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EDITOR'S PICK

Boys and Girls Club supporters plan to speak against Fitchburg budget amendment

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PHOTO BY MICHELLE STOCKER

Michael Johnson, CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of Dane County, addresses a crowd at the club's Allied Drive location in May.

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About 200 Boys and Girls Club of Dane County supporters are expected to appear at a city of Fitchburg meeting Tuesday to oppose a budget amendment that would pull funding from the club, CEO Michael Johnson said.

Fitchburg has provided \$50,000 in its budget for the club for the past four years, about 18 percent of the Allied Drive location's total operating budget, Johnson said.

“There’s no other nonprofit in Allied Drive that has a physical plant that we have that can feed hundreds of kids every day, that has a transportation infrastructure,” Johnson said. “And that was why they literally began to fund us to relieve some of that pressure.”

Fitchburg Alds. Julia Arata Fratta, Dan Carpenter and Dorothy Krause are sponsoring an amendment to the proposed 2017 budget that would remove club funding from the city budget and put it under the control of the Community Economic Development Authority, whose eight members would decide how to allocate it.

“The idea is to have this grant fund under CEDA administration available for any not-for-profit organization that resides in Fitchburg or serves clientele that are more than 40% Fitchburg residents,” the amendment said.

The proposed amendment also would transfer \$10,000 allocated for the Badger Prairie Needs Network into the fund.

Krause told Madison365 in an Oct. 28 story that the amendment supporters do not intend to lower the club’s funding, but there are no guarantees if the CEDA assumes control.

“We are seeing a lot of needs in the community for good projects,” Krause told Madison365. “To just put things in the budget for various groups, we wanted to be able to look at things. (CEDA) is the most appropriate group to vet things before they go into the budget.”

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Johnson said the proposed funding system would pit nonprofit groups against each other for city funding.

Madison365 reported that some alders may be supporting an amendment to the originally proposed amendment that would add \$50,000 to the budget to secure the club’s funding and set up a process for other community organizations to apply for city funding.