Gallup firefighters report accomplishments to city councilors

Written by By Rick Abasta Sun Correspondent
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The Gallup City Council convened Feb. 13 for their regular meeting and honored local firefighters serving the community. A number of firefighters were in attendance, including the fire chief and police chief for fire department related items on the agenda.

Approval of the collective bargaining agreement with the city and Gallup Fire Fighters Union, the International Association of Fire Fighters Local 4296 started the meeting.

Klo Abeita, human resources director, presented the settlement agreement. The city clerk handed out the current contract to the councilors.

“The bargaining unit did not come forward to open negotiations during the period of time that was allowed for them to do so…the parties went back and forth to try and settle this matter,” Abeita said.

During that period of time, the contract expired and raised the question of whether or not the agreement was still valid and enforceable.

“It wasn’t a full blown negotiation of the contract. Eventually, we agreed to extend this current contract that you have before you for one year and to include a provision that would have the firefighters to participate in a safety incentive program,” Abeita said.

Councilor Yogash Kumar motioned to approve and Councilor Linda Garcia seconded the action. The item passed by a vote of 5-0.

Fire Chief Eric Babcock of the Gallup Fire Department presented the department’s annual report.

“Thanks for having us, this is a good news story. I’m very proud of this group,” Babcock said before introducing a group of firefighters.

Deputy Fire Chief Jesus Morales shared 2017 highlights.

“We did bring most of our administration here today. We’re pretty excited with all the content in this report,” he said.

Operations Battalion Chief Jonathan Dayton spoke next about various fire calls.

“Gallup is starting to make some great progress. We’re graduating a lot [of EMTs] from our own community from within and we’re also employing from within,” he said.

Assistant Chief Michael Hoffman spoke about training. He was very proud of one particular statistic.

“For 134,420 hours of work, we only had one reported injury. That’s just amazing. That’s something I’m very proud of. We have a culture of safety at the firehouse,” he said.

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