

CITY COUNCIL REPORT



Meeting Date: January 13, 2026
General Plan Element: *Community Well-Being*
General Plan Goal: *Promote access to health and human services for citizens of Scottsdale.*

ACTION

Adopt Ordinance No. 4699 amending section 2-138 of the Scottsdale Revised Code, relating to the voluntary utility billing donation program known as Scottsdale Cares to two (\$2) dollars per meter, per month billed.

BACKGROUND

The voluntary bill donation program, also known as Scottsdale Cares, has been in operation since May of 1995 through Ordinance No. 2744 and the donation amount has not increased in 30 years.

Scottsdale Cares has received over \$5 million from Scottsdale residents, donating one dollar at a time. Scottsdale Cares is an easy way to help neighbors in need by adding \$1.00 to their monthly water bill. Participating residents pay the grand total on their utility bill and \$1.00 will be automatically donated to the program. There currently is an option to donate additional funds per bill more, and many Scottsdale residents pay more than \$1.00 at a time. 100% of the donation goes to our neighbors in need.

Scottsdale Cares was initiated to allow Scottsdale residents the opportunity to donate one dollar each month through their utility bill to assist programs which promote the development of youth, to strengthen the capability of families and assist Scottsdale citizens of all ages in addressing crisis needs through the annual funding process through the Housing and Community Office.

On average 6,016 residents are served annually with Scottsdale Cares awards. An average of 180,502 Scottsdale residents has benefited from services in the last 30 years since the inception of Scottsdale Cares in 1995. Over the last ten years the average annual donation for Scottsdale Cares was \$143,712.

Action Taken Approved on Consent

IMPACT ANALYSIS

There has been a long history of collaboration between non-profits and the City of Scottsdale's Human Services Department. Non-profits supported by Scottsdale Cares play a vital role in addressing societal issues such as poverty, senior services, education and healthcare. Increased donations will enable these organizations to maintain quality operations, and expand their reach and impact, providing essential services to those in need.

According to an AZ Big Media article from January 10, 2025, Scottsdale ranks as the second-most caring city in America. This ranking is influenced by its high adoption rates, low child poverty rates, and residents' enthusiasm for charitable donations.

Overall, Scottsdale Cares exemplifies community support and engagement, reflecting a strong culture of philanthropy and care for fellow residents while addressing emerging needs within the community.

The financial landscape for non-profits is increasingly challenging, with many facing decreased donations, rising operational costs, and heightened demand for services. A non-profit focus group was hosted by city staff on Tuesday October 29, 2024, with partnering agencies who are either funded through Scottsdale's annual funding process or through city services contracts with the Human Services Department. The outcome of this focus group confirmed concerns over decreasing donations, rising operational costs due to inflation, and heightened demand for services.

Annually, the Housing and Community Assistance Office receive an average of twenty-one (21) applications for Scottsdale Cares with a total request of \$377,000.

To support rising service demands and costs, we propose increasing the voluntary utility donation from \$1 to \$2 per month starting July 1, 2026.

Over the past three decades, Scottsdale Cares has distributed more than \$5 million to local nonprofit organizations, directly improving the lives of thousands of Scottsdale residents. Through this funding, the program has supported vital services such as the positive development of youth, strengthening the capability of families and assisting Scottsdale citizens of all ages in addressing crisis needs, strengthening the social fabric of the community and ensuring help reaches those who need it most.

OPTIONS & STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Recommended Approach

Adopt Ordinance No. 4699 amending section 2-138 of the Scottsdale Revised Code, relating to the voluntary utility billing donation program known as Scottsdale Cares to two (\$2) dollars per meter, per month billed.

Proposed Next Steps

If approved, to ensure a smooth rollout of the upcoming program change effective July 1, 2026, staff recommends developing a comprehensive communication strategy in collaboration with the Office of Communication.

While a message will be included on customer bills, additional outreach is essential. Proposed communication efforts include a direct postcard mailer, updates to the quarterly newsletter, Scottsdale Cares and Utility Billing webpage updated with FAQs, messaging on the Online Payment Portal (OLPP), social media posts, and a press release. To support customer service, a call center script will also be developed. Messaging should clearly state that the change does not take effect until July 1, 2026, and that all customers currently opted in will be automatically transferred at that time. This multi-channel approach is critical to ensuring transparency, minimizing call volume, and maintaining public trust.

Utility billing customers can opt out of the voluntary donation process at any time.

RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT(S)

Library and Human Services and Office of City Treasurer

STAFF CONTACTS (S)

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APPROVED BY

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12/22/25

Date

Greg Caton

Greg Caton, City Manager

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12/22/25

Date

ATTACHMENTS

1. Ordinance No. 4699

ORDINANCE NO. 4699

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF SCOTTSDALE, MARICOPA COUNTY, ARIZONA, AMENDING SECTION 2-138 OF THE SCOTTSDALE REVISED CODE, RELATING TO THE VOLUNTARY UTILITY BILLING DONATION PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, funds raised through the voluntary utility billing donation program, known as Scottsdale Cares, assist the City in promoting the positive development of youth, strengthen the capability of families and assist citizens of all ages in addressing crises needs; and

WHEREAS, the funds for programs served by Scottsdale Cares are insufficient and demand for services has increased; and

WHEREAS, increasing the suggested donation amount included in a user's utility bill will help support rising service demands and costs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the City of Scottsdale, Maricopa County, Arizona as follows:

Section 1. Section 2-138 of the Scottsdale Revised Code, relating to the volunteer utility billing donation program, is hereby amended to read as follows:

Sec. 2-138. Voluntary utility billing donation program.

(a) There is hereby established a voluntary utility billing donation program for the purpose of facilitating donations by users of city services to human services programs serving the community. All persons receiving bills for services from the city under the provisions of chapters 24 and 49 of this Code shall be included in the voluntary utility billing donation program.

(b) The city manager, or the city manager's designee, shall determine the form of the donation program and any procedures necessary to administer it. Donations under any program established pursuant to this section shall be voluntary. The amount of any suggested donation added to a user's bill, if applicable, shall not exceed ~~one dollar (\$1.00)~~ two dollars (\$2.00) per meter, per month billed, and shall not be included in the amount of any arrearages or collections on an account

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Council of Scottsdale this _____ day of _____, 2026.

ATTEST:

CITY OF SCOTTSDALE, an Arizona
municipal corporation

By: _____
Ben Lane, City Clerk

By: _____
Lisa Borowsky, Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
OFFICE OF THE CITY ATTORNEY

By: Karen Tyler
Luis E Santaella, Interim City Attorney
By: Karen Tyler, Principal Assistant City Attorney