



January 18, 2019

Dear Santa Clara Community,

The City of Santa Clara would like to clarify the City Council-approved [Community Grant Policy](#). The new policy, adopted in September 2018, makes it easier and faster for community groups to use City facilities at no-or-reduced costs.

We are writing to share these facts with you because of inaccurate and misleading articles in the Silicon Valley Voice/Santa Clara Weekly by Carolyn Schuk and Miles Barber, which give the impression that the City has intentionally done harm to our valued nonprofit organizations and community events.

This is, obviously, **not** the case. Here are the facts:

During the January 15 meeting, the Council discussed the new policy and clarified its intentions that it had been designed to make it easier for community groups to get grants. The new policy eliminated time-consuming bureaucratic processes which forced community groups to write a petition, get a staff report and testify before the Council several times to get a waiver. Often times the community requests were for a relatively small amount of money relative to the amount of time and money it cost them to go through the old procedure. It also required several Council meetings to get approved.

Now, the new policy streamlines the waiver process by converting it to a grant process that can be administered without going through the previous time-consuming Council process.

The purpose of the recently adopted policy is “to establish a standardized process to award grants to qualifying non-profit community organizations, youth athletic groups or organizations, education groups or organizations, or individuals, for events, activities, and competitions that provide a public benefit for the City of Santa Clara and its residents.”

Contrary to the misleading articles in the Silicon Valley Voice/Santa Clara Weekly, there was **never** the intention to defund nonprofits or discourage events in Santa Clara.

To support our vibrant community and nonprofit organizations, the Council requested a new policy that supports events in Santa Clara and financial transparency. It is also a fact that the Council set aside \$100,000 to absorb the costs of these events and subsidize these activities, acknowledging that more funds may need to be added once

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the City understood the magnitude of cost to support these events. It is our public responsibility to be transparent about these subsidies, track the costs and allow equitable access to public facilities.

Further, the new policy establishes criteria to be eligible for these monies, within state laws, as well as in support of our community events and organizations. The City Council approved the criteria, which includes, among other items, requiring the event or activity be open to the general public and providing a benefit to Santa Clara residents.

The application process documents the public purpose for awarding a grant and limits the City Manager's authority to \$10,000 per event. The City Manager's Office reviews grant applications for compliance with eligibility criteria and availability of funds. The application process provides transparency for the use of tax payer dollars, which is how a professionally-run city must operate.

The articles raised questions about the City's fees for use of City facilities. The new policy requires that the full City costs of subsidizing the event be documented and covered, including staff time to support the events (which is reflected in facility rental rates and other fees). By law, the City Manager has no authority to waive these fees, even though past Administrations did so without any authority.

The Council-approved [Municipal Fee Schedule](#), which is updated annually, shows the current fees which, in some cases, include a nonprofit group rate and those fees are eligible to be covered by the Council's New Policy. With the criteria in mind, the grants are available to nonprofits which they could use to rent space at a City facility for an upcoming event, fundraiser or meeting. The Council directed a review of the fee schedule to determine if lower costs or free use should be allowed.

In closing, the City remains supportive of nonprofits and community groups that are helping make Santa Clara the "Center of What's Possible." This new policy doesn't change this fact. As always, the City Manager's Office is committed to continuous improvement and feedback on how this Council-approved new policy supports the community interest.

If you know of a community group or nonprofit organization that could benefit from the Community Grant Program, please visit the [City website](#) to learn more about how to apply for a grant. For questions, contact the City Manager's Office at 408-615-2210 or [manager@santaclaraca.gov](mailto:manager@santaclaraca.gov).