

https://www.myheraldreview.com/news/bisbee/bisbee-nonprofits-to-work-with-the-city-on-a-proposed-food-bank-fund-through-the/article_8c022f4e-445a-11ef-8f04-bf856329a1ef.html

CENTERPIECE

FEATURED

Bisbee nonprofits to work with the city on a proposed food bank fund through the state

By Shar Porier shar.porier@myheraldreview.com

Jul 17, 2024



Representative Consuelo Hernandez talks with attendees while Mayor Ken Budge listens in during Tuesday's city council meeting. Hernandez elaborates on procuring one million dollars for the Bisbee area to help those who need assistance with food.

MARK LEVY HERALD/REVIEW

BISBEE — How will the city use the \$1 million appropriation by Rep. Consuelo Hernandez (D-Tucson) from the state budget?

The talk Tuesday night at a meet and greet with Hernandez, the city council and the nonprofits was to let them know of the proposal to provide a brick and mortar facility large enough to store canned and dry foods, bottled water and electrolyte drinks, provide refrigeration for produce and meats and have its own commercial kitchen. The intent is to ensure a steady supply of healthy food including meats and fresh produce for the city's low income, elderly, unhoused and disabled residents.

Hernandez pointed out the larger counties, like Pima and Maricopa, get the most attention, while the rural counties get ignored. She wanted to help the rural counties and was glad her request for funding was included in the budget.

As Mayor Ken Budge said the money must be used for food assistance for those people who need it. The city will work with the Department of Economic Security (DES) which will oversee the program in Bisbee.

Though the money will not be available for a few months, Budge wanted the nonprofits Cochise Harm Reduction, Goar Park Lunches, Bisbee Coalition for the Homeless (Tintown Shelter), the Boys and Girls Club of Bisbee, St. Vincent DePaul and First United Methodist Church Hope and Beyond Emergency Food Pantry to partner with the city on this new project of providing nutritious and healthy foods to those that need it.

Many people donate food products canned and boxed, but often, what's being donated is not what is needed. Tony Bedolla, executive director of the Bisbee Coalition of the Homeless Tintown shelter, explained that much of what is donated are unhealthy snacks, like rice crispy cakes and other food stuffs some of the unhoused recipients cannot use for one reason or another as most lack of ways to cook their own food.

He said a big load of watermelons were donated recently, but they were not fit for human consumption and had to be tossed. Fresh produce is a needed food source for good health, but it has to be useable. Sometimes a few hundred eggs are donated and other times none.

Lu Funk, executive director of Cochise Harm Reduction based in Bisbee, was also onboard with the new project. She and her crew have been providing hot meals, food boxes and toiletries to those who are homebound, elderly, low income and unhoused.

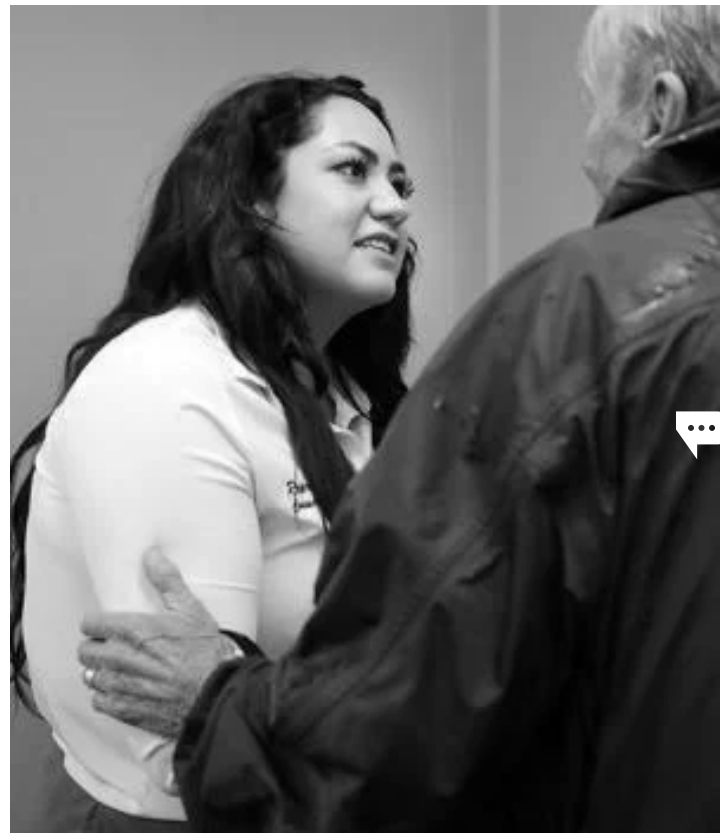
The group also provides the opioid-addicted with Narcan, new diabetic needles and disposal bins for old needles. When available, they provide tents, tarps, sleeping bags, blankets, flashlights, bottled gas and clothing to the various camps around the county.

The churches rely on their congregations to fill the food pantry, so they can count on a food bank filled with foods to share with their families. Sometimes, they get calls to come and clean the shelves of people who are moving which helps build stocks. But, it's not enough.

The inconsistency of the types of food donations can be a problem, Bedolla said. "Commodities need to provide proper substance for the at risk part of the population."

They all were in favor of a central location where they can pick up food and know they're getting better quality.

Budge said the new food bank would probably have one full time person employed, but volunteers would be needed. Thankfully, Bisbee folks have a tendency to respond to calls for help from the nonprofits.



Representative Consuelo Hernandez chats during Tuesday's city council meeting in Bisbee.

MARK LEVY HERALD/REVIEW



City council member Pete Skinner interacts with Representative Consuelo Hernandez at this week's meeting.
MARK LEVY HERALD/REVIEW

Once all the state rules are determined, he will hold another meeting to move forward with the food bank project.

Budge said, "You know how to serve our people. We want to help. Once we get the state rules, we can sit down and talk."

Shar Porier

Bisbee/County Reporter