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By JESSICA CRAWFORD • Daily Leader Wednesday is the deadline for not-for-profit organizations to make their requests known to the city commission in order to be considered for budgeted funding.

City Manager Mark Hall explained some of the the qualifications that must be met to first be qualified as a not-for-profit organization.

He said for charitable funding, applying organizations must meet all of the following funding eligibility criteria”

o Applicant or organization must be a non-profit/not-for-profit 501 (c)(3) organization or recognized by the city as a non-profit organization;

o Applicant or organization must be located within the city of Liberal or Seward County;

o Applicant or organization must provide service or benefits to the local community;

o Applicant or organization must be a non-governmental agency;

o Applicant or organization must be non-political and/or non-religious organization; and

o Applicant or organization must not discriminate, in accordance with law, based on race, creed, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, physical or mental disability and sexual orientation.

Although all requests will be noted and carefully considered, all cannot be granted due to funding limitations.

“The city commission will consider all requests for funding from community-based non-profit organizations at a specified time during the regular budget process,” Hall said. “Due to limited resources, not all requests can be funded. Therefore, it is the city commission’s intention to evaluate each proposal, and based upon available funds and the merits of each proposal, provide money or other forms of assistance to those organizations which most effectively serve the needs and improve the well being of Liberal residents.”

Ultimately, Hall said, organizations are encouraged to function on their own.

“Further, the city commission encourages a goal of self-sufficiency for all community-based organizations seeking city funding,” he said. “City grants are not intended to provide on-going funding to well-established programs or services, except where the city commission finds merit for funding consistent with the community-need philosophy stated.

In order to request charitable funding, Hall said applying organizations must meet the following requirements:

o Demonstrate a need for financial support;

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- o Demonstrate efforts to obtain funding from other sources;
- o Demonstrate fiscal responsibility and accountability; and
- o Demonstrate how the Liberal community would be served.

One of the following criteria must be met for a not-for-profit organization to even be considered for funding:

- o Cultural, recreational, and environmental: organizations that are associated with artistic, historic, or museum endeavors. Recreational and environmental benefits are also considered in this grouping;
- o Economic: organizations that provide economic influence to the local area;
- o Human services: organizations that provide basic human services to the community;
- o Youth: organizations that enhance the development of Liberal youth. Youth organizations are characterized as any group that has participants 18 years old and under; or
- o Crime prevention: organizations that promote community awareness or services to reduce or prevent crimes in the local area.

Hall said the amount of applicants varies from year to year, as well as the amount of funds allotted to not-for-profit organizations.

“The available funds awarded varies from year to year,” he said. “The organizations that most effectively serve the needs and improve the well being of Liberal residents are funded based upon available funds. A representative of the organization will attend the City Commission Funding Special Meeting with sufficient knowledge to answer the questions of the commission and to make a brief five-minute time limit presentation. Priority is based upon how the Liberal community will be served.”

Hall added the following standards determine priority when the city commission makes a decision as to who will be funded:

- o Must comply with the general funding philosophy;
- o Must fulfill the funding category requirement;
- o Must fulfill the funding criteria requirement;
- o Must fulfill funding utilization requirement;
- o Must demonstrate that funds will not violate funding prohibited utilization;

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- o Must fulfill the funding eligibility requirement; and
- o Must fulfill the event project or service eligibility requirement.

Hall said all applications have certain requirements as well when submitted by Wednesday's deadline.

"The application must be completed fully and all required documents attached," he said. "A copy of the organizations current financial statement and balance statement must be included with the application.

"Upon meeting the above criteria, each application is reviewed by the city commission on a case-by-case basis," Hall concluded.

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