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CL doles out hotel tax funds to local nonprofits

CRYSTAL LAKE – The Crystal Lake City Council distributed \$233,500 in hotel and motel tax funds to local nonprofit groups.

Council members struggled with how to allocate the shrinking pool of money collected from a tax on overnight stays in Crystal Lake.

This year, the city expects to collect \$230,000 in hotel and motel tax revenue. That's down from \$270,000 last year. The decline was a result of the economy, city staff said.

"This is not an easy process because we have a lot of worthy organizations," Mayor Aaron Shepley said.

Eight of the nonprofit groups that had requested funds were awarded slightly less than they received last year. The council dipped into hotel and motel tax reserves to fund requests from two groups that had not previously sought money.

Council members voted to give the largest chunk of money, \$122,334, to the Raue Center for the Arts.

It was less than the \$150,000 that the nonprofit had requested. The group will use the money for programming and marketing efforts, Executive Director Richard Kuranda said.

"We were hoping for more, but we are always grateful for the support we receive," Kuranda said. "We strive to be good stewards of all the funds we are given."

The Raue Center brings about \$4.2 million to the local economy each year, he said.

The rest of the funds were allocated to the McHenry County Youth Sports Association, Historic Downtown District of Crystal Lake, Lakeside Legacy Foundation, Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce, McHenry County Music Center, McHenry County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Crystal Lake Rowing Club, Crystal Lake Babe Ruth Baseball League, and the Berkshire Ballet Theatre.

The tax was enacted several years ago when the city was concerned about a proposed countywide hotel and motel tax that would have flowed into McHenry County coffers, Shepley said. Most of the money collected is given to community organizations that bring in overnight visitors who use local lodgings.

2011-12 fiscal year hotel and motel tax funding allocations

Raue Center for the Arts: \$122,334

McHenry County Youth Sports Association: \$40,778

Historic Downtown District of Crystal Lake: \$35,000

Lakeside Legacy Foundation: \$20,389

Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce: \$4,893

McHenry County Music Center: \$2,936

McHenry County Convention and Visitors Bureau: \$2,500

Crystal Lake Rowing Club: \$2,039

Crystal Lake Babe Ruth Baseball League: \$1,631

Berkshire Ballet Theatre: \$1,000

Source: Crystal Lake City Council board packet

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