

NCI STRUGGLES TO GAIN budget approval

The Gallup City Council convened Aug. 14 for the regular meeting and began with action on the contract reopener agreement between the Gallup and the United Mine Workers of America Local 1629.

There are currently 131 city employees affected by the agreement and Klo Abeita, human resources director, said they are all non-probationary employees.

She said the parties came to an agreement Aug. 1, after discussing wage rates and insurance health costs.

The employees will receive a two percent increase that will be effective the first full pay period after council approval, Abeita said, which would be Oct. 8.

“The current agreement expires 2019 without any further economic reopeners and the next time we meet, which will be around October 2019, it will be a whole new contract that we are negotiating on,” she said.

Abeita said discussions were opened earlier in the year to afford members of the bargaining unit to get the same 80-20 premium split, the same as non-union employees, when the new

insurance plan year begins in October 2018.

The fiscal impact for the wage increase was $10,868 for the remaining year, prorated at three pay periods, she said, noting that the amount includes wages and health insurance.

Councilor Linda Garcia commended city employees and said, “Great job and well deserved for city employees.

The measure passed unanimously.

Abeita also reported for the second agenda item, a contract settlement agreement between the city and Gallup Professional Firefighters Association Local 4296.

“This bargaining unit is comprised of firefighters and firefighter lieutenants. There’s currently 39 members that are affected,” she said.

Under terms of the collective bargaining agreement, the city will pay 80 percent of health insurance and employees will pay 20 percent, effective in the new benefit year.

Effective the first full pay period after approval by the City Council, the employees will receive a one percent increase to their hourly rate of pay and effective the first full pay period in Jan 2019, employees will receive another one percent increase to their pay.

The agreement is through Jan. 18, 2020.

“That was some creative negotiating,” said Mayor Jackie McKinney.

“One percent now and one percent later. Good work,” he said.

The measure passed unanimously.

The City Council also approved a budget adjustment for the Na’Nizhoozhi Center, Inc. Fiscal Year 2019 liquor excise tax allocation.

The LET allocation for the detox center is 835,000. However only $800,000 was allocated from the general fund due to delays in the agreement between the city and county.

Debra Martinez, Behavioral Health Investment Zone Manager, reported before the council.

“I am here to acknowledge and put on the record that the $835,000 will be coming from LET instead of general funds. We weren’t able to get that in the budget, so we were using $800,000 from the general fund,” she said.

We’ll also need to add an additional $35,000, which is going to be the whole contract from NCI, she said, adding that the funds were already agreed upon in the LET resolution.

The measure passed unanimously.

By Rick Abasta
Sun Correspondent