**California Public Records Act ("PRA"):** In compliance with the PRA, the documents pertaining to agenda items, including attachments, which are presented to the Vernon Community Fund Grant Committee in open session are available for public inspection. They may be inspected during regular business hours in the Office of the City Clerk at Vernon City Hall, 4305 Santa Fe Avenue; Vernon, California 90058, no appointment necessary, and on the City’s website at [www.cityofvernon.org](http://www.cityofvernon.org).

**Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA"):** In compliance with the ADA, if you need special assistance to participate in the meeting, please contact the Office of the City Clerk at (323) 583-8811. Notification of at least 48 hours prior to the meeting or time when services are needed will assist the City staff in assuring that reasonable arrangements can be made to provide accessibility to the meeting or service.

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**Agenda**  
City of Vernon  
Special Vernon CommUNITY Fund Grant Committee Meeting  
Tuesday, December 03, 2019, 01:00 PM  
City Hall, Council Chamber  
4305 Santa Fe Avenue  
Vernon, California

Leticia Lopez, Chairperson  
Juliet Goff, Vice Chairperson  
Michael Gavina, Committee Member  
Mark Gonzalez, Committee Member  
Steven Froberg, Committee Member  
James Chang, Committee Member  
Vacant, Committee Member

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**CALL TO ORDER & FLAG SALUTE**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**  
At this time the public is encouraged to address the Grant Committee on any matter that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Grant Committee. The public will also be given a chance to comment on matters which are on the posted agenda during deliberation on those specific matters.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. **City Administration**  
   Establish Temporary Advisory Committee to Evaluate Vernon CommUNITY Fund Grantmaking Program and Related Parameters  
   Recommendation:  
   A. Find that the establishment of a Temporary Advisory Committee to evaluate the Vernon CommUNITY Fund Grantmaking Program is exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) because it is a government fiscal activity that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment, and therefore does not constitute a “project” as defined by CEQA Guidelines section 15378. And even if such action were a “project,” it would be exempt from CEQA review in accordance with Section 15061(b)(3), the general
rule that CEQA only applies to projects that may have an effect on the environment; and
B. Establish a Temporary Advisory Committee composed of less than a quorum of the
Vernon CommUNITY Fund Grant Committee for the sole purpose of evaluating the future
purpose and structure of the Vernon CommUNITY Fund Grantmaking Program and related
parameters, and assign a maximum of three members of the existing Vernon CommUNITY
Fund Grant Committee to serve as participants on the Temporary Advisory Committee.
1. Existing VCF Direct Service Grant Guidelines
2. Existing VCF Capital Grant Guidelines
3. Existing VCF Scholarship Program Guidelines

ORAL REPORTS
Brief reports on activities, other brief announcements, and directives to staff.

ADJOURNMENT – Next regular meeting: Wednesday, February 19, 2020, at 10:00 a.m.

I hereby certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California, that the foregoing
agenda was posted on the bulletin board at the main entrance of the City of Vernon City Hall, located at
4305 Santa Fe Avenue, Vernon, California, and on the City’s website, not less than 24 hours prior to the
meeting date set forth on this agenda. Dated this 26th day of November 2019.

By: ______________________________
    Lisa Pope, City Clerk
SUBJECT
Establish Temporary Advisory Committee to Evaluate Vernon CommUNITY Fund Grantmaking Program and Related Parameters

Recommendation:
A. Find that the establishment of a Temporary Advisory Committee to evaluate the Vernon CommUNITY Fund Grantmaking Program is exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) because it is a government fiscal activity that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment, and therefore does not constitute a “project” as defined by CEQA Guidelines section 15378. And even if such action were a “project,” it would be exempt from CEQA review in accordance with Section 15061(b)(3), the general rule that CEQA only applies to projects that may have an effect on the environment; and
B. Establish a Temporary Advisory Committee composed of less than a quorum of the Vernon CommUNITY Fund Grant Committee for the sole purpose of evaluating the future purpose and structure of the Vernon CommUNITY Fund Grantmaking Program and related parameters, and assign a maximum of three members of the existing Vernon CommUNITY Fund Grant Committee to serve as participants on the Temporary Advisory Committee.

