

[Letter read by Dana Watson at the City Council budget work session on April 17, 2018; supplied by Dana Watson and reproduced by East Lansing Info with permission.]

Hello Everyone (read on 4/17/2018):

I sat on the Community Development Advisory Committee. I own a home, I vote, I pay my property taxes, send my 3 kids to East Lansing public schools and I voted yes on the city income tax. I am here today to express my surprise and disappointment that despite the amount of time spent by myself, the committee, staff and social service agencies that dollars to their services have a no fund EL staff recommendation. I graduated from MSU with a BA (Communication) in 1999 and I also have a Masters in Human and Social Services (Walden University). I have worked for the (Ingham) County gov't for like a decade. I have reviewed the titles of the Financial Advisory team that was comprised of people like banks, university professors and accountants.

“Staff” have recommended 0 funding to all the agencies (outside the Tri-County Consortium Dues). In other EL budgets I saw that 20 thousand went toward citizen ideas on fixing our budget. I have read about the 200,000 that must be repaid due to CDBG funds being determined to have been misused.

Yet I have also sadly been informed that infrastructure has basically solely been chosen again for funding over social service agencies. The Community Development Advisory Committee reviews grants and advices for services that directly benefit our low-moderate income population in East Lansing. Up to 1% of City East Lansing General Funds are allocated for human service activities (<https://www.cityofeastlansing.com/321/Community-Development-Advisory-Committee>). We went thru the whole process on the committee. Approximately 15 different agencies were set to receive. After taking their staff time and resources to apply for the funds, answer our additional questions, come to our hearing and they even showed up to thank us for the funds we anticipated providing. We don't have the expertise that these agencies do and that is an investment.

Tim (Dempsey) sent a communication to me as well about the decision. I appreciated his angle. I have talked to other EL staff (like Amy S) and council person (Aaron S).

When something has to be cut and a full chop is to our social service groups which effects our low/moderate income people, both an economic inequality and access inequity is upheld by policy decisions. They did not have to be fully funded either.

Even though the CD staff initially recommend funding similar to the CD Advisory committee, A staff changed those recommendations for Council due to the current budget challenges.

I am coming from a social service perspective. From a community perspective. From a health equity and social justice perspective. And I am thinking about impact and who loses. Do I want to see a nice sidewalk or know that a child received a scholarship to remain on a track team that her single father couldn't afford?

Data tells us that participating in keeping social service agencies afloat is an investment in our present and future.

It's an unseen investment that an accountant wouldn't see. But a city does because crime rates remain the same or lower, children who are facing unfortunate circumstances have safety nets, our older population who cannot feed themselves, are fed, our homeless population can have a day shelter, a person at their end has a number to call and someone who volunteers to process their feeling etc. .. In conclusion

I hope we shift and find away Please say yes to our recommendation. You might not be able to fund them all but please fund at least five, maybe make it a lottery. No one has asked me to be here. My name is Dana Watson and I was appointed to the CD advisory committee and I sit on Human Relations Commission. I am an advocate, a mother and resident.

== Dana Watson