

## County mulling internet hotspots for fire stations

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent  
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One hurdle that many businesses and governments have had to face during the COVID-19 pandemic is deciding how best to utilize CARES Act funding. While the funds have a deadline to be used by the end of the year, some of those groups continue to debate how and where they should allocate the funds.

The McKinley County Board of Commissioners thinks they have found one means to spend the funds: set up wifi hotspots with Sacred Wind Communications Telesolutions, Inc. at fire stations across the county.

“This is a bid we’re working with CARES funds for, to get internet access for public safety, the community, children who need internet for schools,” McKinley County Manager Anthony Dimas Jr. said during the board’s Nov. 10 meeting.

Dimas said the board will be able to utilize up to \$508,017 in CARES funds. The estimated costs will vary on the chosen internet speed, about \$272,016 for 50 megabits per second with a monthly cost of \$3,984, and about \$228,016 for 100 megabits per second.

Procurement Manager Hugo Cano said if the contract is approved, the county will work with County Fire Chief Brian Archuleta to determine which connection speed would be best at each station.

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“We will mix and match the 50 or 100 megabit speed at each station and the installation costs will be different,” Cano said.

Since the county would pick different speeds for each fire station and the fees would vary as a result, Cano said it is unlikely the county would actually pay up to the bottom line number of \$508,017, and the final total would likely be more in the \$200,000 range.

Since the total cost has not been finalized and will not be until the individual inspections are complete, Commissioner Bill Lee said he was hesitant to move forward but understands this is a need for many people across the county.

“It’s important we give people as much service as we can,” Lee said. “It’s a good idea to allow schools in those areas to be able to access that internet because 100 megabits will be used and appreciated.”

The motion to go forward with Sacred Wind to set up internet hotspots at county fire stations was approved with a 2-0 vote.

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