CITY OF EUREKA CALIFORNIA

AGENDA SUMMARY
EUREKA CITY COUNCIL

TITLE: 2024 Participatory Budget Program Update

DEPARTMENT: Finance

PREPARED BY: Suzanne Ross-Mantle, Administrative Technician

PRESENTED FOR: ☒Action ☐Information only ☐Discussion

RECOMMENDATION

1. Approve the Update to the 2024 Participatory Budget Program Process; and
2. Approve the Participatory Budget Submission from Eureka Theater in Ward 5; and
3. Approve the Youth Council as a body to select and approve Participatory Budget applications with the funds allocated to Ward 3.

FISCAL IMPACT

☐No Fiscal Impact ☒Included in Budget ☐Additional Appropriation

COUNCIL GOALS/STRATEGIC VISION

Community Pride, Community Engagement

BACKGROUND

The Eureka City Council approved the current Participatory Budgeting program and its $75,000 budget on March 5, 2024, to empower residents in selecting local projects while gaining insight into municipal budgeting and project planning. The program transitioned in 2024 to a community-driven model facilitated by the Finance Department. Each Councilmember nominated a delegate and an alternate from their ward, with applications opening in March 2024. Due to low participation, the delegate training was postponed from April to the end of May, with additional one-on-one training sessions offered. Ultimately, a small number of volunteers attended training, with some opting out at those initial discussions, after discussing the responsibilities of the role.

The initial loss of momentum after rescheduling the initial training was a loss from which the project was not able to recover. After the slow start, it was difficult to connect with the energy in the wider community and have people show up who had initially expressed interest in the program. Additionally, being presented with the task of spending a large amount of money can be too broad to conceptualize, and can contribute to the perceived difficulty of the task, of having too many possibilities.

At the November 19, 2024 Council Meeting, Council heard an update of the program. At that time, Council heard the suggestion to move to an application-based program model. At that same meeting, Council suggested incorporating the Youth Council in the Participatory Budgeting program. Community Services staff and Finance staff met to discuss the details, and are very excited about what is possible with the new Youth Council.

DISCUSSION

Potential for a new program model, adapting to ability and current availability

Throughout the process there were a few involved participants, volunteers who had applied and were selected to serve as delegates or alternate delegates, who brought ideas and suggestions to discussions. Unfortunately, all but one delegate had to step back. The remaining single participant, a delegate for the Fifth Ward, brought a funding idea forward.

The delegate for the Fifth Ward was a staff member at Eureka Theater at the time, and identified an improvement the theater needed. Aside from being a Eureka landmark, the theater is dedicated to the education of the general public in film, theater and music, which satisfies the “Public Good” requirement of the Participatory Budgeting program. This inspired staff to redesign the program to be more efficient in identifying projects

Staff developed an application to use for submissions, modeled from the Agenda Summaries that are provided to City Council. These applications lay out the program guidelines, and an applicant must show how the submission meets the guidelines. The Fifth Ward delegate worked with staff to complete this application for funding, which is before Council for approval, in addition to updating the program model.

Staff Recommendations

Staff recommends moving to an application-based model to allocate the remainder of the funds in the current Participatory Budgeting cycle, totaling $45,000. Residents or Non-Profit agencies within the City would submit project ideas for funding, using a standard application, to be reviewed and approved by an existing body. Initially, this will be the Economic Development Commission. This model will be similar to a community grant model, where the funding is available for the community and projects recommended by community members, not influenced or led by City staff or leadership. Staff believes that this model is an appropriate way to satisfy the ethos of the project, and to make sure that the funds will get out into the community, where they were intended to go.

Secondly, staff recommends approving the funding submission from the Eureka Theater, for $15,000 for the Fifth Ward, as detailed in the attached submission application. The next regularly scheduled Economic Development Commission meets in July and we feel, due to the completeness of their application, that proceeding today is the best option.

Lastly, staff recommends allowing the Youth Council to serve as the body to review and approve funding applications for the funds allocated to the Third Ward, $15,000, as a part of the Youth Council program. Finance Department staff will work with Community Services staff to provide support and guidance on the program.

ATTACHMENTS:

PB Project Submission Form

Participatory Budgeting – Project Submission – Ward 5 – Eureka Theater