

County roads improvements mulled by commissioners

Written by By Rick Abasta Sun Correspondent
Friday, 15 June 2018 07:16



Fireworks restrictions measure passed

During the June 5 regular meeting of the McKinley County Board of Commissioners, a funding request from Iyanbito Chapter to provide road improvements to County Road No. 33, Turtle Butte Circle, was tabled.

Chapter president Steven Arviso was requesting \$50,000 to cover costs associated with an engineering survey and centerline survey for road improvement and realignment.

He provided commissioners with chapter resolutions for the project, maps and constituent requests for the road improvement.

"I grew up in Iyanbito all my life," he said. "As a youngster, we traveled these roads and sometimes, we'd have ruts of 18 inches to two-feet deep. There were times we'd leave our vehicles two to three miles from home."

The chapter is thankful for the relationship with the county, Arviso said, because by working together they have improved many of the community roads.

"We have six miles of dirt road left in Iyanbito to pave," he said.

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“How much work have we done in this area?” Commissioner Muskett asked Jeff Irving, county road superintendent.

“This road is on our maintenance inventory. It is a road that we maintain on a regular basis,” Irving replied. “Since I have been here, the only construction road project we have done out there is the Dakota Loop.”

That particular project was \$200,000, and it was a partnership with Navajo Division of Transportation to pave the road, he said, adding that there are other projects in Iyanbito that the county is working on currently.

“I do have some other projects lined up there with local government road funds, as soon as we get through the certification process with the state on Iyanbito Road. On this particular road, we don’t have the right-of-way,” Irving said. “This is kind of the first step toward that.”

Finance director Sara Keeler said that without a right-of-way, there will be problems requesting funding for the project.

Muskett moved to table the measure, and the action passed unanimously.

Meanwhile, Les Gaines of Grants came before the commissioners to requesting support for public access to Cibola National Forest ranger districts and opposing wilderness area designation.

Resolution No. JUN-18-036 was in regard to more than 316,000 acres with cooperating agencies working together on the forest service plan revision.

“The forest service plan was last written in 1985,” he said. “We all know that a wilderness area

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is a place that is untraveled by man. In those areas, unless you have a special designation, you are not allowed to fight fire. No power tools. No wheeled vehicles. No chemical treatment for weeds.”

County attorney Doug Decker said he received a call from Ronnie Pynes about a similar resolution that was passed by Cibola County.

The resolution passed unanimously.

In addition, Resolution No. JUN-18-035, a proclamation declaring extreme or severe drought banning certain fireworks was also discussed.

Currently, 50 percent of McKinley County is rated as exceptional drought and the other half of the county is rated as extreme drought condition.

Fire chief John Carlisle said fireworks burn anywhere between 500-1,200 degrees.

“We do know that the fire ... that was started in Heber, Ariz. was several spot fires that was started by a Dragon Chain firework, which does not put out sparks at 500-1,200 degrees. Much less,” he said.

Carlisle said the smoke spotted north of town on Sunday was a fire in Sawmill, Ariz., which burned more than 600 acres.

“That was a short growth fire, one day’s worth of work. We currently have resources there, three Helitak crews,” he said.

In addition, the county responded to 10 brush fires over the weekend.

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“You can look at grass the wrong way and it’s going to go up,” he said.

The resolution passed unanimously.

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