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Developer Donates to City Churches

A developer working to bring a pair of logistics centers to Perris has donated \$100,000 to City church congregations, which plan to use the funds to expand a variety of outreach and charitable programs for underprivileged residents.

Gary Hamro, a partner with the Optimus Building Corporation, presented checks in amounts ranging from \$4,000 to \$6,500 to 17 churches and the Perris Police Department, which will use the funds to support its Explorer Post and the National Night Out program this summer.

Law enforcement agencies cannot accept private funds for their services.

Hamro presented the checks May 8 during the monthly "Perris Cops and Clergy" meeting. The Perris Chapter, founded by Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers in 2002, meets to discuss issues involving law enforcement and the community with a goal of increasing understanding between both sides.

He credited Rogers with comforting him emotionally and spiritually after his sister died suddenly last year and the Optimus project dragged through the development process.

Hamro said Rogers also helped restore his religious faith and he praised the work of community ministers and congregations in the Perris community.

"I know the job that you do is not easy," Hamro said. "Your commitment humbles me. I know there are a lot of churches in Perris in need. This is my chance to give back to churches in Perris. I am so pleased to be able to gift to you."

Rogers told the audience of ministers she was excited to invite Hamro to Cops and Clergy and grateful for his generous support.

"Tonight is a time to bless all pastors and the good work you do for our community," she said. "I didn't get much sleep last night. Today feels like Christmas!"

Hamro said he plans on gifting Perris non-profit organizations and City-supported youth activities with another donation in the coming weeks. That donation could be as much as \$200,000.

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Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers holds a cake presented by Perris clergy members to Optimus Building Corporation's Gary Hamro, who presented the ministers with checks totaling \$100,000 during the May 8 meeting of the local Cops and Clergy group. The ministers will use the donations to expand outreach programs at their churches.

Jobs, revenues to Perris

Ground-breaking on the first of two logistics centers in the Otpimus project is scheduled to take place in July with the second planned for early 2018. Together, the project north of Ramona Expressway just east of I-215 will total about 1.4-million square feet and employ up to 2,500 people. Perris residents will have the "first crack" at landing those jobs, Hamro said.

All told the project is expected to pump \$25 million into Perris coffers through development fees, \$15 million in road and infrastructure improvements and another \$75 million in ongoing economic activity.

The logistics center project, Hamro said, will provide more jobs and economic opportunities for the Perris Valley while reducing unemployment and poverty.

"People need the kinds of jobs we're going to provide," Hamro said.

Several ministers said they plan to immediately put the money their churches received into action.

"Pushing forward"

Pastor Wade Forde of the Fifth Street Seventh Day Adventist Church said his congregation will host a May 21 dental clinic for homeless and indigent residents and hopes to expand that outreach to include residents facing mental health challenges.

"We are pushing forward," Forde said.

Pastor Pete Perez of Free Indeed Christian Fellowship, which serves men battling substance addiction, said the church will use the Optimus donation to expand its youth ministry and its drug-rehabilitation programs. Perez called the donation a "fantastic blessing to us."

Pastor Benjamin Briggs, of Greater Light Community Church, will spend the money on its food, clothing, shelter and counseling ministries.

"Whenever someone shows such generosity, it is added support and blessing," Briggs said. "We are deeply, deeply appreciative."

Briggs and Perez have been part of Cops and Clergy since the outreach began 15 years ago. Briggs praised Councilwoman Rogers' commitment to the City, the Perris community, faith-based groups and law enforcement.

"Every community needs a visionary and we have one in Rita Rogers," Briggs said. "She has worked very hard to make sure our community remains cohesive."



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