

Court of Common Council



CITY OF HARTFORD

550 Main Street
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06103

COUNCILMAN MATTHEW D. RITTER

August 4, 2009

Joseph Barber
Bernadine Silvers
Chairpersons
Hartford 2000
111 Charter Oak Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Chairpersons Barber and Silvers and members of Hartford 2000:

Thank you very much for your recent letter regarding allocations made by the Court of Common Council to various nonprofit agencies across the City of Hartford. Hartford 2000, like many nonprofit organizations across the City, plays a pivotal role in providing necessary services to our residents and helps to improve their lives every day.


In your letter, you recommend that the Court of Common Council establish an official application procedure before awarding future grants from its Civic and Cultural Account to ensure maximum transparency. I wholeheartedly agree. The Court of Common Council attempted to use these grants as an economic stimulus package for various nonprofit agencies across the City and, as you noted in your letter, many of the organizations which were awarded grants are very deserving and provide high quality services to City residents. However, it should be the goal of the Court of Common Council and all nonprofit organizations to work with each other and listen to each other's recommendations because a responsive and quality government is best achieved through cooperation and an exchange of ideas from all interested parties.

In appreciation of your advice, please know that I will be proposing that the City adopt an ordinance which would require that in the future the Court of Common Council set priorities for the awarding of funds from the Civic and Cultural Account, that it hold at least one (1) public hearing prior to distributing grants from its Civic and Cultural Account and that any organization seeking such a grant from the City must first submit

an application. This ordinance will not impact the grants allocated in July, but it will impact all future grants upon its adoption, including the money returned by Hartford 2000 and any funds returned by other organizations. I understand, for example, that the West End Civic Association is considering whether to return the \$10,000 it was awarded. These funds would be awarded through the application process I am proposing, if the ordinance passes. Please also know that the Council debated a similar resolution in March 2008, which would have established a process through which organizations could be considered for Civic and Cultural Account funds. That resolution was not passed.

It is my hope that going forward this new process will ensure transparency and enable Hartford 2000 to apply for and receive grants from the City's Cultural and Civic Account. Again, I want to thank you for your letter and your constructive criticism, leadership and commitment to Hartford. I look forward to working with you to implement these changes and setting good public policy for years to come. This is a moment where we can learn from what I now recognize is a flawed process and improve Hartford. Your letter spells out a clear and precise way of how we can move forward together and that is why Hartford 2000 is such a valuable and important organization in our community.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Matthew Ritter".

Matt Ritter

Cc: Mayor Eddie A. Perez
Court of Common Council