Background:
As one of the key elements of the City’s good governance reforms, the City Council created the Vernon CommUNITY Fund (“VCF”) to provide grants to charitable and governmental entities for projects and programs that benefit those residing and working in Vernon. Given the exclusively industrial nature of Vernon, the City Council determined that the VCF was in the best interest of the City and its residents, businesses, and workers.

On February 4, 2014, the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 1218, as amended by Ordinances No. 1238 and No. 1257 to establish the Vernon CommUNITY Fund Grant Committee (“Grant Committee”) and provide the basic guidelines and operational procedures for said Committee and its officers, including those related to the allocation of funds and the processes for reviewing and ranking applications and awarding grants.

Pursuant to Vernon Municipal Code Section 2.164, the City Council may appropriate funds to the VCF. Through the normal budgetary process, City Council authorized an amount of $500,000 to the VCF for fiscal year 2019/2020 (a $500,000 decrease from $1,000,000 in fiscal year 2018/2019). In consideration of its limited amount of funds in this fiscal year, and in anticipation of a similarly reduced allocation in future years, the VCF Grant Committee discussed at its November 20, 2019 meeting the prospect of adjusting the Vernon CommUNITY Fund Grantmaking Program to be aligned with the current economic trajectory of the City. As such, staff is recommending that the board form an Temporary Advisory Committee whose sole purpose would be to evaluate the parameters associated to the existing model alongside VCF consultant, Jemmott Rollins Group and City staff. At the conclusion of their due diligence, it is expected that the Temporary Advisory Committee would present a viable option(s) to the VCF Grant Committee that would address the committee's collective goals, concerns, and desired approach toward grantmaking activities.
Some of the potential points for discussion are:
* Grant approval and awards timeline
* Desired focus on types of services provided by grantees
* Desired focus on service area of grantees

Staff will be providing documentation that will aid the Grant Committee in their review of the current course of the Grantmaking Program in order to evaluate possible strategies that may better suit the needs of the VCF and the City. Ultimately, if there is a consensus to implement modifications to the VCF Grantmaking Program, suggestions for revisions will be brought to City Council for review and approval.

**Fiscal Impact:**
None.

**ATTACHMENTS**
- 1. Existing VCF Direct Service Grant Guidelines
- 2. Existing VCF Capital Grant Guidelines
- 3. Existing VCF Scholarship Program Guidelines
Guidelines for Direct Service Grant Awards

About the Vernon CommUNITY Fund

The Vernon CommUNITY Fund targets its grant making activity toward organizations serving the Vernon Area (which includes the cities of Vernon, Maywood, Bell, Huntington Park, Commerce, the area within the City of Los Angeles known as Boyle Heights, and the unincorporated area known as East Los Angeles).

Background

Founded in 1905 as the first exclusively industrial city in the Southwestern United States, the City of Vernon is an industrial city of 5.2 square miles located southeast of Downtown Los Angeles in Southern California. Vernon currently houses more than 1,800 businesses that employ approximately 50,000 people and serves as a vital economic engine in the region. The City maintains strong philanthropic ties with neighboring communities where much of its workforce lives, providing significant financial support for public services including health care and education.

The Vernon CommUNITY Fund (VCF) contributes to the health, well-being and quality of life in surrounding communities. The Fund is administered by a diverse group of appointed volunteers serving as the Grant Committee which reviews and approves applications from community and faith-based organizations as well as local governments.

VCF Mission

The Vernon CommUNITY Fund provides charitable contributions to community-based organizations and governmental agencies in support of efforts to improve the quality of life, strengthen families and affirm Vernon’s ties with neighboring communities in pursuit of bright futures. Implemented in 2014, the VCF has granted more than $2 million to nonprofits aligned with its mission.

