

BUDGET READING, 9/9/13 – Closed Captioned Transcript
“Increase Outreach Efforts and for Snap Enrollment” (Budget Question 160)

Councilmember tovo. >> Tovo: I'd like to ask a question about about our budget question and response 160. And this is for health and human services -- health and human services staff. [11:47:28] >> Mayor Leffingwell: Which item? >> Tovo:1.29. >> We have gotten a recommendation from the sustainable food policy board to increase our outreach efforts and for snap enrollment. And in answer to councilmember riley's question on 160, we did get back some information about the existing enrollment efforts and the fact that grant funding will soon be unavailable for those positions. And if we don't allocate additional resources through the budget process those grant funded positions would end. And I wanted to invite our staff up to talk a little bit about that and where you see it in terms of departmental priority. I think probably all of us share the concern that there are such low rates of enrollment in snap in our area and there's such a high need and high number of families suffering from food insecurity issues. So I just wanted you to address whether you see this as an important need. >> Carlos rivera, director of health and human services. Yes, it's absolutely -- there's a need on two levels. First of all, as you said there are a lot of folks out there that are drug struggling to -- struggling to make ends meet. Equally important is the fact that many individuals don't realize they have these resources available to them and it's our responsibility to get out there and really connect them with those resources. >> Tovo: So our existing positions that are currently working with the community to get -- could you talk about the four temporary positions that are described in 160? And the question was about the administrative associate positions that were focusing on outreach. [11:49:30] >> Councilmember, we currently have four temperature positions in the neighborhood centers that are currently funded by grants. That grant funding, that portion of the grant funding will end in december. And so the request has been to continue those positions in january through the end of the fiscal year. They're currently doing screening for clients who may be eligible for a variety of benefit programs that may be available to them to help increase those enrollment numbers. >> Tovo: Part of their focus is in helping clients determine whether or not they would be eligible. >> Absolutely.

>> Tovo: So the cost of funding all four is 158. I had put forward just the recommendation from the food policy board, which I think was actually aimed at increasing the double dollars program, but I had item 1.29 talked about 59. So that

funds just a little over one half or a little over one temporary position. Do you think there's a benefit in having one or two of these staff members continuing? If we can't get the full 158? >> We currently have the four because we have one at each strategic neighborhood center. So reducing that would reduce the locations we would be able to have those services at. Or reduce the hours if we were to spread those two positions across the different facilities. >> Another issue that you should be aware of is that the benefit banks from the Texas Health Institute is no longer going to be offered to our community because it's changing hands. So that was another avenue that we were pursuing in order to have folks aware of their eligibility, but again since that resource isn't available to us, this -- it makes this request even that more important. >> Morrison: So we talked about this probably a year or so ago in health and human services. And we were talking about getting benefit bank terminals basically in our rec centers and our neighborhood centers and our high need centers. And at the time you talked about the need for support and the computer terminals there. So can you bring us up to date. Did any of that happen in those positions were grants funded or that never happened? [11:51:56] >> It's no longer an option. >> Morrison: So it did happen. >> We were moved towards getting it implemented. We were just about there and then the benefit bank is no longer an option for us. We received an email from the Texas Health Institute that it is changing hands and that it might -- I don't know whether it would be affordable or not, but at this point it's off the table and not an option for us. That additional information, until they have a sense of what they will be offering moving forward. >> Morrison: I know that there are a lot of people that are concerned about this very issue and that is under enrollment of eligible people. There are millions of dollars that the community leaves on the table. And so -- I know other folks are working on it. I don't know if other folks actually implemented the benefit bank. So I want to make sure we're going this strangely and in a collaborative way. It certainly sounds like having the ability to do outreach at our neighborhood centers makes a lot of sense, but I just feel a little uncomfortable because I don't know what else is going on. And we've talked about this at C.A.N. A lot, but every entity is interested in this and I assume that others have moved forward on it. >> We've been working with Central Health to get the benefit bank implemented. It was not implemented anywhere that Central Health or we were involved in. So it's not in our neighborhood centers. It's in the in our W.I.C. Offices. We were unable to complete it in the end. >> I guess I'm certainly sympathetic and I think it makes sense to continue this. I guess it's more of a manual process at this point. But I -- but it's something that really makes sense to be done in a collaborative way. And in a way that has some automation. In fact, Central Health was talking about actually putting together a

system. So if we were to move forward I would -- that would be fine, but I think we should think of this as at least temporary and get another plan in place because we've got to have a plan. This is not going to answer it. [11:54:12] >> Tovo: Mayor? It sounds like there are lots of moving parts here. I wonder if it makes sense to allocate an amount -- i might need some help from our financial and legal staff. Could we allocate an amount and then ask that the discussion -- that a more thorough discussion happen at public health and human services and that they return to us a recommendation about whether we should go forward? And continue the temporary staff positions or reallocate that money for that purpose in some other way? Is that allowable? >> From a legal perspective you need to adopt your budget and then take action in accordance with it if you choose -- you can amend it for municipal purposes later on. But you do need to have something in the budget for adoption when the budget is adopted. Active tow I guess I was suggesting could we allocate \$158,000 for outreach and enrollment efforts and then have our public health and human services committee look at how -- how best -- whether that makes sense to continue these positions or use that money in some other enrollment focused way or return to us the recommendation for \$50,000? And we can do something different. Is that doable? >> Sounds like it fits within the lawful parameters. Are you going to set out f.T.E.'S -- >> these are temporary staff currently, right? Would we need to specify -- if one of the options for using that \$158,000 is to continue funding those four temporary staff does it need to be designated as an f.T.E.? >> It does not, councilmember, I think you would be final indicating, appropriating \$158,000 to this program with the further direction that staff come back to the health and human services committee and I think that would be all we would need. If there's ever a desire to transition these geez into a permanent staff we would to you to make the action today to authorize the permanent positions. [11:56:29] >> Tovo: If the committee reviewed the situation that this wasn't an investment that made sense to continue at this point I assume they could return to us that recommendation and we would have \$158,000 extra in around this year. It doesn't need to be spent, in other words? >> It would be \$158,000 of unexpended funds in the health and human services department's budget. >> Tovo: Then I will make that motion. >> Mayor Leffingwell: This is world cup 29 with the amount being \$158,000 instead of 150? >> Tovo: Correct. Based on the staff's discussion that having that kind of geographic disperse al makes sense if that -- if it looks like that --

>> Mayor Leffingwell: I'll call for a vote on that one. In favor say aye? Opposed say no. No. I believe that passes five-one with -- with me voting no and councilmember spelman off the dais.