



CITY OF FRESNO

Mayor Jerry Dyer, Council President Mike Karbassi and Council Vice President Nelson Esparza would like to provide the following statement regarding the embezzlement of \$1.5 million of Measure P funds from the Fresno Arts Council.

On the evening of February 5, 2026, the City of Fresno was notified by a board member of the Fresno Arts Council that an employee of the Arts Council had embezzled approximately \$1.5 million dollars of Measure P funding. The employee no longer works for the Arts Council.

The following day a criminal investigation was initiated by the Fresno Police Department.

The Arts Council received its first cycle of funding totaling \$9,722,600 for the first two years of Measure P. Those funds were distributed by the Arts Council to members of the arts community.

The Arts Council received \$5,710,556 for a second cycle of funding on October 1, 2024. The Arts Council distributed the vast majority of those funds to members of the arts community, with a percentage still being owed due to having a shortage of funds as a result of the embezzlement.

The Arts Council requested a third cycle of funding from the City of Fresno in October 2025. That request, totaling \$6,630,767, was denied by the City of Fresno due to the Arts Council not providing sufficient documentation to justify prior expenditures, as mandated by their reporting requirements.

Applications for the third cycle of funding will be initiated and administered by the City of Fresno and not the Arts Council.

In addition to initiating a criminal investigation, the City of Fresno has cancelled the contract with the Arts Council to administer any future Measure P funding. A forensic financial investigation of the Arts Council will also be conducted by the City of Fresno.

It is the City's intent to utilize future Measure P funding to make those organizations whole who were owed money by the Arts Council. How that occurs is yet to be determined.

The Mayor and members of the City Council are appalled by the lack of safeguards put in place by the Fresno Arts Council, which ultimately allowed this embezzlement to occur.

The loss of \$1.5 million of taxpayer dollars is unacceptable. The City of Fresno will pursue every available avenue to recover these hard-earned taxpayer funds up to and to include litigation.

Any awardees who have yet to be fully compensated can call 559-621-2999 or send an email to ExpandedArts@fresno.gov along with the agreement they had entered into with the Fresno Arts Council and any other relevant information.