

FRESNO LAND

City Council closes spending ‘loophole’ exposed by Fresnoland, but there’s still more work to do

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The Fresno City Council unanimously approved a proposal from Councilmember Miguel Arias reforming the city’s public transparency on contracts, and also closing what he had referred to as a “loophole” in the city’s contracting laws.

After heated debate on the dais Thursday, Arias amended his item to require the Fresno City Clerk’s Office — instead of the City Manager’s Office — to produce an all-in-one searchable database on the city’s website, listing everything from contracts worth \$100,000 or less to conflict of interest forms.

However, the policy that passed Thursday fell short of what Arias told Fresnoland it would be. He said last week that the policy would require all no-bid contracts to be published on the city’s website.

The policy approved Thursday limits that to only contracts less than \$100,000 — which would exclude contracts worth \$100,000, like the ones former Councilmember Luis Chavez awarded to a company run by political consultant Alex Tavlian.

Additionally, the policy approved Thursday does not include a blackout period to prevent city officials from using public dollars for print or digital advertisements six months before an election they're participating in.

Fresno continues to steward rehabilitation of local mobile home park

The Fresno City Council formally received a \$5 million award from the state toward the rehabilitation of a local mobile home park.

The funding was first announced last year as part of a \$251.8 million disbursement of funding from state housing officials.

The money comes with a commitment to develop 17 mobile homes for military veterans who may be homeless or at-risk of becoming unhoused. North Fresno Councilmember Nick Richardson, who is also a veteran Marine, confirmed with city staff at the meeting that the rehabilitation was going as planned.

"I know that doesn't often or always happen in government," Richardson said from the dais at City Hall on Thursday.

The news that plans are going swimmingly for the city are indeed a breath of fresh air, as the La Hacienda Mobile Home was a source of years of headaches during a long legal dispute with the ex-park owner, who sought to shut down the park to flip for profit.

Self-Help Enterprises, a Visalia-based nonprofit developer, acquired the park last year.

Proposed Parkway Drive affordable housing development just got smaller

The Fresno City Council is continuing to conditionally support a proposed affordable housing development along an impoverished stretch west of Highway 99, albeit with a reduced housing count.

The Parkview Apartments, a project by developer The Cesar Chavez Foundation, proposes up to 98 new homes along Parkway Drive and won a conditional commitment from the city of \$10.5 million and three city-owned parcels.

The proposed development would convert vacant land and two shelters along about a half-mile stretch of Parkway Drive, between West Dennett Avenue and West White Avenue.

The city has struggled to get the project off the ground "over the past couple of years," a city spokesperson told FresnoLand on Friday. Last year, the council conditionally committed \$6 million for the project, which at the time, proposed up to 170 new homes.

"Through careful analysis of the current available resources and the competitive environment, we determined that reducing the number of units planned (and therefore the overall construction budget) will make this project more competitive for funding in 2026," the city spokesperson said.

The city's commitment is conditional on The Cesar Chavez Foundation acquiring full funding for the project. The city's deadline for them is the end of the year, though they offer a one-year extension if the foundation can show progress toward full funding.

Small Business Facade Improvement Program gets an extension until the summer

The Fresno City Council on Thursday unanimously approved an extension of its Small Business Facade Improvement Program into the summer — a policy that helped subsidize makeovers at about 50 storefronts for local businesses.

The program is administered by the Fresno Area Hispanic Foundation, and grants qualifying businesses with as much as \$50,000 in funding reimbursement to improve the look of their storefronts.

Much of west and central Fresno qualified for the program initially, but amendments have been made by the council to include the downtown and Chinatown neighborhoods.