Goals

- To strengthen and support non-profit organizations that benefit residents and neighborhoods;
- To amplify the impact of the Vernon CommUNITY Fund in Vernon and nearby communities;
- To encourage and inspire positive social development in Vernon and neighboring communities;
- To support and assist organizations that expand opportunities for training and development of residents for potential employment in businesses located in Vernon and surrounding communities;
- To promote positive social development of children, youth, families and senior residents in Vernon and surrounding areas;
- To promote effective and responsible leadership at every level of the community;
- To invest funds in a strategic manner that optimizes dollar for value to communities served;
- To promote community partnerships amongst VCF grantees that have utilized Vernon’s contributions in a meaningful way;
- To increase visibility of funded programs and services by facilitating recognition of the Vernon CommUNITY Fund as a positive benefactor in the southeast region and securing its legacy in contributing to the betterment of the Vernon Area.

Values

- Shared responsibility for the well-being of our neighbors now and into the future;
- Integrity and accountability for fair decisions using high ethical standards;
- Unity of purpose and commitment to succeed at fulfilling our mission.
Guidelines for Direct Service Grant Awards

Definition and Funds Available
Direct Service Grants are specific funding awards that are designed to grant support to an organization’s involvement in the community. These grants typically support personnel, general operating costs or programs. The VCF will focus on funding projects and/or programs that detail a specific mission in the community or target a specific purpose. The Vernon CommUNITY Fund’s goal is to strategically fund nonprofits who offer the greatest impact for dollar; and advocate for organizations that may unify previous grant making efforts by partnering and/or overlapping services with existing VCF grantees, thereby amplifying the impact of the Vernon CommUNITY Fund in the Vernon area.

Eligibility and Application Review Process
Direct Service Grants are awarded to organizations located in and/or serving the population in the Vernon CommUNITY Fund catchment area. Eligibility criteria and grant making processes are detailed in Vernon Municipal Code (VMC) Sections 2.165-2.168. Selection criteria for all grant applications are established at VMC Section 2.166. The considerations outlined here are clarifications and elaborations of the existing statutory criteria and will apply when an organization is evaluated for a Direct Service Grant. All applicants should provide a description of the purpose for which an award would be used along with the estimated cost of the total project and/or program; and the quantifiable value that would be added to Vernon and the surrounding community.

The VCF Direct Service Grant application review will include a full assessment of the following:

“Extent to which Funds Will Promote Health, Safety, and Welfare of Persons Residing and Working in the Vernon Area” / “Benefit Anticipated to Accrue to the Vernon Area” (VMC Section 2.166(a)(i) and (ii))

- **Population Served**
  The VCF considers whether a program or service fills a gap for unmet needs for the population in the Vernon area, and whether an organization is providing quality, in-demand services to the diverse and underserved communities in the southeast region.

- **Impact**
  The level of impact that a project or program offered by an organization has upon the community is important, as is the method in which it is measured. The VCF considers an organization’s unique circumstances and asks if the impact in the Vernon area will be effective, direct, and exponential to those served.

- **Innovation**
  The VCF is interested in innovative organizations and approaches. An applicant will be evaluated on whether the program/project has the potential to establish a new practice, improve how a specific population is being served, or respond to emerging changes in the social landscape.

“Extent to which Public Will Appreciate that Benefits of Proposed Actions Were Direct Result of Funding Provided by City of Vernon” (VMC Sec. 2.166(a)(iii))

- **Recognition**
  For the VCF, it is paramount that it establish partnerships with grant recipients and that these organizations recognize the VCF for its contributions to the betterment of the Vernon Area. The VCF is committed to serving the community in the best and broadest way possible, and the ability of a grantee to publicly recognize these efforts is of great value to the VCF, as public recognition remains one of the best ways to increase awareness of the programs and services funded. Reaching those populations directly impacted by grant funding is of primary importance.
Methods for recognition may include, but are not limited to: social media acknowledgements, events showcasing the program/project where the VCF will be publicly acknowledged either through a speaking opportunity or presentation, inclusion of an ad in a program or signage at a physical facility where the program/project takes place. Recognition shall be targeted toward:

✓ The people, communities, and organizations that have directly benefited;
✓ The leadership within the applicant’s organization;
✓ The external community at large.

“Evidence that Funds Will Be Used by Organization with Sufficient Capacity to do the Work, and Will Be Used Effectively and Without Inefficiencies, Waste or Fraud” (VMC Sec. 2.166(a)(iv))

• **Leadership**
The VCF evaluates staff members’ individual and collective leadership experience, expertise, vision, passion, commitment, and professional and community reputation. The VCF compares an organization’s approaches and solutions to other successful operations.

