Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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In April, the Gallup City Council adopted an ordinance banning the sale of alcoholic beverages at convenience stores because they were concerned people were going into the stores, purchasing the product, then sharing it with others, and in so doing putting multiple people at increased risk for COVID-19.

“We really didn’t have any system in place at the time to deal with isolating and quarantining homeless individuals who had been exposed to or tested positive for COVID when we adopted the ordinance,” City Attorney Curtis Hayes said. “Now we have resources to deal with that population.”

The ban of alcohol sales in convenience stores was uncharted legal territory, Hayes added.

Meanwhile, package liquor stores were closed in accordance with a Public Health Order issued by the New Mexico Health Secretary. Grocery stores were able to continue with their sales.

Since a new Public Health Order was issued June 1 to allow package liquor stores in New Mexico to reopen, the purpose of the City of Gallup’s ordinance to limit the number of places where alcohol can be purchased to grocery stores located within city limits can no longer be met.

As such, a new ordinance was presented to the council to repeal the ban of alcohol sales at Gallup convenience stores during their June 9 meeting.

Hayes said the convenience stores should be commended because they did comply with the ordinance and did not challenge the council on whether they had the authority to adopt the ordinance, but their behavior could change if the ban remains in place.

The council and mayor shared Hayes’ sentiments.

“I think the stores should be commended because as far as I know, they took it upon themselves to close [sales],” Mayor Louis Bonaguidi said. “They understood the situation and went ahead and closed, no questions asked.”

District 4 Councilor Fran Palochak said she hopes the stores will continue to have their safe distance regulations in place as they open liquor sales.

“I don’t want all those people crammed into a tiny store,” she said. “They’re going to have to limit it to so many people in the store. I think it’ll be safe [that way].”

The ordinance to repeal the ban of alcohol sales at convenience stores was approved with a 5-0 vote.

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