

City Council – Action Request Form

Date: February 10, 2020

To: Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, and Members of the City Council

From: Tasha Logan Ford, Assistant City Manager

Council Action Requested:

Allocate \$275,000 in funding to support the expansion of the Driver’s License Restoration program in Forsyth County, Forsyth County DRIVE (Driver Restoration Initiative and Vocational Expansion) Program

Strategic Focus Area: Safe and Secure Community

Strategic Objective: No

Strategic Plan Action Item: No

Key Work Item: No



Summary of Information:

In November 2019, staff presented information to the Public Safety Committee regarding the Forsyth County Driver’s License Restoration program. The effort began in 2015 and to date has provided assistance to nearly 2000 individuals however, the need for additional assistance and financial support for the program remains. In accordance with N.C.G.S. 160A-456, the program will afford some of the city's financially challenged or low-to moderate income citizens an opportunity to have their licenses restored and thus expand their employment opportunities. Therefore, the City of Winston-Salem has been in conversation with the Forsyth County District Attorney and Clerk of Court regarding opportunities to partner and expand the reach of the program.

The Forsyth County DRIVE Program is a poverty reduction initiative forged through a partnership with the District Attorney, Clerk of Court, and the City of Winston-Salem. Resident safety is a key objective of the program as a path is created to allow individuals the ability to restore driving privileges and improve their ability to earn a living and contribute to the economy. Also, lowering economic barriers for residents who are justice involved is connected to increased employment opportunities.

Committee Action:

Committee

Action

For

Against

Remarks:

In the Winter 2018 Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology a study found that “clean slate clinic participants experience significant increase in average employment rates and average real earnings.” Nearly 1,900 job categories require a driver’s license and that while not all jobs require a driver’s license, having one is a very common requirement for the sorts of job that can actually lift people out of poverty. The DRIVE Program is designed to help residents gain employment by restoring driver’s licenses that have been previously suspended. This initiative is designed to assist residents twofold:

1. City and County residents that have limited transportation options will have improved ability to access employment opportunities both inside and outside of their communities.
2. Community residents with restored licenses will have the ability to pursue public/private vocations, and entrepreneurship opportunities in taxi, limousine, commercial driving, ridesharing, and other transportation services.

The program in Forsyth County is equipped to address driving infractions only in Forsyth County. Participants only participate in the program one time and the program is designed to address a specific set of infractions. With financial support of \$275,000 to hire dedicated staff for the program, operating expenses, marketing and outreach over an 18-month period, it’s anticipated the program could be expanded to include at least four application cycles. Assistance from the City would support a Legal Assistant and Assistant District Attorney in the District Attorney’s office and an Administrative Clerk in the Clerk of Court Office. Due to the need for staff to access proprietary information, positions would be housed and report directly to the District Attorney and the Clerk of Court.