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3/10/2021

ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES AND NON-PROFITS IN OCEAN COUNTY STRUGGLING WITH RENT DUE TO COVID 19

OCEAN COUNTY is again providing grants for rent or lease payments to small businesses and non-profits having difficulty making their commercial rent payments due to COVID 19.

“I am pleased to announce that the Ocean County Board of Commissioners is launching Phase 2 of the Small Business Lease Emergency Assistance Program,” said Director of the Ocean County Board of Commissioners Gary Quinn. “We are again working in conjunction with the New Jersey Redevelopment Authority which will be administering the grant program on our behalf.”

The grant program provides up to \$30,000. A webinar to review the application process has been scheduled for 10 a.m. Friday, March 12. The registration link can be found by visiting <http://bit.ly/ocncnty>

“Small businesses and non-profits affected by the coronavirus pandemic can apply for financial assistance for their rent or lease payments through this program,” said Ocean County Commissioner John P. Kelly, liaison to the Ocean County Department of Finance. “The program provides grant funding up to \$30,000. What is nice about this program, is it provides a grant and it doesn’t have to be repaid.”

Grant applications for Ocean County businesses and non-profit 501C3s, 4s and 7s, will be available starting at 9 a.m., Monday, March 15. To apply visit www.NJRA.us and follow the links for Ocean County Small Business Lease Emergency Assistance Grant Program or click on <https://bit.ly/NJRAOceanGrant>. Applications will be considered on a first come first served basis.

“Many of our businesses continue to struggle as the days of the coronavirus pandemic have turned into months and now over a year,” Quinn said. “We are providing financial help in order to keep these hard working men and women business owners open and to reduce some of their concerns about keeping up with the rent and lease payments during this time.”

The County Commissioners rolled out the first phase of this grant program in November of 2020 using \$10 million from the federal CARES money to help our businesses struggling as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

“This marks the second phase of this grant program. We want to get to as many businesses in the County as possible,” Quinn noted. “I personally urge our business owners and our non-profits to apply for this help if they are behind in their lease or rent payments.”

Small businesses that may have received a grant early on in the program but not the full \$30,000 can now apply for the additional funds.

“Small businesses are truly the heart and soul of our communities,” said Ocean County Commissioner Joseph H. Vicari, who serves as liaison to tourism and business development. “The Ocean County business community has been uniquely impacted by the pandemic since tourism and hospitality represent such a high percentage of its economic activity here.

“I am pleased the Ocean County Board of Commissioners has again partnered with the New Jersey Redevelopment Authority (NJRA) to assist Ocean County businesses with rental assistance,” Vicari said. “This is a grant and not a loan and it is paid directly to the landlord.”

The commissioners agreed to again partner with the NJRA to administer the Small Business Lease Emergency Assistance Grant Program solely for Ocean County businesses in order to streamline the grant process.

“It’s vital to our small businesses that this help be made available to them,” Quinn said. “Many non-profits have also gone above and beyond to help our citizens.”

The program provides grants to small businesses and non-profits leasing commercial space in mixed-use buildings; small businesses leasing space in commercial buildings; storefront businesses that lease their space and small businesses that demonstrate a loss due to COVID-19.

According to the NJRA, eligible applicants will need to supply a current copy of their executed lease outlining terms and conditions of the agreement, and a current New Jersey tax clearance certificate or current business registration issued by the state of New Jersey.

The applicant must provide verification from the landlord that the respective business was in good standing with monthly lease obligations prior to March 1, 2020. The landlord and small business will need to sign certifications acknowledging the amount of outstanding lease obligations, not to exceed \$30,000. The tenant will not be disqualified if monthly lease payments are current/up to date.

The Board of Commissioners urged Ocean County small businesses or non-profits in Ocean County to apply for the grant as soon as possible.

“Even while many have been struggling during this past year, small businesses are still making a difference by helping others, donating meals to hospitals and supporting many of our charitable organizations,” Quinn said. “They have been and continue to be a key part of our economy and our communities.”