

## Calexico City Council approves private donations to make up emergency funds, continues public hearing about Mega Park

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**CALEXICO** — Private donations have made up the \$5,000 of emergency funds proposed to be donated to those in Haiti, the city announced at the same meeting where a public hearing about rescinding titles for a Mega Park project was continued for two weeks.

The money will be donated to the Red Cross' relief fund to buy much-needed water, medical supplies and food, said City Manager Victor Carrillo. The donation was the most effective way to "rise to the challenge."

Since the city announced it would be donating the money last Thursday, people have been bringing and mailing money to go toward the effort, he said.

The addendum that the council approved allowed the city to not take money out of its emergency fund, which is separate from the general fund, and instead use the donations, he said.

There has been some controversy about where the money has come from, but that should not take precedent over the need, said Imperial Valley Red Cross Manager Sylvia Preciado. The city stepped up, and it should be commended.

Many are suffering, and the Red Cross' death toll has risen to 50,000 as of Tuesday afternoon, she said. She hopes that the city's effort not only raises money, but also awareness about donating and the dangers of earthquakes.

The private donations mean that there will be no impact to the budget, said Mayor David Ouzan. The money that would have been taken out of the emergency fund would have been made up through fundraising, but now is not necessary.

Donations came in quickly as the \$5,000 was made in four days, he said. The donations were made "before we can even issue the check."

"We all came together and said this was a good cause," he said.

The city will continue to raise funds to donate to Haiti, including information being sent out with the water bill, he said.

The council also decided to continue a public hearing about rescinding titles on a 150 acre mixed-commercial project located on the corner of Jasper Road and Highway 111 after the developer requested it be continued until the Feb. 2 meeting.

No reason was given for why the group wanted to hold off on the public hearing, said City Attorney Jennifer Lyon.

The Planning Commission had recommended that the council approve the resolution to rescind titles at its Jan. 4 meeting.

Rescinding the titles would allow the developer to be more flexible about how the group wants to continue

with the project during the economic downturn, according to a letter to the council from the developers, Cox, Castle and Nicholson LLP.

The council had been told that there was some information missing about the project, Ouzan said. Continuing a public hearing is not unheard of and can occur when a person needs more information or something had to be discussed further.

Even if the titles were rescinded, Ouzan doesn't think it will be the end of the project, he said. The developer may have decided to work in phases on it and maybe make some changes to the plans.

Ouzan is not sure what the turnout will be for the next meeting when the group will continue the public hearing, he said. However, he hasn't heard many say that they don't want the Mega Park.

"I don't see people wanting to challenge this," he said.

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