 for the Vermont Council on World Affairs (which is housed by the LCCC). Similar to GBIC, LCCC is important regionally, although the LCCC relationship with the Town is more direct as the Town Manager and Economic Development Director attend chamber functions and converse with chamber leadership and members on a monthly basis. LCCC was the one non-governmental organization which offered assistance and identified potential champions for causeway repair fundraising after the 2018 storm.

Approving this funding would allow LCCC to continue to offer Colchester services the same or similar as in recent years.

A reduced funding amendment may jeopardize those services.

Manager's Recommendation: Recommended without qualifications.

Health Agency Requests

- A. **UVM Home Health & Hospice** (formerly Visiting Nurses Association): Request is \$40,000 which is a net increase of 22% over last year. UVM Home Health & Hospice is headquartered here in Colchester and their property at 1110 Prim Road and the Respite House on 3113 Roosevelt Highway are exempt from municipal services taxes that would total \$52,121 annually based on FY 23 tax rate. They contribute a support payment, in lieu of taxes, to the Town in the amount of \$18,000 annually, so the net annual municipal services tax break is \$34,121. The Town did not ask for an increased support payment when the Respite House was built as we had a multi-year support agreement with UVM Home Health and Hospice. It is not likely that level funding would affect services to Colchester residents.

Manager's Recommendation: Recommend level funding at FY23 rate of \$36,000.

- B. **Age Well:** Age Well has requested \$1,000. Since the Town has not provided support for Age Well in recent years, this would represent a new funding initiative for Colchester. Many of the communities which fund Age Well also receive E&D transportation from SSTA/GMT via Age Well. Colchester contributes more to E&D transportation than any other single municipality in the State of Vermont. At some point, if SSTA/GMT E&D costs can be controlled, Colchester may wish to consider transferring its E&D transportation responsibility, and funding to Age Well.

Manager's Recommendation: Not recommended.

- C. **Steps to End Domestic Violence:** Steps to End Domestic Violence is asking for \$4,000, which is \$3,450 more than was funded in previous years, or 627% more. Based on FY 23 estimates, the town forgoes \$7,551 in municipal service tax revenue since their acquisition of a property in Colchester for the purpose of providing a shelter to those folks fleeing domestic violence.

Manager's Recommendation: The \$3,450 increase is not recommended. Funding at the \$550 level is recommended.

- D. **Turning Point Center:** This agency received \$1,000 in funding for FY22 and FY23. Turning Point Center is located in Burlington and serves as a substance recovery center for all Chittenden County residents. They create a safe, substance free space for recovery programs and other services. Turning Point did not submit a request for FY 24.

Manager's recommendation: Funded at \$1,000 with no qualifications.

Other Agencies

- A. **Green Mountain Transit** – formerly known as CCTA: Colchester has a contract with Green Mountain Transit, which provides bus transportation on Rt. 15 and Rt. 7 (estimated at \$48,000) as well as ADA qualified riders on the Route 15 corridor (estimated at \$51,000) whereby the total FY 24 contract cost is \$96,911. . Colchester also participates in the Special Services Transportation Agency rider grant program that subsidizes rides for qualified elderly and disabled riders, whereby our estimated funding is about \$29,000 for FY 24. For this program, the Town pays the 20% match until the grant is exhausted, then we pay 100%.

Under previous contracts, costs for GMT bus services increased no more than 3% annually but there was no cap on ADA costs. The current contract was developed, with an eye toward more stable cost increases across both fixed route bus and ADA costs. Costs for SSTA services contracted through GMT (ADA and E&D) are increasing from a combination of trip cost increases and more people riding.

Manager's Recommendation: Recommended without qualifications.

- B. **Membership Organizations: VLCT & CCRPC** These are dues-based organizations that supply a variety of services and are long established partners. Costs are going up by a cost of living.

Manager's Recommendation: Cost of Living increases are recommended without qualifications.

- C. **Vermont Family Network** – This organization has not previously been funded. The Vermont Family Network states their mission is to empower and support all Vermont families of children with special needs. Their request is \$2,500.

Manager's Recommendation: Funding is not recommended.