

Council lays out costs for Community Improvement Plan

Written by By Rick Abasta For the Sun
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City manager looks to balance the budget

Before the start of the regular meeting of the Gallup City Council, the group held a work session on the five-year community improvement plan.

City Manager Maryann Ustick said the next workshop is scheduled for April 25 and will focus on the budget.

“We’d like to have a separate CIP workshop,” Ustick said. “We are still working on our operating budget which is not balanced yet.”

She noted that the hold harmless provisions withholding is at \$800,000.

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“We are about \$500,000 out of balance and the CIP has to come from the fund balance, which is 25 percent of expenditures,” she said.

In 2004, New Mexico exempted food and some medical services from gross receipts taxes, known as “hold harmless.” The state in turn has provided funds to communities to offset the tax dollar deficit. But there’s still a deficit that the city must somehow fill through other means.

Ustick said the PowerPoint presentation, titled, “Recommended Community Improvement Plan Budget,” broke down costs for equipment and capital projects. The general fund CIP recommendation was about \$536,000.

“We’re still working on the operating budget, hopefully you’ll have your books by next Friday,” she told the council. “The hold harmless provisions have made it very tough to balance the budget.”

Stan Henderson came before the council to explain the funding breakdown.

He said the recommended FY 2018-19 capital outlay recommended budget summary included costs for general departments, including planning and finance; parks and recreation; public safety; public works; the electric department; and for water and solid waste.

“The majority of the water and solid waste is the Navajo-Gallup water pipeline,” Henderson said, explaining that \$8 million of the requested amount is going to the project.

The total amounted to \$15,450,070.

Henderson explained the equipment vehicle recommendations summary next, with the total amounting to \$2,798,723.

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“The general fund, as the city manager mentioned, is a \$536,000 piece of the \$9.4 million total,” Henderson said. “Last year, all program funds we had for capital outlay was \$13.6 million and of that piece, \$678,000 was general funds.”

The drop in figures was due to the hold harmless provisions imposed by the state.

Facility projects in need of legislative funds and other funding sources included a study for the regional animal shelter; city planning vehicle replacement; and an animal container box for the shelter vehicle.

“As I understand it, as they hit a bump going down the street, the doors pop open,” Henderson said of the shelter request. “We don’t need any animals falling out on the road.”

The recommended projects for general services included an El Morro Theatre floor replacement; repairs to the library parking lot; a study on new senior center construction; a sulfur burner for the golf course; desktop computer replacements; a city voice and data upgrade; city hall camera replacements; children’s library surveillance cameras; library cameras; a library Perfecta full color poster design system; and a microfilm scanner.

That total came to \$250,500.

Henderson explained the CIP’s various needs, ranging from vehicle replacements, equipment upgrades, construction projects, and building renovations at length.

THE COUNCIL RESPONDS

The estimated funding need for the five-year CIP amounted to more than \$169 million.

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Mayor Jackie McKinney said county schools that utilize Ford Canyon Park for various events must assist with the cost of turf replacement at the complex.

“We can’t carry that burden,” McKinney said.

Councilors Fran Palochak and Allan Landavazo both brought up the issue of security, and security cameras.

“We need to focus on security, especially where our employees are located,” Palochak said. “These requests (for cameras) are very reasonable, they’re not being extravagant.”

Councilor Allan Landavazo asked about monitoring for the surveillance cameras.

“Are we going to have cameras in all of these areas? Who is going to monitor the bad guys and how are we going to monitor this?” he asked.

Active camera monitoring would come at a cost, but passive monitoring would be from employees reviewing footage from the night before.

Gallup Police Chief Phillip Hart said he visited Hobbs Police Department and commended their system, which actively monitors cameras throughout their municipality.

“It costs them \$750,000 to \$800,000 per year for monitoring equipment, maintenance, and replacement. We have a real good idea of the budget required for such an operation,” Hart said.

Other discussion items included a new library combined with the children’s library downtown. The City Council will further refine these requests at the April 25 meeting, beginning at 8:30 am.

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