

# Culver City Council Member Small Talks About Culver City Forward & Feeding a City in Crisis

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Today, March 9, 2020, Culver City Council member Thomas Small reached out to *Culver City Crossroads* to highlight programs available to residents impacted by the pandemic, and introduce a new non-profit organization moving behind the scenes to facilitate some of our most important aid – food.

**The still-forming Culver City Forward will be headed by Small as CEO.** “We were planning an announcement, but then we had to pivot, suddenly, in the face of this crisis,” Small stated, “we have details that still need to be attended to, putting together the boundaries of the organization, but clearly we had to get to work right away.”

Working with local entities from the Whole 9 Gallery/Peace Project to the Exchange Club, Culver City Forward is working with three projects now, and has a fourth still in development.

While a complete mission statement was not available, Small offered that “CCF is intended to help the city and the community do more than the city can afford to do on it’s own.” The brainchild of Michael Hackman of Hackman Capital Partners, the organization is funded primarily by Hackman and Culver Studios, along with many other business interests in the city.

When asked about possible conflicts of interest between council duties and the non-profit desk, Small noted that he held “extensive discussions with City Attorney [Carol Schwab] and City Manager [John Nachbar] and we also engaged outside council. How I will deal with the conflict of interest issues,” admitting that they were likely to happen, “would be by recusing myself on certain votes. Of course, if I have to recuse myself all the time, then I won’t be an effective council.” Noting that was a bridge that will need to be crossed later, it was also a topic for another time.

After the original incorporation of Culver City Forward last year, there are still several legal steps that must be completed by September of 2020. “But we couldn’t wait for this crisis to be over before we began; this is the kind of thing we we created to address.”

CCF is supporting the Backpacks for Kids program; originally created to feed homeless students from the Culver City Unified School District over the weekend, the program has expanded to a full grocery giveaway now that students are learning from home while sheltering in place.

Also benefitting from the largesse is Peace Project, led by Lisa Schultz of the Whole 9 Gallery on Main Street. So far there have been two grocery giveaways on Wednesday mornings at the gallery. More will be added to the calendar going forward..

The most ambitious project is the new [FeedCulver.org](https://www.feedculver.org), an idea fostered by Small and Vice Mayor Goran Eriksson, both members of the City’s Economic Development Subcommittee, along with Exchange Club President Jeff Cooper, to keep the restaurants going by feeding the needy.

Inspired by a ‘pay what you can’ restaurant support in the city of Sierra Madre, the Exchange Club is the non-profit through which funds for FeedCulver are being moved via a specific bank account created to help the new program get on it’s feet.

Travis Morgan set up the website for [FeedCulver.org](https://www.feedculver.org), and the donations began to accumulate rapidly. “As soon as the website went live, we had almost \$10,000 in donations.” said Small. Culver City Forward is offering to match the amount.

“We hope that we are starting out with Akasha, and Meet in Paris next Tuesday [April 14, 2020] and we will be distributing meals through Grace Diner [the long running program at the Grace Lutheran Church] to individuals and families.”

Drawing together restaurants, service clubs and non-profits, many of these projects will be helping to take care of Culver City through the course of the crisis.

*Judith Martin-Straw*

*Photo – Jeff Cooper with Thomas Small*