
Sponsor: Public Health

Meeting Date: 7/12/2022

Title: Public Health Water Gremlin Settlement Fund Special Project

File Number: 2022-360

Background and Rationale:

On December 27, 2019, Ramsey County District Court determined that Water Gremlin created a public health nuisance by failing to prevent lead dust from leaving their facility. The migration of lead dust from the facility into employee vehicles and homes, known as “take-home lead,” disproportionately impacted children in Ramsey County. As part of the settlement agreement, Water Gremlin was directed to pay for cleaning lead dust in employee vehicles and homes for those who opted into the service. Additionally, funds left over from the cleaning service would be directed to Ramsey County to use for lead poisoning prevention projects in the amount of no less than \$75,000. On February 2, 2022, Water Gremlin transmitted funds in the amount of \$75,000 to Saint Paul - Ramsey County Public Health department (Public Health).

Despite gains in reducing lead in our communities, lead poisoning remains a threat to children in Ramsey County. Ramsey County’s Lead Program provides comprehensive lead poisoning prevention services for county residents. This partnership between the Environmental Health and Family Health Divisions of the Public Health department aims to reduce the number of the children with elevated lead levels in the county through multiple layers of prevention. Services provided by the Lead Program include conducting lead risk assessments, enforcing the correction of lead hazards, financing the mitigation or abatement of lead hazards, and providing case management services to lead poisoned children and their families.

A special project focused on lead poisoning prevention is worthy of the Public Health Water Gremlin Settlement Funds, which came at the cost of children’s health and well-being. The use of this fund will be towards primary prevention activities, but the specific programming is intended to be undetermined at this point. To authentically engage the community for input on programming services from this settlement, the project will engage with community stakeholders to plan, implement and evaluate lead poisoning prevention activities in Ramsey County. This project will align with ongoing primary prevention activities working to reduce exposure to lead hazards in our community for children at risk of lead exposure to reduce the chances of permanent damage inflicted by lead poisoning.

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Accept and approve the Water Gremlin Settlement Funds Special Project budget and financing plan in the amount of \$75,000.
2. Authorize the County Manager to account for the Public Health Water Gremlin Settlement Funds special project as a project budget in the Public Health Environmental Health Lead Hazard budget.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Reinhardt, seconded by Commissioner McDonough.

Motion passed.

Aye: - 6: Carter, MatasCastillo, McDonough, McGuire, Ortega, and Reinhardt

Absent: - 1: Frethem

By: 

Mee Cheng, Chief Clerk - County Board