• **Partnerships**
Collaboration is an important tool among nonprofits. The VCF evaluates whether an organization is well-integrated into its community and involved in partnerships, and considers whether developing strategic partnerships is an ongoing part of its work.

• **Organizational Strength**
An organization’s history, reputation, structure and management is weighed by the VCF. The VCF will evaluate if an organization is regarded as a provider of high-quality, relevant and meaningful services. Qualities that are valued include positive morale, strong management and efficient communication systems.

• **Sustainability**
The VCF examines the sustainability of a program or project and the organization as a whole. The strength, stability and diversity of the nonprofit’s finances are assessed. At the program or project level, the VCF evaluates the significance of a singular grant and/or whether an organization has regular contributions from other sources.
The Vernon CommUNITY Fund is pleased to announce the availability of funds for capital expenditures. Potential applicants are encouraged to review the City of Vernon web site (www.cityofvernon.org) and click on the Vernon CommUNITY Fund button. The following general information appears on the web site as well as more details about the history of grants awarded.

**Background:**
Founded in 1905 as the first exclusively industrial city in the Southwestern United States the City of Vernon is an industrial city of 5.2 square miles located several miles to the southeast of Downtown Los Angeles in Southern California. Vernon currently houses more than 1,800 businesses that employ approximately 50,000 people, serving as a vital economic engine in the region. Vernon maintains strong philanthropic ties with the neighboring communities where much of its workforce lives, providing significant financial support for public services including health care and education.

The Vernon CommUNITY Fund (VCF) contributes to the health, well-being and quality of life in surrounding communities. The Fund is administered by a diverse group of appointed volunteers serving as the Grant Committee which reviews and approves applications from community and faith-based organizations as well as local governments.

**VCF Mission:**
The Vernon CommUNITY Fund provides charitable contributions to community-based organizations and governmental agencies in support of efforts to improve the quality of life, strengthen families and affirm Vernon’s ties with neighboring communities in pursuit of bright futures.

**Goals:**
- To strengthen and support non-profit organizations that benefit residents and neighborhoods;
- To improve the built environment of Vernon and nearby communities;
- To encourage and inspire positive social development in Vernon and neighboring communities;
- To support and assist organizations that expand opportunities for training and development of residents for potential employment in businesses located in Vernon and surrounding communities;
- To promote positive social development of children, youth, families and senior residents in Vernon and surrounding areas;
- To promote effective and responsible leadership at every level of society.
Values:

- Shared responsibility for the well-being of our neighbors now and into the future;
- Integrity and accountability for fair decisions using high ethical standards;
- Unity of purpose and commitment to succeed at fulfilling our mission

Definition and Funds Available:

Capital Grants are specific one-time funding awards that are most often time limited and related to physical acquisition, repurposing and improvement of property that supports an organization’s charitable involvement in the community. Capital grants typically do not support personnel, general operating costs or programs. The Vernon CommUNITY fund will award up to $750,000 for one or more capital grant(s) in 2016/2017 and no less than 25% of the total CommUNITY fund annual budget in subsequent fiscal years.

Consideration will be given for the following purposes with useful life of 10 years or more:

- Equipment, furnishing, and other major material purchases
- Renovations, refurbishment, remodeling, rehabilitation, etc. for outdated facilities
- Construction or purchase of new facilities
- Land purchases
- Capital campaigns (formal approaches to major construction projects)
- Matching/challenge grants for capital campaigns

Eligibility and application process:

Capital Grants are for projects located in the area served by the Vernon CommUNITY Fund. All eligibility criteria for the general fund will apply for consideration of a Capital Grant as well as additional criteria outlined here.

The application for a capital grant is different than the typical operating or project support grant.

The application process is initiated with a formal letter of interest signed by the Executive Director and the Chair of the Board of Directors. This is not the formal proposal. Rather this letter requests the VCF to consider capital grants funding for a specific purpose that is outlined in the letter.

