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MEMORANDUM

To: Municipal Officials
From: Abigail Friedman, Director VLCT Municipal Assistance Center
Jim Barlow, Senior Staff Attorney
Date: July 13, 2011
RE: Model Social Service Agency Appropriation Policy

Under Vermont law, voters of a city or town may appropriate money for the support of social service programs and agencies that provide services to town residents. 24 V.S.A. § 2691. Such programs include but are not limited to transportation, nutrition, medical, day care, and other rehabilitative services persons with low incomes, senior citizens, children, disabled persons, drug and alcohol abusers, and persons requiring employment to eliminate their need for public assistance.

Because of the proliferation of social service agency requests, legislative bodies may find it helpful to adopt a policy for managing these requests. An agency's request for an appropriation can be placed on the warning by the legislative body's own motion or by a petition signed by 5% of the voters, submitted to the town clerk by the 40th day before the date of the meeting. 17 V.S.A § 2642. These petitioned requests, if valid and timely, must be included in the warning, while others may be included at the legislative body's discretion. A selectboard can require that all social service agency requests be submitted by petition.

Consistent with the practice already followed in many municipalities, this model policy provides for a procedure whereby those social service agencies that have had an appropriation approved at the last annual meeting are not required to submit a petition if the requested appropriation is the same or less than the amount previously approved by the voters. In such case, the agency may make its request by letter to the legislative body no later than 60 days before the annual meeting. All other social service agency requests must be submitted by a petition in accordance with 17 V.S.A. § 2642.

The model policy provides an example of a petitioned article and language to encourage or require social service agencies to describe their programs for inclusion in the annual report. Some municipalities require social service agencies to provide some form of financial disclosure as a condition for receiving an appropriation.

This model policy has been developed for illustrative purposes only. VLCT makes no express or implied endorsement or recommendation of

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any policy, nor does it make any express or implied guarantee of legal enforceability or legal compliance, nor does VLCT represent that any policy is appropriate for any particular municipality. Your legal counsel should review any proposed financial policy before adoption.

SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCY APPROPRIATION POLICY

Town of _____

PURPOSE: Under Vermont law, a town may appropriate such sums of money as it deems necessary for the support of social service programs and agencies that provide services to town residents. 24 V.S.A. § 2691. The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for managing social service agency appropriations that will be voted upon at the Town of _____ annual meeting.

APPLICABILITY: This policy applies to appropriation requests from social services agencies and programs subject to the provisions of Chapter 73, Title 24 of Vermont Statutes Annotated. Such programs include but are not limited to transportation, nutrition, medical, day care, and other rehabilitative services persons with low incomes, senior citizens, children, disabled persons, drug and alcohol abusers, and persons requiring employment to eliminate their need for public assistance.

This policy does not apply to municipal membership organizations such as the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, the _____ Regional Planning Commission, or the _____ Solid Waste Management District.

PROCEDURE: Those social service agencies that have not had an appropriation request approved at the most recent annual town meeting, or that are requesting a larger appropriation than that approved at the most recent annual town meeting, must submit a petition for an article requesting an appropriation in accordance with 17 V.S.A. § 2642(a). Such petition must be signed by at least five percent of the voters of the town and filed with the municipal clerk not less than 40 days before the day of the annual meeting. The petition should be in substantially the following form:

Petition of Legal Voters of the Town of _____

We, the undersigned legal voters of the Town of _____, hereby petition the selectboard to add the following article to the warning for the annual town meeting to be held on Tuesday, March __, 20__:

Shall the Town appropriate [amount of request] to [name of social service agency], for [brief description of the purpose of the proposed appropriation] in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2691?

Print Name

Address

Signature

No proposed article may contain any opinion or comment. The selectboard reserves the right to reject, amend, or edit any petitioned article that does not meet the requirements of 17 V.S.A. § 2642(a) and 24 V.S.A. § 2691. Petitions submitted after the deadline will not be honored.

Those social service agencies that have had an appropriation request approved at the most recent annual town meeting are not required to submit a petition for an article requesting an appropriation, if the amount requested is the same or less than the amount approved by the voters in the previous year. In such case, the agency should make its request by letter to the selectboard no later than 60 days before the day of the meeting. The letter should identify the name of the agency, the amount requested for appropriation, and a person to contact for more information. Agencies that do not meet the 60-day deadline must submit a petition for an article requesting an appropriation in accordance with the above paragraph.

Social service agencies requesting appropriations under this policy are [encouraged/ required] to submit a description of the agency's programs for inclusion in the town report. Descriptions must be limited to _____ words and should describe the program or services provided to town residents. Agency representatives are encouraged to attend [town meeting/public informational hearing] to explain the appropriation request to the voters and answer their questions.

Approved social service appropriations will be paid by the town on the following schedule:

Payment is subject to the availability of funds.

The foregoing policy is hereby adopted by the selectboard of the Town of _____, Vermont, this ___ day of _____, and is effective as of this date until amended or repealed.

Chair
