



Proudly serving the Business Community for over 65 years!

Honorable Mayor Bozajian and City Council
Mr. Kindon Meik, City Manager
100 Civic Center Way
Calabasas, CA 91377

May 4, 2021

Dear Mayor, City Council, and City Manager,

Thank you for your continued support for the Calabasas Chamber of Commerce and for allowing us to submit a request for stimulus funding. We value the relationship we have with the City, City Council, and our local businesses.

At the start of COVID-19, the Calabasas Chamber was the primary resource for businesses, organizations, and the community by providing information from local, state, and federal governments on financial relief possibilities, public health guidelines, webinar facilitation for critical information, and served as a sounding board for concerned business owners. Our function was to advocate for the survival of city businesses throughout the pandemic by creating an environment in which they could continue to prosper during a very challenging time.

The Chamber provided regular updates to businesses, members, and non-members from LA Public Health on COVID-19 protocol, emerging recommendations from the CDC to ensure a safe work environment, and what Tier levels need to be met for indoor and outdoor capacity for business operations. The Chamber also facilitated several informative webinars that focused on funding opportunities for businesses from federal, state, and county offices.

The Chamber assisted many local businesses with unemployment and PPP applications providing them with much needed empathy and reassurance that they were not alone. Many of these businesses faced an uncertain future that they had not planned for and were faced with closing their doors. We provided them an outlet to talk, seek answers through information, and personal assistance in their time of need.

For the businesses forced to close because of public health protocols, the Chamber provided free e-blast advertising, take-out for restaurants, curbside pick-up, e-Commerce online sales for retailers, and Pop-up markets at each shopping center in the City to boost holiday sales. The Chamber also promoted businesses on all social media outlets, including Facebook boosts, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and the City and Chamber websites.

For the open businesses during the pandemic, the Chamber also offered free advertising because they were experiencing a decrease in sales. At that time, the community believed all business were closed except grocers.



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The Chamber held webinars with government agencies, Congressman Ted Lieu on the "CARES Act," Senator Henry Stern's forum for local business leaders to discuss "The State Response to the Economic Ramifications of Covid19," and Assembly Member Jesse Gabriel's "Small Business Meeting." During the pandemic, the communication between Mayor Weintraub and the Chamber proved invaluable, having a unified message for the businesses and community. On March 31, 2020, the Chamber sent a proposal to the Mayor and City Council asking for financial support for the Calabasas businesses that were forced to close. The Chamber's objective was to request funding in the way of loans or grants. Mayor Weintraub and Councilmember Gaines put forth a grant program to purchase PPE for the businesses positioned to reopen.

The "Calabasas Open Small Business Grant Program" provided a one-time emergency grant, up to \$10,000, to eligible Calabasas based small businesses to assist with COVID-19 reopening costs. The approved appropriation amount was \$500,000, or 50 grants if each small business receives the maximum amount. The City's small businesses that were required to close, or partially close, because of the pandemic, had access to money. Providing these much-needed funds to the City's small businesses allowed stores to reopen while also stimulating the local economy.

Several merchants benefited from the Chamber's involvement with the City to provide grants to the businesses hit the hardest. Providing program information to local businesses proved to be challenging. The Chamber President visited, in person, with many local business owners eligible for the grant to make them aware of the grant, and to help them navigate the application process. The Chamber President spent countless hours providing expert advice, reassurance, and sound guidance to these businesses to help them get through.

The Chamber worked closely with City staff, Michael McConville, and Marty Hall, to review the submitted applications for eligibility, and with Maureen Tamuri distributing banners and signs throughout the City to the businesses allowed to reopen.

The Chamber is always grateful for the City's support, but this is a different time, with urgency, that requires a different measure of support. Like so many small businesses, the Calabasas Chamber has experienced financial hardship because of COVID-19, and we are not immune.

The Calabasas Chamber Board of Directors respectfully requests \$200,000 from the City's stimulus funds to help restart the Chamber and develop a successful long-term economic strategy to support our local economy – and we will do this together.

These funds are a reinvestment from the City into the local business community through the Chamber and its initiatives. We serve as both an advocate for local merchants and as a liaison between the City and their business community. Our professional expertise of unifying our businesses, providing high-quality events, networking opportunities, educational events to increase knowledge of cutting edge business practices, and advertising is essential to reigniting a robust Calabasas business community.



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Our sole function is to embody what the spirit of Calabasas represents for the local economy. This community is a destination spot, it is well-known throughout the Country, it has a mystique that is different than other communities, and it's where we all call home. We help the City create that sentiment, together.

The stimulus funds from the City will allow the Chamber to promote specific commercial initiatives to help combat the negative economic impact to the City and our local economy caused by COVID-19. We will work with the City encouraging new businesses and businesses looking to expand to open up here. The City's assistance will allow the Chamber to return to a visible and welcoming office space as the City's official Visitor and Tourism Bureau. At our best, we will have a friendly front office, greet visitors, and provide recommendations on where to eat and shop locally. We are also a source of knowledge for the local community and new homeowners moving into Calabasas.

Having office space allows us to meet with interested developers, investors, and entrepreneurs looking to develop or open a new business within the City. The Chamber office will provide an essential space for business employee recruitment and a place to hold interviews. The office allows us to meet with corporations who need a Certificate of Origin for exporting products overseas and will serve as the initial point of contact for potential economic opportunities for our community.

The Calabasas Chamber is aware the City will draw up an agreement defining the specific purpose of the stimulus funds. The Chamber can guarantee that the funds will be used to combat the negative economic impacts of the pandemic or to respond to a public health emergency.

Calabasas is a unique community. Our relationship to our local economy and the City could not be more critical to our businesses as liaisons to the City and their advocates. Coming out of the pandemic requires a reintroduction for everyone to our new "normal," which we intend to use these funds to do. To put this dark winter behind us, we will need to be aggressive in our approach to rebuilding the momentum for our local businesses. This requires the continuation of the strong relationship the Chamber and the City have together.

Respectfully yours,

Mike McNutt

Mike McNutt Chamber Chairman & The Calabasas Chamber Board of Directors