

Council approves new Liquor Control Act regulations

Written by By Molly Adamson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 02 July 2021 06:39



City manager, city attorney to get raises

The 2021 legislative session led to some big changes for the New Mexico Liquor Control Act. One of those changes was a new type of restaurant license that would allow businesses to sell more than just beer and wine.

During the June 22 city council meeting, Gallup's city attorney Curtis Hayes explained the different types of licenses available to restaurants.

A restaurant owner can opt to serve beer and wine only. Hayes called that option "Restaurant A." This type of license is already allowed in Gallup. "Restaurant B" will allow restaurants to sell spirits such as vodka and whiskey.

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Hayes also mentioned a third option, which he is calling “Option A+.” It allows restaurants to sell spirits, but only those specifically distilled locally in New Mexico.

The law allowing these changes becomes effective July 1.

Hayes informed the council that some of the old rules still apply to the new laws, including one that says a customer would only be allowed three alcoholic drinks and that 60 percent of a sale still has to come from food. It will also be illegal for a restaurant to sell alcohol past 11 pm.

Before the council voted on the matter Mayor Louis Bonaguidi showed his support for the new ordinance.

“I think it gives some of the restaurants a chance to grow and [it could] possibly even bring in some new restaurants since Gallup is certainly not overrun with restaurants at this point,” Bonaguidi said.

Hayes informed the council that they would need to approve the ordinance that issues “Restaurant B” licenses. They did so.

RAILROADS

City Manager Maryann Ustick presented a cooperative agreement with the New Mexico

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Department of Transportation for the Second and Third Street railway crossings design.

NMDOT has budgeted Federal Highway Administration funding for the design of some pedestrian safety improvements. Some of them include warning devices and new widened walkways.

Ustick explained that the agreement includes a total of \$90,000 for Second and Third Streets. It also includes a 10 percent match from the state. The city will have to pick up the remaining cost if the project goes over the funding amount.

Ustick also noted that if the project gets canceled or isn't completed in 10 years, the city will have to pay back some of the money.

The council approved the agreement.

WELLNESS HOTEL BUDGET ADJUSTMENT

During the pandemic when many people without homes were at risk, the city, the non-profit Heading Home, and the New Mexico Children, Youth, and Families Department were able to help with the creation of a Wellness Hotel.

This became home for a lot of families before the Lexington Hotel was able to offer a more permanent solution beginning Feb. 1.

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During the June 22 meeting, Debra Martinez, the manager of Gallup's Behavioral Health Investment Zone, spoke about some unanticipated costs the city will need to cover because of some damages that occurred at the hotel.

The amount comes out to a little less than \$1,800.

Councilor Fran Palochak, Dist. 4, commented that she understood why the money was needed.

"I know you had a lot of people in the Wellness Hotel, so actually I'm surprised you didn't have more damage to the property," she said. "I think it's very minimal considering the amount of time they were in there."

The council approved the budget adjustment so repairs could be made.

SALARY INCREASE FOR CITY MANAGER AND CITY ATTORNEY

Finally, Ustick proposed a budget adjustment that would serve as a salary increase for Hayes and herself.

The city manager position hasn't had any salary adjustments since Ustick was hired in August, 2014. The city attorney position hasn't had an adjustment since Hayes was hired in July 2017.

The positions were not a part of the five percent cost of living adjustment in FY22 budget and they didn't receive any hazard pay adjustments funded by the CARES Act funds, while all other city employees received both of these things.

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The proposed increase to the FY22 general fund budget was a little over \$13,000.

Palochak expressed her support for the increase.

“Maryann Ustick works constantly, I don’t know how she gets her energy and likewise so does our attorney,” she said. “We call on him for every little thing and he’s always right there with an answer and researching and doing everything.

“I was surprised when I learned that they did not get the same increases as our employees do, because they are right there doing the work,” Palochak concluded.

The council approved the budget adjustment.

By Molly Adamson
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