Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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The City of Gallup, McKinley County, and the Greater Gallup Economic Development Corporation held a signing ceremony May 6 for a joint planning agreement as a kick-off to the 2019 Economic Development Week.

Patricia Lundstrom, executive director of GGEDC, said the agreement is being signed as a step to foster a resilient homegrown economy.

“I can think of no better way to kick off this important week than to have the state land commissioner here,” she said, describing the commissioner as one of the most dynamic, hard-working individuals she has ever met.

Stephanie Garcia Richard, state land commissioner for New Mexico, spoke about the importance of the stakeholders in the region, as well as the relationships between elected entities.

“What the state land office looks for is people who know what they want to do with the land,” she said to the room. “They are people who are instrumental in what is made on state trust land in your community.”

The joint planning agreement will be an opportunity for Gallup to have the first say in what is done with the trust lands, Richard said. She added that this would be the first agreement signed in 2019.

“We want to get you work,” she said.

Mayor Jackie McKinney was on hand for the signing, and spoke about how efforts with the previous land commissioner did not pan out. He said the city is hopeful about the future.

“There are great announcements in the future that will benefit [Gallup] and help benefit our community,” he said.

McKinley County Chamber of Commerce CEO Bill Lee was also present for the signing. He said that decisions made under the agreement take a lot of time and effort, but will yield unique opportunities for the city and the county.

“Sometimes we are just waiting for [the] next domino to push us over the edge into new things like Gallup Land Partners,” Lee said. “We have an incredible workforce that’s ready to go.”

Richard called the collaboration of the city, county, and GGEDC a “win-win-win” because each party will benefit, so long as they all work together and use their resources wisely.

“The agreement is a testament to the rest of the state coming proactively together,” she said. “I see our challenges as a state, so I appreciate people putting their best foot forward.”

The agreement was signed by McKinney, Lee, and Richard.

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