

http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/madison-s-finance-committee-approves-for-rapid-response-peer-support/article_95594143-a3ff-5541-94b4-5b35e12cd168.html

Madison's Finance Committee approves \$50,000 for 'rapid response' peer support program

LOGAN WROGE lwroge@madison.com 6 hrs ago



DEAN MOSIMAN, STATE JOURNAL

Madison's Finance Committee approved \$50,000 Monday for the several Madison organizations to run a peer support program reducing violence. Mayor Paul Soglin, at microphone, stands with Focused Interruption Coalition members -- from left, Aaron Maub'El, Michael Johnson and Anthony Cooper Sr. -- in October. The coalition will coordinate the "rapid response" peer support

Madison's Finance Committee approved \$50,000 for a short-term, peer-support program Monday as an attempt to stem violence.

The funds would go to the Focused Interruption Coalition, a collection of community and faith leaders, the Nehemiah Community Development Corp. and the Boys & Girls Club of Dane County to run a "rapid response" program aimed at reducing violence, de-escalating crises and providing support to victims of violence.

An additional \$25,000 would go to unexpected costs incurred by victims of violence, such as temporary housing or access to transportation, to be determined by the city's Community Development Division in consultation with Focused Interruption.

Ald. Barbara Harrington-McKinney, 1st District, took issue with how the \$50,000 is planned to be distributed.

The proposal would have the city enter into a contract with Nehemiah. Focused Interruption would then subcontract from Nehemiah, while the Boys & Girls Club acts as a fiscal agent for the coalition.

Harrington-McKinney argued the way the proposal is structured creates issues of accountability and transparency. She attempted to amend the proposal to clarify Nehemiah as the sole recipient of the funds.

But Mayor Paul Soglin noted the absence of the Boys & Girls Club in an original resolution caused "controversy" between city officials and Focused Interruption.

While Harrington-McKinney's attempt to simplify the contracted organizations failed, committee members did include her suggestion to put in deadlines for the Community Development Division to report on the money's use and any measurable outcomes.

Harrington-McKinney was the one audible dissenting member to the funds on a voice vote.

The \$75,000 is part of \$400,000 in the 2017 city budget meant to go to a 15-point plan offered by Focused Interruption last year with the goal of reducing violence, recidivism and racial disparities.

The City Council will take up the peer support funding June 20. The money could not be doled out until a memorandum of understanding between the city and Focused Interruption is approved.

The Finance Committee also recommended a change to sewer rates that would create a three-tiered pricing system for restaurants, commercial kitchens and retail food establishments.

City officials argue the change, which could raise the price of treatment for some restaurants by up to 120 percent over a base volume rate, would bring equity between what residential users and restaurants pay for sewage treatment.

“This is a policy moving us more in line with an equitable way of distributing cost among our users,” said Ald. Sara Eskrich, 13th District.

The new rates, which would be phased in over three years, would begin on April 1 and affect businesses with \$25,000 or more in sales annually. Restaurants could enter a discounted level in the pricing structure by participating in an approved organics recycling or collection program.

While acknowledging the benefit of encouraging organic recycling, opponents to the change argued businesses that would be affected did not have enough input into the proposal and called for more time to examine an appropriate increase to rates.

“I really don’t have philosophical problems with the concept of this ordinance,” said Greg Frank, a co-owner of Food Fight Restaurant Group. “But every dollar that we don’t have available we can’t use for investment, we can’t use for salaries, we can’t use for community problems.”

Among other actions taken, the Finance Committee approved reimbursing Eskrich \$8,524 she spent on legal fees against an ethics complaint that was dismissed by the city’s Ethics Board in April.

Committee members also authorized the Madison Police Department to apply for a \$1.875 million federal grant to hire more police officers.

MORE INFORMATION



Madison City Council members seek to fund peer support to address gun violence

- Man dies after being shot on Far East Side
- Proposal to raise sewer rates for restaurants evolves with new discount tier

Should Madison spend money on the 'rapid response' peer support program

5 hrs ago

Madison's Finance Committee approved \$50,000 for a short-term, peer-support program Monday as an attempt to stem violence. The funds would go...

Logan Wroge | Wisconsin State Journal

Logan Wroge has been a general assignment reporter for the Wisconsin State Journal since 2015. He earned a degree in journalism from the University of Minnesota while minoring in communication studies.