

Minutes of Somerville Municipal Scholarship Committee - Open Meeting (In-person)

Monday, February 12 2024 at 6pm

In Attendance:

Eric Lopez (President)

Shari Pitkin (Vice-President)

Darci Hanna (Secretary)

Cindy Lee

Linda Dubuque

Melanie Kessler, Representative of the Superintendent

Paul Murphy, SHSSF Representative

Brandon Wilson, SHSSF & Somerville City Planner

Quorum Attained

- Approval of minutes: Past minutes from 11/09/23 approved
- Discussion of Somerville High School Scholarship Foundation (SHSSF) repayment request
- SHSSF has reached out to Mayor for reimbursement of the money on behalf of the Somerville Municipal Scholarship Committee
- Canceled checks equaling the amount they've requested have been provided by the SHSSF to Linda, she has reviewed them and explored ways to repay the request legally through the city
- The funds have to be sent to the school, not directly to the students, the Mayor wants this resolved ASAP, it pre-dates her administration and current committee members' tenures
- Shari proposes a motion to go ahead and distribute all of the owed funds to SHSSF-vetted students in one year and balance the books
- Cindy seconded the motion, Darci and Eric agreed
- The SHSSF has 197 applicants this year, the most ever, so the need is high
- Excise bills go out Feb. 22nd and Linda has included a request for scholarship fund donations
- To be in compliance with Section 3-C, Paul wants to know if we need to review applications, our committee members agree that their vetting is sufficient, but Eric volunteers to attend if necessary
- Student Aid Index is the new FAFSA measure for need, that's still being provided but it's delayed in some situations because of the trouble with the new FAFSA rollout glitches
- Linda will need the students' names, the college they're attending, their college ID number, and their W-9, Paul will provide that
- Brandon asked why we have to send money to the schools and not the students, Linda says the administration and legal team have indicated that's what the city needs to do, and Eric weighed in that some colleges require it because it affects the awards that the school will provide students
- Brandon asked about our consideration of financial need, the SHSSF has a cutoff now, SMSC prioritizes need but doesn't enforce a specific cut-off amount for eligibility
- Eric discussed the need to get the word out about our scholarship application for this year, asked Melanie for suggestions for contact info: Melanie is the contact person for SHS, we'll have a flyer out soon, we can email it to Melanie (a QR code is ideal), Full Circle has 5 seniors so Dan McCall can get it to all of them

- SHS has a little over 300 seniors this year
- Shari asked about suggestions for additional schools to notify (Catholic, private, etc...) and homeschoolers, she is maintaining a list to notify
- Melanie told us that there's a common application for all SHS and Full Circle students already, and in the future we could consider participating in that existing application system, but it doesn't include non-public school students who we would also like to consider for awards
- Committee reviewed application draft for approval so that it can be sent to Somerville's IT Dept. for posting
- Eric approved and Shari seconded the application questions, Darci and Cindy agreed as well

Notes submitted by Darci Hanna, SMSC Secretary