

City council hears about Lexington Hotel, Economic Development Week, more

Written by Molly Adamson Sun Correspondent
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During the pandemic, many people without homes have been at risk of contracting the virus. But they're getting a break thanks to the city, the non-profit Heading Home, and the New Mexico Children, Youth, and Families Department.

In a previous interview with the *Sun*, Gallup City Manager Maryann Ustick said the Lexington Hotel had been purchased by the city about three years ago when the CARE 66 Foundation gave it up. When they bought the property, it was in bad shape, and Ustick explained that the city simply "kept the utilities going."

The hotel was finally able to open on Feb. 1.

According to Heading Home's website, the charity opened the 26-unit building that provides private rooms, shared common spaces, and case management support.

Before the Lexington Hotel was open, McKinley County funded a Wellness Hotel to safely quarantine people without homes during the pandemic.

During the April 27 city council meeting, Debra Martinez, the manager of Gallup's Behavioral Health Investment Zone, gave the council an overview of the hotel's progress. She said the

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hotel currently has 28 bedrooms, five offices, an industrial kitchen, a guest kitchen, four community areas including a space for kids, a patio, a laundry room, and a dining room. The community rooms have TVs and games.

Martinez stated that there are currently 20 women and 37 men living in the hotel. She said seeing the kids come into the hotel was a great experience. "One little girl was on her bunk bed and was just so excited. It was very humbling," Martinez said.

The councilors thanked Martinez for all her work with the Lexington Hotel.

Councilwoman Fran Palochak, Dist. 4, applauded Martinez and stressed how important it is to see the local government work on things like the hotel in the future. "What I would really like to see in the future is the government working together to do one good thing in the city," Palochak said.

"I think we need to look as government elected officials [at] pulling our resources to make an awesome project or an awesome building or office; an awesome facility to house homeless people," she said. "This is an example of true collaboration, and I applaud all of us, everyone involved."

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WEEK

At the April 21 commissioners meeting, the commissioners passed on voting on the resolution to make the week of May 9-15 Economic Development Week because the Greater Gallup Economic Development Manager Bruce Armstrong was unable to attend the meeting to talk about the week's events. But he was at the city council meeting.

"Now more than ever in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's important to take a moment to celebrate the strength of our enduring community and recognize projects that will be key to our recovery; projects that raise up our local business community and that create new jobs and opportunities for Gallup and McKinley County residents," Armstrong said.

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He described some of the events that would be happening that week. There will be two panel discussions that will be presented as webinars. one of them will discuss autonomous vehicles and the next steps in looking at the potential for researching and testing self-driving cars in Gallup and New Mexico. The other panel will discuss entrepreneurship and tourism in Gallup.

The council unanimously agreed to approve the resolution to recognize the week as National Economic Development Week.

MALONEY SEWER REPAIR

Gallup's Water and Sanitation Director Dennis Romero addressed the council requesting financial assistance for the Maloney sewer repair project.

Romero explained that a portion of the wastewater collection system had failed underneath Maloney Avenue near the intersection of Ninth Street and Maloney.

"Basically, an older manhole structure looks like it corroded, fell apart, and took some of the line with it," Romero stated. "So there's still free-flowing sewer.

"We don't have backup for wastewater, but it's basically a cavern, if you will, rather than a pipe," he continued.

The failed line was seen as an emergency situation, so an accelerated bid schedule was allowed. The bid went to two companies: Horizon Enterprises and D'Bonauguidi Construction. The two companies bid over \$79,000 for the project.

Romero said that the Wastewater Maintenance and Repair budget has a little over \$45,000 left and that a little over \$34,000 is still needed for the project. In his resolution, he requested an

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additional \$8,000 for a ten percent contingency. The council unanimously approved the budget adjustment of approximately \$42,000.

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