McKinley County Board of Commissioners approves budget presentations

Written by Rick Abasta Sun Correspondent
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The Sept. 11 special meeting of the McKinley County Board of Commissioners focused on the review and approval of the 2019 fiscal-year budget letter received from the New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration.

County Finance Director Sara Keeler reported before commissioners on eight budget resolutions for the Pueblo Pintado Fire Station, Pueblo Pintado waterline, Zuni-Blackrock Fire non-capital equipment, EMS funding, a severance tax bond for a Sheriff's Department pursuit vehicle, the Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial, Red Lake Chapter road projects and Sheriff's Department equipment.

Resolution No. SEP-18-055 was for $1,260,000 for the Pueblo Pintado Fire Station.

"This is a budget increase in Fund 222, which is our fire excise tax, for the expenses for construction of Pueblo Pintado Fire Station. This was missed in the final budget," Keeler said.

Finance only received a partial encumbrance of the funding for the project, she said, which was for the engineering portion of the project.

County Fire Chief Jason Carlisle said construction of the fire station would be completed six months from the start date.

“This was an oversight on my part, we thought that we were going to get this expended before the end of the fiscal year 2018, but it never happened,” Carlisle said.

As FY 2019 came around, he was going through bids for construction and realized the oversight, he said.

“So does this mean this is finally going to get off the ground?” Commissioner Carol Bowman-Muskett asked.

“Yes, it is going to get off the ground. The bid was awarded I think three commission meetings ago and they’re just waiting on a purchase order from us. Unfortunately, construction will not be completed before you guys leave office,” he said.

Commissioner Bill Lee asked where the $1.2 million was coming from.

“It’s in carryover cash. It was never encumbered. So it’s moving the budget from FY 2018 to FY 2019,” Keeler said.

The commissioners listened to all of the budget presentations before approving them in one fell swoop.

The budget items included $136,000 for the Pueblo Pintado waterline; $9,098 for Zuni Blackrock Fire; $10,458 for EMS; $58,000 severance tax bond for Sheriff’s Department pursuit vehicle; $515 state funding for the Gallup Ceremonial; $66,824 for Red Lake Chapter road projects; and $8,000 for Sheriff’s Department E&E grant for equipment.

All of the items passed unanimously.

The commissioners also approved PSA No. 18-SEP-3993 for Systems Management Co. to provide IT services for McKinley County Metropolitan Dispatch Authority. This included transferring $60,000 from the salary and benefits of one computer tech position into professional services.

Georgene Dimas, director of Metro Dispatch, said she does not need a computer tech position, but rather, competent IT-support for the new hi-tech dispatch equipment.

“We have been getting by with the assistance of county IT. We utilized their on-call services, but what they give is minimal. I need that ongoing management services,” she said.

Dimas said the computer tech position was advertised and a candidate was hired.

“He came in and worked for two weeks and he resigned. He said this wasn’t a computer tech job,” she said.

Dimas said an IT technician can use remote access to enter into the Metro Dispatch server and network and fix 85 percent of issues online. She said services for this per-hour contract amounted to $41,400.

“I am asking for $60,000 to cover when we have events that aren’t covered in services. I need someone with public-safety answering point experience. It’s overwhelming,” she said.

PSAP centers answer emergency calls for the police, fire department and ambulance.

The commission unanimously approved the request.

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