Philosophical, Legal Concerns Prompt 'No' Vote on Donations

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

At Thursday's Kodiak Island Borough Assembly meeting, funding to the local Girl Scouts and Little League was on the chopping block as the yearly grants to non-profits were considered. At the prior work session, Assemblywoman Louise Stutes had proposed zeroing out the two organizations. She was convinced to change her position after a room full of Girl Scouts, Little League players, and their supporters showed her exactly who was being affected by her proposed cuts, and told her what they do with the money.

Assemblyman Mel Stephens, who railed against grant-giving in general during the meeting, said the two groups just weren't well-connected enough.

-- (Non Profits 1 17 sec "I think the sin of the Girl Scouts ... I mean it just wouldn't have.")

Stephens said the process of selecting who gets grants in the borough has stagnated, and outlined his three issues with non-profit grants in general. His first was what he called a practical consideration:

-- (Non Profit 2 28 sec "I don't think it is helpful ... tonight, went to four

groups.")

Those four are Kodiak's homeless shelter, food bank, community health clinic and the battered women shelter.

Stephens' legal issue was a question of whether the borough even had authority to give away public money. He said his philosophical issue would be soothed if some money were reserved for small grants that go to organizations with no employees.

Countering him was Assemblyman Dave Kaplan, who said he ran for the assembly with the promise to support Kodiak's non-profits.

-- (Non Profit 3 39 sec "Our non-profits are one ... chump change, and I'll stand by that.")

In the end, it was only Stephens who cast the dissenting vote on Non-Profit funding, as it passed 5-1. After the vote, one young constituent told the assembly how appreciative she was:

-- (Non Profit 4 6 sec "Thank you for helping Girl Scouts; it means the world to us. Thank you.")

In the interest of full disclosure, Kodiak Public Broadcasting once again received $7,500 in grant funding, which has been level for many years.

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