

Board Approval to Receive \$10,000 Richmond Rent Relief Partner Grant

August 17th, 2022 | Regular Meeting of the Richmond Rent Board

Item H-1

Nicolas Traylor- Executive Director

Statement of The Issue

- The Richmond Rent Program has received a check for \$10,000 for participating in the creation and development of Richmond's rent assistance program. Prior to depositing and using these funds, the Richmond Rent Board, which oversees the Richmond Rent Program's budget and finances, must authorize receipt and use of the \$10,000 Rent Relief Partnership Grant.

Background

- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the Rent Program organized a series of meetings with the City of Richmond, past Richmond Rent Board members and Richmond City Council members to discuss the creation of a rent assistance program dedicated to Richmond Tenants and Landlords.
- Based on the high percentage of housing counseling cases that revolved around non-payment of rent evictions in Richmond, it was clear that there was an on-going demand for rent assistance. Rent assistance resources at the time were not only scarce, but spread out among many local organizations, each competing for rent assistance funds.
- These initial meetings spurred discussions about the need for a permanent rent assistance program for Richmond and how to create such a program. Initial ideas included modeling a program for Richmond on Oakland's "Keep Oakland Housed" program, a collaboration between the City of Oakland, corporations, foundations, local non-profits, and philanthropic organizations.
- When the COVID-19 pandemic began in the Spring of 2020, the urgency to create a Richmond rent assistance program ramped up, resulting in the Rent Program spearheading the effort to create a permanent rent assistance program for the City of Richmond.

Background Continued

- In the Spring of 2020, the Rent Program organized a meeting with the City of Richmond's Community Development Department to urgently address the anticipated increase in demand for rent assistance services in Richmond and began the process of building out a permanent rent assistance program.
- Rent Program Staff and Community Development Staff invited local non-profits that administer rent assistance services to the meeting in order to learn from their expertise and include them in the effort to build out a permanent rent assistance program. Those local non-profits included Seasons of Sharing, SparkPoint, Shelter Inc., the West Contra Costa County edFUND, Richmond Community Foundation, and Catholic Charities.
- The coalition of non-profits grew to include the Richmond Neighborhood Housing Services (RNHS), the Office of Mayor Tom Butt, Richmond Land (Trust), and the Community Housing Development Corporation (CDHC).
- Meeting weekly to strategize efforts, the coalition has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars, integrated itself into the Richmond Rapid Response Fund and disbursed over \$385,000 in rent assistance to 77 Richmond renters and landlords.

Background Continued

- After initially being led by the Rent Program, in May 2021, the West Contra Costa edFUND began overseeing the Program's development. This transition made sense because the West Contra Cost edFUND was overseeing the Richmond Rapid Response Fund, a City sponsored program that provides financial relief to Richmond residents impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In July of 2021, the West Contra Costa County edFUND hired Jessica Travenia, Program Officer, to organize the rent assistance program's governing structure, to continue the program's development and to seek additional funding. Efforts are underway to transform the current program into a permanent City sponsored rent assistance program separate from the Richmond Rapid Response Fund.

Purpose

- The purpose of the \$10,000 is to compensate the Rent Program for its assistance and participation in the establishment of Richmond's rent assistance program.

Use of Funds

- The \$10,000 is a general operating grant to fund administrations or other activities related to the Rent Program, excluding lobbying. The Rent Board may direct staff to use the \$10,000 in Rent Relief partner funds towards a specific activity or to supplement the Rent Program budget.

Recommended Action

- APPROVE receipt of and AUTHORIZE use of the \$10,000 Rent Relief Partner Grant for partnering in the establishment of Richmond's rent assistance program.