

DATE: NOVEMBER 9, 2015
TO: MEMBERS OF CITIZENS BUDGET COMMITTEE
CITY OF ASHLAND, ORE
FROM: DAVID RUNKEL
RE: PROPOSAL TO REFORM ECTS GRANT PROCESS

The ECTS grants program is an important contributor to the quality of life of our community. The current process, however, is cumbersome and time consuming and several problems emerged in this year's process:

- 1) A third of our Budget Committee time was devoted to this \$200,000 item.
- 2) No citizen members of the committee participated in the grants review.
- 3) Several subcommittee members gave allocation reasons that were not included in the grant materials circulated to potential grantees.
- 4) Initial tourism grants did not meet state minimum requirements.
- 5) Two recipients were implored by the committee at the last minute to make changes in their requests allocation categories to increase spending in the tourism category.

To improve the program I am proposing revising the grants process to provide greater community involvement in the cultural and sustainability grants, while expanding the major tourism category approved annually by the City Council to allow organizations bringing significant numbers of tourists to the city to plan multi-year promotional activities.

Aspects of the proposal include:

- 1) Disband the grants subcommittee of the Citizens Budget Committee.
- 2) Add the Ashland Independent Film Festival, Science Works, the Gallery Association and other major tourism-related organizations to the list of grantees of TOT tax revenues the City Council distributes in an annual resolution. In the past, this resolution has been limited to funding for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and the Chamber of Commerce.
- 3) Allocate by Council a sum for cultural grants to be reviewed by a new committee consisting of a representative of from each of the following fields -- visual arts, theatre, music, and dance -- chaired by a SOU professor with expertise in the city's cultural life. Recommendations would go to Council for approval.
- 4) Allocate by Council a sum for sustainability programs and assign review of applications to the Conservation Commission, which would make recommendations to Council for allocation of these funds.
- 5) Drop the economic development aspect of the current grant program.

I'm making this detailed proposal for the sake of encouraging discussion on this topic with the twin goals of improving the Citizens Budget Committee process and providing greater input into

these grants from citizens with more direct knowledge of cultural and sustainability programs. There probably are many other ways of dealing with the problems we encountered this year and in the past. Your suggestions are welcome.

Here is a draft suggested motion:

The City Council is urged to disband the grants subcommittee of the Citizens Budget Committee, expand the allocation of tourism money to major organizations that bring tourists to the city, create a new committee to review cultural grant applications, refer sustainability grant applications to the Conservation Commission for review and drop allocation of TOT funds for economic development activities.