

Historic neighborhood in the gutter

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Chihuahuita due for city council help

By a vote of 5-0, the Gallup City Council decided to spend potential grant funds to restoring roads in the historic neighborhood of Chihuahuita, which has been waiting for help with its water drainage for years.

The funds are from the imminent 2020 Community Development Block Grant funding cycle, and the Gallup City Council discussed the plans at their Jan. 28 meeting.

The Chihuahuita neighborhood, particularly a stretch of Logan Avenue, has dealt with stormwater drainage challenges for years, which has resulted in flooded yards and basements. Residents currently have no means of preventing these issues.

The city previously held two public hearing sessions on Jan. 7 and Jan. 21 to solicit public input on the next CDBG project.

Angelina Grey, associate planner for the New Mexico Northwest Council of Governments, spoke about several publicly proposed projects at the meeting.

“A project will be submitted to the state CDBG program where it compete[s] for federal funds to improve public infrastructure,” Grey said.

On a summary of the meetings attached to the agenda, there were 11 proposed projects.

Grey highlighted three eligible projects to the city council: the drainage issue in the Chihuahuita neighborhood, Gallup Housing Authority’s water-main replacement, and the Gallup MainStreet Program.

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Dist. 4 Councilor Fran Palochak voiced her support for the Logan Avenue project.

“I’ve been a councilor for four and a half years, and I’ve been asked by this [Chihuahuita] neighborhood to fix the drainage problems,” she said. “It’s been a constant problem.”

Palochak mentioned a former longtime resident who had been asking the city for the past 25 years to address the drainage problems.

“I suspect it is an eligible project [area],” Palochak said. “I’m saying it’s about time we invested money into the area. It’s an old neighborhood with kind people who deserve to have nice streets with drainage that works.”

Dist. 2 Councilor Allan Landavazo also advocated for the Logan Avenue project. He recalled a time about 13 years ago when he, Henderson, and the Gallup Fire Department ran some water down the street to see how the street elevations responded to water flow.

“It’s been a challenge for a long time, dating back to before I was on the council,” Landavazo said. “I remember going through that exercise and knowing we had a project staring us in the face, but not having money to get the project done. This is a good opportunity to move forward and make some improvements out there.”

Dist. 1 Councilor Linda Garcia also added her support.

“I remember in the ‘90s, we came to the city council [to ask for help], but nothing came to fruition, so I hope we can get this started and complete,” Garcia said.

The city will have to gather the income information of residents in the neighborhood to confirm they meet one of the CDBG project objectives, Grey said.

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Public Works Director Stanley Henderson confirmed the city has not conducted the income survey in the past.

“You have to go door to door and specifically ask residents about their salary, like a mini-census,” Henderson explained. “You cannot be a resident of public housing unless you meet that [income] requirement.”

When asked about potential costs for the Logan Avenue or water line projects, Henderson said both projects would carry a price tag of over \$1 million.

“We’re talking reconstruction of the roadway, curbs, gutters, and sidewalks,” Henderson said. “If we’re in there, the utilities will need to be upgraded, too.”

Henderson also said projects could be divided into phases depending on how much funding they can receive from CDBG, and whether the city would then have to contribute the remaining funds to finish the project.

ABOUT THE GRANT PROGRAM

The CDBG project is part of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and provides communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community development needs.

There are three objectives for the CDBG program. They must: benefit primarily low and moderate-income persons or communities, aid in the prevention of slum and blight, and address conditions that pose a threat to the health and welfare of the community.

The projects also have to comply with state and federal CDBG regulations and are limited to \$500,000, according to Grey. But if there is a certified cost estimate in place, the funding ceiling is \$750,000.

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