



DATE: September 9, 2019

AGENDA ITEM #4

**TO:** Environmental Commission

**FROM:** Callie Niday, Staff Liaison

**SUBJECT:** Los Altos Community Foundation Environmental Education Fund

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Discuss EnviroThon Challenge award distribution process

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**BACKGROUND**

In November 2003, the Los Altos Community Foundation (LACF) entered into a Donor Advised Fund Agreement with the Los Altos Environmental Commission (formerly the Los Altos Environmental Committee) for the purposes of creating and maintaining an Environmental Education fund, “the Fund”. The Fund is maintained and administered by LACF and was initially created for the purpose of funding the reprinting of the *Trees of Los Altos* booklet. Upon an initial grant of \$1,000 by LACF, the fund received donations from the public to aid in the printing and distribution of the *Trees* booklet. The books were printed and distributed, though LACF reports hundreds of copies remaining in storage. The current balance of the account is \$3,528 and is to be used specifically for “environmental education”.

**DISCUSSION**

LACF has informed the City that the \$3,528 balance remains available for environmental education efforts. The Environmental Commission has the authority to make recommendations to LACF for disbursement of the funds.

At the January 14, 2019 meeting, the Environmental Commission discussed potential uses for the environmental education fund. The Commission determined that a brainstorming session would help determine potential uses for the funds and directed Commissioners to bring ideas to the February meeting. The Commissioners will share their ideas and begin to narrow the focus of the environmental education fund.

The Environmental Commission continued its discussion of potential uses for the environmental education fund at the February 11, 2019 meeting. Vice Chair Yuan and Commissioner Teksler formed a subcommittee to distill the February 11, 2019 discussion and develop a list of the group’s top ideas from the brainstorming session.

At the March 11, 2019 meeting, the Environmental Commission continued to discuss the potential uses for the environmental education fund. Commissioner Klein expressed interest to work with the History Museum to develop specific activities and programs to use the funding for engagement and community involvement focused on environmental education as both organizations deem fit, and bring back a generalized proposal with review and input from the Commission.

At the May 13, 2019 meeting, Commissioner Klein gave an update that the Commission is going to work with the Los Altos History Museum to host an activism workshop during the Apricot STEM Fair on Sunday, June 30, 2019. The goal is for participants to form a team, design an environmental protection campaign, and pitch their campaign for cash funding. The pitches will be recorded, and the Commission will select the winners. The details of how the environmental education fund is being allocated is being discussed and will be presented at the June meeting.

At the June 10, 2019 meeting, Commissioner Klein updated the Commission that 12 applications representing seven schools across four cities were received for the Los Altos EnviroThon Challenge at the Apricot STEM Fair. Despite the challenge of getting the attention of teachers and students at the end of the school year and the challenge of holding the event during the summer break, a great number of students signed up for the event. Commissioner Klein informed the group that the pitch presentations will be recorded and published on the web. Once the videos are reviewed by the Commission, the winners will be selected and the amount of funding to award each team will be decided. Awards will be judged on the basis of both the feasibility of the project idea and the persuasiveness of the presentation. The grand prize-winning team will also receive a session of personalized tutoring in advance of reprising their pitch in front of an audience at the Los Altos Night of Ideas event in September.

At the July 8, 2019 meeting, Commissioner Klein announced that the EnviroThon event was a success. There were 13 participants from seven different schools across four cities. Four teams were formed, and they had only three hours to put together a presentation. The EnviroThon Challenge winners were announced including Fight Back for First Place, Field Trippers and Next Generation tied for Second Place, and Vroom Vroom for Third Place. The Commission unanimously awarded the four winners up to \$1,700 (approximately half) of the Los Altos Community Foundation Environmental Education Fund balance. The group discussed how to allocate funding appropriately. It was announced that the awards will be distributed to non-profit or educational organizations selected by the winning teams. The remaining education fund balance will go towards hosting a similar event next year.

On the August 12, 2019 meeting, Commissioner Klein gave an update that the winning team, Fight Back, has been actively involved with the City for the carbon dividend tax. The two teams focusing on education has attended a few community events and has decided to combine funds (\$800 total). One of the groups gave a presentation to the Cupertino City Council with the Youth Climate Group. Commissioner Klein will give an update on the award distribution process at the next Environmental Commission meeting on September 9, 2019.

Attachments:

None