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Kent County Board of Commissioners Passes COVID Relief Funding Recommendations

Funding recommendations will assist businesses, community organizations and local units of government

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (June 11, 2020) – The Kent County Board of Commissioners voted today to allocate \$94.2 million of federal [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#) funding to support the region as it recovers from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and reimburse the County’s direct community-wide COVID-19 mitigation efforts. Additionally, \$20.434 million was placed in reserve for a possible second wave of COVID-19 infections.

As part of the CARES Act, Kent County was awarded \$114.6 million on April 24th, 2020 from the U.S. Treasury. A COVID Relief Subcommittee was subsequently established by the Board of Commissioners, to ensure the funds were allocated pursuant to the guidelines provided by the federal government. The Subcommittee met twice weekly over the past two months and received testimony from representatives of underserved communities who are being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, as well as representatives of local chambers of commerce. A set of funding recommendations was then developed for the full Board’s review and approval.

“The COVID-19 public health crisis has significantly affected residents and businesses across our County, and it was critical for our Board to allocate this federal funding as quickly as possible,” said Kent County Board of Commissioners Chair Mandy Bolter. “As we do on so many issues, we worked closely with several businesses, organizations and non-profits to develop a comprehensive plan to ensure the funds meet the needs of our community and reflect the intent of the federal legislation.”

The Board directed funding to the following priorities:

- County Expenses: \$35 million (This includes, but not limited to, expenses for community education, emergency operations, homeless population response, surveillance and contact tracing, testing, public safety and correctional facility, etc.)
- Business Assistance: \$25 million
- Return-to-Work PPE: \$3.0 million
- Mitigation of Homelessness: \$3 million
- Care for Vulnerable Populations: \$12.2 million
- Compliance with COVID-19-related Public Health Measures: \$1 million (An objective of this priority is to expand internet access to facilitate social distancing.)
- Assistance to Local Units of Government: \$15 million

- Unallocated (Reserve for Possible Second Wave): \$20.434 million

The CARES Act funds must be fully spent by Dec. 30, 2020 or will be forfeited back to the federal government.

“We heard from numerous organizations that many of our residents are not receiving needed care, education and services during this pandemic due to limited or lack of internet access,” said Bolter. “I am gratified we were able to provide funding to expand internet access which will benefit our underserved communities in using telehealth services and adhering to social distancing guidelines.”

County administration will now develop a process to distribute the funds to various programs within each priority and contract with the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce to administer a program to assist for-profit businesses under 25 FTES with economic grants. A similar contract will be developed with the Heart of West Michigan United Way to administer a comparable program to assist nonprofit agencies. Additionally, the County will contract with a firm to conduct an audit on the distribution and use of the CARES Act funding.

“Members of the Subcommittee worked very hard over the past two months to make every dollar count for the residents of Kent County,” said County Administrator Wayman Britt. “I appreciate the work of my team in assisting our Commissioners in developing a set of funding recommendations that attacks the spread of the virus and assists those facing financial hardship.”

To view a copy of the COVID Relief Subcommittee Executive Report in English and Spanish, [click here](#).

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