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By EARL WATT • Daily Leader

Former Economic Development Director Colleen Towns is no longer employed by the City of Liberal as of Friday.

According to City Manager Mark Hall, the opening will be promoted immediately.

“We have great potential,” Hall said. “We have a strong retail pull factor. We have an economic draw. We are centrally located and have a good water situation compared to other communities in Southwest Kansas. We have commercial and industrial sites available.”

The city has a strategic economic plan, and Hall said some new economic plans are on the horizon. He also shared that with the 1- cent sales tax and other incentives, Liberal has a “war chest” of options in developing the community’s economic base.

“We want to be able to offer some new type of incentives,” Hall said.

“We want to be a community of choice, from a quality of life standpoint to business opportunities. Making enhancements to Light Park, the pool, all these things make Liberal a more attractive area that make people want to come here. It all sets up a better future for Liberal economically.”

Hall said he wanted to see a better partnership between the City of Liberal and its businesses.

“Incoming businesses want to know if this is a town that participates with business, and do the businesses participate in the town,” he said. “That’s why we want this to be the community of choice. We want to work with our businesses for the greater good. We want them to see Liberal as a safe town with fun things to do. Kids can go to skate parks or water parks and, eventually, a community recreation center.

They will see this is as a great place to raise their kids.”

Hall said the first priority in filling the economic director’s position will be to look locally for someone who has a proven track record in business and grant-writing ability. The position will also require an understanding of the Kansas Department of Commerce as well as other state entities. In addition to a local option, Hall said he would also consider regional and statewide options.

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