

Mayor's original plans get sidetracked

Written by By Beth Blakeman Associate Editor
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Gallup's new mayor stepped into a maelstrom with the community spread issues of COVID-19.

Since his swearing in there have been two lockdowns in the city and now that the second lockdown has expired, Mayor Louis Bonaguidi is working on what's next to stop the spread of COVID-19 and get the city back to work.

At a city council meeting May 12, the subject of masks was addressed. More about the meeting can be found in Cody Begaye's story, *City Council mask ordinance goes into effect May 18*.

Bonaguidi says there was no reason to extend the lockdown for an additional three days since it didn't appear that the situation was improving following the two lockdowns that were originally ordered. He pointed to five deaths May 8 in McKinley County and four deaths May 9.

"At this point we're flying blind," he said. "We don't know how we can attack this situation."

Does he regret becoming mayor at such a difficult moment in time? "No, not at all," he told the *Gallup Sun*, May 10.

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He said he took on the job because he thought he could probably be of help to the community. When he decided to run, he wanted to work basically on the economy.

"This is a great business town," he said. "We need more retail stores, more industries for that matter. I felt I had the experience. I was on city council when we lobbied for the Navajo Gallup pipeline and Na' Nizhoozhi Center , so I had experience in lobbying Washington and Gallup and Santa Fe."

Looking at the city now he said, "Gallup has lost more than it's gained in the last 30 years."

The mayor spoke about the railroad spur and Fort Wingate and coal mines and I-40. He acknowledged the losses Gallup has suffered and the need to have water to bring in industry.

That's his vision: bringing industry to Gallup.

"Why not? Microsoft or Intel...We're limited to what we got [water]. We're high plains desert. With water coming in, that would open it up to small industries," he said.

As he thinks about bringing in business, he is simultaneously focused on finding solutions for COVID-19 community spread.

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