

Organizations seek City Council approval for block grant money

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City staff brought two applications before the City Council on Monday from non-profit organizations seeking funding through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. A third group expressed interest in applying for the grant money during the required public hearing.

Sunny Valero, Human Resources Administrator, outlined the application process and the money available for the city council to approve.

She said the CDBG program is federally funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The city applies through the state's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

"The CDBG provides communities with resources to address a wide range of community development needs," Valero said. "The goal is to develop and preserve decent affordable housing, provide services to the most vulnerable and create and retain jobs."

To qualify, the CDBG must address one of the national objectives:

- Benefits low- to moderate-income persons
- Prevents or eliminates slums or blights
- Addresses urgent community development needs

Volero said Crescity City has received CDBG awards in the past to fund infrastructure, sewer projects, public services like food banks and domestic violence.

Crescent City is allowed to apply for six applications in two categories — community development for up to \$3.5 million and economic development up to \$6 million.

Volero said city staff received two proposals.

The first was from Pacific Food Pantry, which Volero said was a very successful program funded under a 2016 CDBG grant that recently expired. The food pantry was run as a “sub-recipient agreement,” meaning the city would reimburse them for actual costs only, Volero explained.

The Pacific Food Pantry is requesting \$500,000 for food pantry services for 2 1/2 years to serve 5,700 unduplicated individuals.

Amanda Hixon, Food Program Director of the Community Food Council, wanted to emphasize to the City Council how incredibly important it would be for them.

“The Pacific Pantry is much more than an entity giving out food to people in this community. Since we opened in April 2018, we have served, including (repeat customers) over 27,000 people,” Hixon said. “As a choice pantry, we emphasize fruits and vegetables, dairy, eggs and we support the local food economy and growers.”

Hixon added the organization is also partnering with Del Norte County to help provide stock for disaster preparedness.

The other application for CDBG funds came from the North Coast Rape Crisis Team, also a sub-recipient agreement. Volero said the group is requesting \$140,040 for emergency services (shelter, food and clothing) for sexual assault, domestic violence and human trafficking survivors, as well as public education for two years. The group said the grant would pay to serve 24 survivors and provide violence prevention to 192 youth.

When the public hearing was opened up to anyone else seeking CDBG funds, Christen Wilson from Seven Angels Last Stop Services stepped forward. She said the non-profit is new to the Crescent City area with a pilot program that would provide emergency transitioning housing programs utilizing used trailers and accessing space in area RV parks.

“A pilot program would need \$70,000 to purchase and refurbish five trailers and would be able to house four different families each throughout the year,” Wilson explained. “Those eligible would be veterans on Daily Bread and others participating in transition programs.”

The City Council expressed unanimous support in adding Seven Angels to the application list.

“Clearly, housing is a big component to the way CDBG is moving,” Mayor Blake Inscore told Wilson. “We have very few transitional opportunities in our community. County Health and Human Services Department spend a significant amount of money every year putting people up in motel rooms, which helps get a person off the street but doesn’t help in the transition of getting them back on their feet in a normalized structure. It’s worth taking a look at.”

Volero said applications for the CDBG grants are due April 15, so city staff would have work quickly with the Seven Angels to complete an application. It would then have to be brought back, with the other two applications, for council final approval.

Volero said city staff would like to hire a consultant to help with the complicated application process. To pay for that, the city last year had \$34,000 in defederalized, unassigned money. She recommended taking \$10,000 from that to use toward the applications.

Volero added for each successful application that receives CDBG money, the city will be reimbursed for the application cost.

The City Council was unanimous in supporting all three applications moving forward. Mayor Pro Tem Heidi Kime was not present.