From:	Jacob Patterson
To:	Sanchez, Diana
Cc:	Albin-Smith, Tess; Rafanan, Marcia; Whippy, Isaac
Subject:	Public Comment -- 8/10/2022 Finance & Admin Committee Mtg., Item 3C
Date:	Wednesday, August 10, 2022 12:19:19 PM

Tess & Marcia,

I am concerned about some information in the quarterly reports agenda item. The concerns require a combination of information from sources. In this case, the combination of a lack of budget adjustments/transfers and the disbursements report.

Although the event itself garnered significant political support, I find the way the City has handled the Blue Economy Symposium to be very inappropriate. This event was not included in the City's adopted budget and there is no appropriate existing cost center for those expenses. Please keep in mind that this event appears to have been created out of thin air without any prior public approval of pursuing the effort or hosting or funding the event. If you look at pages 5 and 6 of the disbursements report, there are various expenses that are being charged to the cost center for the Measure AA/AB money and allocations. The Blue Economy Symposium has nothing to do with promoting tourism in Fort Bragg nor does it relate to the other special projects that are funded from that source and have corresponding appropriations in the approved budget. I mean, special invitees did travel to Fort Bragg to attend the meeting but someone simply travelling here to attend a City-sponsored meeting is not equivalent to promoting tourism and bringing visitors to the Coast. It was an economic development focus and related to future local job creation and local industry. In fact, it is basically the opposite of promoting tourism because it is all about potentially diversifying our local economy so it isn't so dependent on tourism.

The policy section of the City's budget allows the City Manager some authority to move approved funding around that could have funded those expenses but since that didn't happen staff took it upon themselves to incur event-related expenses and then charged them to a department and cost center that is for another purpose altogether. I find this to be procedurally objectionable. What is particularly galling is the symposium itself was effectively closed to broad public participation. Staff isn't authorized to hijack our City finances and use them to fund unapproved items and their personal pet projects. I don't recall any policy body even endorsing the Blue Economy Symposium as something the City should work on or sponsor. I believe it was simply created and then pursued without any public disclosure or opportunity to comment on the propriety of the effort. More importantly, no funding request or corresponding appropriation happened. Unless I missed a meeting, the Visit Fort Bragg Committee didn't even review or approve the Symposium as part of their events budget but it looks like that is where staff decided to charge the expenses.

Shouldn't the public have had the opportunity to offer public comments and know about this new expense or are we all about doing everything we can behind closed doors without public notice or oversight? I doubt the public would endorse and invite-only not open to the broad public "event" as an appropriate use of limited taxpayer funds. Please clarify this situation during your meeting today.

Regards,

--Jacob