A description of the purpose for which an award would be used is required along with the estimated cost of the total project; list and amounts pledged from other funders; time period in which funds will be spent; final product and value added to Vernon and the surrounding community. The letter of interest cannot exceed two pages.

Attached to the letter of interest, applicants must include an IRS determination letter; latest Form 990, most recent financial audit, list of the board of directors and list of other funding partners.
Site Readiness:

The letter of intent for a capital project must contain an accurate physical description of the location for which funds will be used if the applicant is awarded a grant.

The VCF grant review will include a full review of the following:

**Site control:** who owns and has title to the property? If not the applicant, what is the relationship between the property owner and applicant? If property is a government agency and tenant is the applicant non-profit, what is the length and terms of the lease? Is the applicant able to assure ten or more years of continuous tenancy? Why is the tenant and not the owner applying for funds?

**Proposed use of funds:** The letter of interest must demonstrate intent well beyond the idea stage of development. Is transparency and approval evident in records of the Board of Directors, its committees and planning meetings? Are other funders of the organization supportive of the capital project, even if they will not be direct contributors? Why does the applicant believe the use of capital grants is feasible to achieve its goals? What is the proposed total estimate of costs and how was it derived?

**Project Management:** What is the proposed plan for managing capital expenditures? What key staff/personnel will be involved? What is their experience with capital grants? What consultant expertise will be used? How will consultants be chosen?

**Ongoing Maintenance:** Is there a plan and budget developed for ongoing maintenance of the capital project? Who will maintain the capital project after completion?

**Request for Proposal (RFP):** The VCF Grant Committee will select the most promising applications to advance to the RFP stage. Applicants may expect site visits, meetings with City of Vernon consultants and Administrative Staff of the City.

**Timeline (dates TBD each fiscal year):**

- **Date** Release of Notice of Fund Availability
- **Date** Bidders conference
- **Date** Deadline to submit LOI
- **Date** Notification of successful bid
- **Date** Deadline for submission of proposal
- **Date** Presentation for approval by VCF Grants Committee
  - Grant Agreement Letter issued
- **Date** Grant funded
The Vernon CommUNITY Fund “Pilot” Scholarship Program targets its grant making activity toward 12th grade students living in the Vernon Area (which includes the cities of Vernon, Maywood, Bell, Huntington Park, Commerce, the area within the City of Los Angeles known as Boyle Heights, and the unincorporated area known as East Los Angeles).

**Scholarship Criteria**

Vernon Municipal Code (VMC) Section 2.166(a)(vi) sets forth the specific selection criteria for scholarship recipients and will be the specific standards used to identify qualified applicants who, ultimately, will be recommended as scholarship recipients. Selection criteria have been identified to clearly define the profile of the scholarship recipient.

Many factors will be considered when evaluating scholarship applicants. Scholarship criteria include an applicant’s financial need, academic achievement, and the geographic distribution of scholarships. The criteria selected support the purpose of the Vernon CommUNITY Fund which was established to provide charitable contributions in support of improved quality of life, strengthening of families, and affirming Vernon’s ties with neighboring communities in pursuit of bright futures. The Vernon CommUNITY Fund Scholarship Program was created to provide disadvantaged youth in the Vernon Area the opportunity to achieve success in their post-secondary educational endeavors.

**Award Criteria (not in order of priority)**

- Financial need
- Academic achievement
- Community/extracurricular involvement
- Leadership
- Awards and recognition
- Personal and/or family attributes

**Eligibility**

12th grade students enrolling in a post-secondary educational institution with full-time status who reside in the Vernon Area (as defined above) may submit an application for a Vernon CommUNITY Fund (VCF) Scholarship.

