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"THE KNOT"

Lafayette Strong – city offers assistance for small businesses



Photo Pippa Fisher

Downtown Lafayette is quiet at midday as small businesses remain shuttered during SIP.

By Pippa Fisher

The city of Lafayette is taking steps to support local small businesses and non-profits during the COVID-19 pandemic in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and the Lafayette Community Foundation.

The city council voted earlier in April to allocate \$30,000 from the emergency reserve fund to contract with Townsend Public Affairs, the city's advocacy firm, as a resource to help small business owners navigate the sometimes-confusing waters of state and federal loan applications.

Under the umbrella of "Lafayette Strong," resources are all listed on the city website, including the Lafayette Business Assistance Program, offered free.

The program kicked off with a webinar (available for viewing through a link on the city website) presented by TPA Senior Associate Austin Webster April 15 in which members of TPA gave an overview of the types of loans available. The firm is available to help small businesses identify organization needs, by providing step-by-step instructions, and by assisting with any issues arising from a submitted application if necessary. To be eligible the small business or nonprofit must have fewer than 500 employees and be located in Lafayette.

Registration for the program is available

through the city website (see below for link). Once city staff has verified eligibility through a business verification form, TPA staff will schedule a time to discuss specific needs and questions.

In the week following the launch of the LBA program, according to an update provided to the city by TPA Associate Johannus Reijnders, the advocacy firm had connected with 34 small local businesses and had completed one-on-one triage for 24 businesses with more scheduled. According to Reijnders the 34 businesses reflect over 250 employees and independent contractors within the Lafayette community. Roughly half of the businesses have applied for Payroll Protection Program funding and as yet, none have been approved, "reflecting the frustration nationwide that banks have been prioritizing their larger business customers over a first-come, first-serve basis, disadvantaging mom-and-pop style businesses," according to Reijnders.

The LCF is meeting the crisis by increasing its support to local nonprofits and has extended its deadline for grant application through April 30 to allow more time for nonprofits to assess their needs, matching every dollar donated up to \$25,000. The COVID-19 Community Matching Campaign will allow them to grant up to \$100,000 to nonprofits hit hard by the pandemic.

More information is available on the city website at <https://www.lovelafayette.org/city-hall/lafayette-strong> Donations to the LCF can be made at <https://lafayettetcf.org/donate/>



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