

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 5, 2014

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Commission

FROM: Kenneth Fields, City Manager

RE: City Funding for the Historic Lake Wales Society, Inc.

SYNOPSIS: The City of Lake Wales will provide temporary financial support to the Historic Lake Wales Society, Inc. while it develops a long term business plan.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Commission approve the proposed letter agreement between the City of Lake Wales and the Historic Lake Wales Society for the provision of Six Thousand dollars (\$6,000.00) of temporary financial support for a ninety day period.

BACKGROUND

The Historic Lake Wales Society is a private, non-profit entity that currently operates the City's Depot Museum and organizes the annual Pioneer Days festival. Its Director is Mimi Reid Hardman. Over the years the Society and Ms. Hardman have made significant contributions to the City by acquiring and preserving historic structures and objects related to the City's history. In the past few years, as the Society's financial situation has deteriorated, it transferred ownership of its historic structures and some of its objects to the city, who assumed responsibility for major maintenance items and matters such as property insurance and security. Operation of the Depot Museum, which houses the Society's historic objects, has remained a Society responsibility and it collects and retains any revenue the Museum generates.

At this time, the Society has indicated that it no longer has the financial resources to continue operation of the Museum or the ability to be the organizer of the Pioneer Days festival and has requested the city provide direct financial support of the Society while it organizes a task force to develop a long term business plan to address its future needs. The Society has indicated it has no other prospects for long term financial viability. It is believed this task force can develop a plan for building the Society's resources through more resident involvement and broader community outreach to assure the continuation of the Society's services. The current Executive Director of the Society will be available to consult with the task force but will not be a member of it.

The Historic Lake Wales Society's contributions are many and greatly appreciated by the City of Lake Wales and its citizens and its efforts to modernize its approach and broaden its base of support should be applauded.

OTHER OPTIONS

Not provide operating funds to the Historic Lake Wales Society from the City and allow the Depot Museum to cease operation.

FISCAL IMPACT

The proposed Six Thousand Dollars (\$6,000.00) can be provided from the current year budget out of reserves.



City of Lake Wales

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September 16, 2014

Mimi Reid Hardman
Historic Lake Wales Society
325 South Scenic Highway
Lake Wales, FL 33853

Dear Ms. Hardman:

This letter will confirm the understanding between the City of Lake Wales ("City") and the Historic Lake Wales Society, Inc. ("Society") concerning the City's provision of temporary financial support of the Society and the Depot Museum in accordance with the City Commission's direction of September 3, 2014.

Upon City Commission approval of this letter and the Society's acceptance of its terms, the City will immediately provide the Society with Six Thousand Dollars (\$6,000.00) for operating expenses of the Depot Museum and the upcoming Pioneer Days Festival only. In return, the Society's Board will create a task force of community and professional representatives to develop a business plan in the next ninety (90) days that will address and develop solutions to the Society's long term financial needs and begin a process of identifying ways to upgrade and modernize the Depot Museum's displays and presentation. The sale of City owned assets to provide cash for regular operations will not be allowed but may be considered if capital investment is needed in the Museum facility. If requested, I can designate a City Staff member to serve on the Task Force to assist in this effort. The Executive Director of the Society will be available to consult with this task force but will not be a member of it.

It is hoped that once the business plan is developed and delivered to the City, the Society will be in a position to actively solicit community financial support to order to continue operations and will have some vision as to what future steps are necessary to make the Depot Museum relevant and attractive to both residents and visitors.

The City will continue to meet its obligations as owner of the property under its prior agreements with the Society but nothing in this letter shall be construed to commit the City to financial support of the Society's or the Museum's operations at the end of the ninety day period. It is hoped that this short term support will allow the Society to create the kind of broad community based financial and volunteer support it needs to continue its mission.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any additional information and know that the City fully supports the Society's efforts to remain a vibrant and vital part of the Lake Wales community.

Kenneth Fields
City Manager

C: Albert C. Galloway, Jr., City Attorney
Dorothy Ecklund, Finance Director

Accepted: Mimi Reid Hardman
Executive Director on Behalf of the Historic Lake Wales Society