



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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La Mesa Small Businesses and Renters Get a "Lifeline" Receive \$1.6 Million in CARES Act Funding

La Mesa, California, August 12, 2020 - The La Mesa Chamber of Commerce is thrilled to announce that the La Mesa small business community has received the lion's share of the \$1.8 million CARES Act funding, that is allocated by the County and the State of California. These funds are to be utilized by the City to fund programs to assist residents and businesses impacted by COVID-19 and offset the cost of unbudgeted expenditures. The pandemic has devastated the business sector of La Mesa. Restaurants that used to flourish are now stalled or shuttered. Restaurants that can creatively offer outdoor dining are attempting to keep their doors open by modifying their menus and working with a limited number of employees. The COVID-19 pandemic has stifled the desire for customers to frequent restaurants. Businesses that are deemed "non-essential" are closed, forcing owners to lay off employees, as well as themselves or look at creative ways to offer their services in an outdoor setting. Retail stores and shopping centers have seen a decrease in sales, as shoppers feel more comfortable shopping online. La Mesa renters have also experienced a hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a job loss, late rental notices or overdue utility payments. Families who are an integral part of our community, have been tragically affected by the pandemic and need assistance as well.

The August 11th City Council agenda proposed a split of this money allocating \$600,00 to create a business assistance grant program, \$600,000 to create a rental assistance program and the larger balance of funds given to the City of La Mesa to recover unbudgeted costs related to COVID-19. The Chamber was insistent that a larger portion of the CARES Act funds should be allocated to the local businesses, who are the backbone of the economy, as well as generate the sales tax that the City desperately needs to provide services to residents and balance their budget.

Council Member Kristine Alessio offered to allocate \$1 million to create a business assistance program, \$600K to create a renter assistance program and the balance to be utilized by the City. Her motion received a second by Mayor Arapostathis. The businesses and renters of La Mesa had three advocates at the Council meeting. The motion was passed by Mayor Arapostathis, Councilmembers Alessio and Baber supporting the motion, with Councilmembers Parent and Weber opposed. The end result is that La Mesa small businesses may receive a "lifeline" of \$5K from a new assistance program and La Mesa renters who have fallen on hard times, may also receive a \$5K "lifeline." This is a win-win situation for all and a time for La Mesa small businesses and La Mesa renters to rejoice!

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