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18 TOWNS ASK KANE COUNTY TO PAY FOR COVID 19 EXPENSES

GENEVA -- Eighteen communities, citing massive public health and safety expenses from the Coronavirus, asked Kane County today to quickly distribute to its towns and cities at least an initial \$45 million of the \$92.9 million the county received from the federal CARES Act.

The mayors of Aurora, Elgin and Geneva testified to the county's Coronavirus Relief Fund Task Force that the Illinois General Assembly intended for Kane County to swiftly release funds to pay for the unparalleled and unexpected expenses incurred for police, fire, first responder and public health efforts.

Kane County communities signed a May 29 letter urging the Kane County Board to immediately release millions of dollars to municipalities. Eighteen towns submitted their Coronavirus expenses to the Metro West Council of Government, including Aurora, Elgin, St. Charles, Geneva, Batavia, South Elgin, Maple Park, West Dundee, North Aurora, Sleepy Hollow, Campton Hills, Gilberts, Hampshire, East Dundee and Carpentersville, Algonquin, Elburn, Sugar Grove and Pingree Grove.

"These 18 towns represent over 400,000 Kane County residents and the cities have a population of more than 75 percent -- or three-quarters of Kane County's 532,000 residents," said Geneva Mayor Kevin Burns, president of the Metro West Council of Government. "Local governments in Kane County were left out of direct CARES Act allocations by the state and federal government. This leaves Metro West no choice but to request Kane County share the \$92.9 million in federal CARES Act funding with municipalities."

Like Kane County itself, local governments have had to provide additional significant levels of support and resources to public safety and COVID-19 efforts but nearly all have received no direct support from the federal or state government. Metro West urged that county funds be distributed per capita. However, if the county board and task force choose to have communities

itemize Coronavirus expenses, the 18 towns submitted a spreadsheet with \$45 million in eligible expenses, Burns said.

“These expenses are Phase One of our request and our Metro West communities will have more public safety and public health expenses later this year. We will need to come back. We need a rolling reimbursement so that all of the funds are expended and we aren’t turning any money back,” Burns said.

DuPage County’s Finance Committee and Will County have already detailed plans to distribute CARES Act money to cities by population. Will County plans to give 55 percent of its Coronavirus Relief Funds to communities. Across the country, counties are distributing federal CARES Act funds to municipalities on a per capita basis including Salt Lake County, Utah; Kern County, California; and Denton, Travis, Dallas, Fort Bend, Collin and Hidalgo counties in Texas. Many other U.S. counties that received CARES Act funding have approved distribution plans for cities and towns.

The Illinois Legislature and the Governor decided to have Kane County distribute its CARES Act funding to cities. During the debate on the floor of the House and Senate and also in caucus meetings, legislators and the Governor’s office said towns in Kane County were not included in the allotments because they are supposed to receive disbursements from the county.

Metro West credited Kane County legislators for fighting to make sure that Kane and the other collar counties would distribute their funds to cities and villages. House Bill 357, the state budget implementation bill, sets up the new Legislative Budget Oversight Commission that must “oversee the distribution and expenditure of federal financial relief for State and local governments related to the COVID-19 pandemic.” It also requires that “units of local governments shall report to the Commission on the status and distribution of federal CARES money and any other federal financial relief related to the COVID-19 pandemic.” This language was added to ensure the distribution of funds to communities, Metro West said.

Elgin Mayor Dave Kaptain testified that his city took quick action, tightened its belt and announced furloughs for city staff due to Coronavirus.

“However, I have consulted with several public health experts and we are expecting a second wave in the Fall that will further tax our ambulance drivers and other first responders,” Kaptain said.

Mayor Richard Irvin of Aurora said the second largest city in Illinois is in the unenviable and unique position in Illinois of having to obtain its CARES Act funding from four counties since Aurora is located in Kane, DuPage, Will and Kendall counties.

“Our public safety officers in Aurora have seen a record number of calls over the last few months related to Coronavirus.” Irvin testified. “Besides having to take many expensive, special precautions for the Coronavirus with the presumption of all service calls involving Coronavirus, looters on May 31st struck the Kane County part of downtown Aurora. These individuals had the goal of causing damage and injuries to police officers and public safety vehicles and destroying

many family-owned businesses in the downtown area. Damage was estimated in the millions of dollars. The State's Attorney has charged 21 people for their participation in the looting damage.

“The federal CARES Act is specifically intended to fund municipal police departments and allow local governments to maintain public safety during a crisis,” Irvin said. “So what happens the next time the Kane County party of Aurora has violence and looting? Will the city have the resources needed to combat the crisis?”

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