Specific eligibility standards are identified in within this section. In order to be considered for award, applicants must meet all of the following detailed criteria:

- Graduating High School Senior
- Achievement of a Minimum Weighted Grade Point Average of 2.0 in high school level coursework for trade school or two-year College applicants; or Minimum Weighted Grade Point Average of 2.5 in high
Vernon CommUNITY Fund
“Pilot” Scholarship
Program Guidelines

school level coursework for four-year College/University applicants at the time of VCF Scholarship application submission
- Pursuit of a two-year or four-year Degree from accredited College/University; or pursuit of Trade School Certification
- Full-time enrollment at post-secondary educational institution of choice (minimum of 12 units for college)
- Immediate transition into a post-secondary educational institution upon graduation from high school (must begin post-secondary coursework within 6 months of graduation)
- Residency in the Vernon Area (U.S. Citizenship is not required); minimum residency of 12 months
- Demonstration of strong leadership skills and responsibility (successfully communicated in scholarship application)
- Active in extracurricular activities (school/community involvement/employment)
- A minimum of 20 hours of community service from 9th grade to first semester of 12th grade
- Not a City of Vernon employee or relative or dependent of a City of Vernon employee, Vernon City-appointed official, or Vernon City-elected official

Application Procedures

The information requested on the application is a reflection of the selection criteria designated for the VCF Scholarship Program. The following question and answer section (Q&A) addresses procedures related to the submission of a VCF Scholarship application:

Q: Where and when are scholarship applications available?
A: Beginning on January 1st of each year, applications will be available on the Vernon CommUNITY Fund website: www.vernoncommunityfund.org

Q: Where should scholarship applications be submitted?
A: Students may submit their applications via the online portal available at the Vernon CommUNITY Fund website. Contact information is available on the website if any questions or technical issues arise during the application submission process.

Q: When are scholarship applications due?
A: The Vernon CommUNITY Fund will accept scholarship applications through March 31st.

Q: What additional information/documents must accompany the scholarship application?
A: As per the eligibility criteria noted above, students must submit proof that they reside and have resided for at least 12 months in the Vernon Area (e.g. utility bills); most recent report card; evidence of GPA with high school transcripts; sworn statement (on form found on the Vernon CommUNITY Fund website)

1 The definition of “relative” shall be the same as that used in the City of Vernon’s policy against nepotism, which can be found here: http://www.cityofvernon.org/images/hr/personnel-policies-procedures/I-5%20-%20nepotism%20-%20Sept%202013.pdf
of a teacher or program director/ supervisor with knowledge that applicant has performed the minimum amount of community service; and evidence of extracurricular activities. Although not required, students may also include letter(s) of recommendation, and/or letter(s) of acceptance to post-secondary educational institution(s) along with their scholarship application.

Q: How and when will the scholarship award winners be notified?
A: Scholarship grant applicants recommended for award will be reviewed at the regular VCF Grant Committee meeting in May. Applicants selected for award will be notified within one week of scholarship award via email.

Q: How and when will the scholarship awards be disbursed?
A: Award disbursement will occur in June, with checks directly mailed to scholarship grantees.

The VCF Grant Committee retains the right to withhold scholarship grants in any given year if no candidate is determined to be qualified.

Additional Considerations

- Scholarship value range will be based on applicant competition and funds available for award
- Personal interview of scholarship applicant may or may not be required, and shall be determined after initial review of applicant pool
- Applications may be summarily denied, with or without prior notification to the applicant, if any statements or representations in the application and supporting materials are found to be untruthful, dishonest, or misleading

Selection Procedures

Procedures for selection of award will not differ from the current process employed for the award of direct service grants and capital grants through the Vernon CommUNITY Fund. The initial evaluation of the merit of a scholarship application will be a joint effort amongst City staff and Jemmott Rollins Group (JRG). Ultimately, any candidate(s) recommended for award will be brought to the Vernon CommUNITY Grant Committee in May for deliberation and approval(s) of grant(s).

The VCF Scholarship Program is designed to benefit a broad class of beneficiaries through an objective process that is nondiscriminatory in nature.

Program Timeline

A VCF Scholarship Program Timeline has been established based upon the calendar year. In summary, applications are accepted beginning January 1st through March 31st of a given year. In May, the Vernon
CommUNITY Fund Grant Committee will select scholarship grantees. Funds for scholarship awards will be dispersed in June to all scholarship grant recipients.

**Promotion/Publicity**

Brochures, newsletters, direct mail, social media, scholarship directory listings or a combination of one or more of these methods will be used to advertise the availability of a Vernon CommUNITY Fund Scholarship. It is important that the appropriate applicant pool is reached, as targeted students reside in the Vernon Area (which is clearly defined).