

## Ustick updates BID on city projects

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 05 November 2021 04:40

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The Coal Avenue Commons and city alleys are ongoing projects for the City of Gallup. During the Oct. 21 Business Improvement District board meeting, City Manager Maryann Ustick gave an update on the projects' progress.

According to Ustick, the second phase of the Coal Avenue Commons project will cost a total of \$3.5 million. A Transportation Project Fund grant from the New Mexico Department of Transportation will pay for 95 percent of the project, while the city will only pay for five percent.

In an interview with the *Sun*, Gallup's Planning and Development Director Clyde Strain said the city should receive the grant any day now.

Ustick told the BID that the only thing left before the city can go out to bid on Phase Two is the environmental certifications, on which the construction firm Wilson and Co. is currently working.

She also noted that Strain is making sure the area has enough sources of electricity; that way, the space can be used for events without any problems like not having enough outlets available.

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Ustick also spoke about the structure of the second phase of the project's construction.

"The only other comment was that to stress that when we go out to bid and we award a contract that we phase construction to ensure that the intersection of Coal [Avenue] and Second [Street] is done first, because that's going to end up closing Second [Street] for a number of weeks," Ustick said.

Then Ustick turned to the alley project update. She told the board that the water and sewer construction for the alley between Second Street and Third Street had begun. But they've run into a few problems.

"We've had a few mishaps because there's so many old service lines in there that aren't marked. So they're moving ahead, but we're starting from west to east, so the contractors are already working on that," Ustick said. "So that's moving ahead and then the electrical will follow and then ultimately the surface work will have to go out to bid."

The city is also working on electrical between First Street and Second Street.

BID board member James Rich asked Ustick if the restriction in lane traffic and all of the construction have caused an uptick in car accidents.

Ustick said traffic is moving smoothly.

"Actually our drivers are behaving well," Ustick said. "The environment's so beautiful they're just stopping to look."

Finally, Ustick gave an update on the gates that were recently installed at Second and Third Streets. She said the gates appear to be effective in keeping transients out of the alley.

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The gates were suggested by City Councilor Linda Garcia, Dist. 1, and members of the neighborhood and business community as a possible solution to squatter encampments on rooftops, vandalism, and garbage in alleyways.

“[We] actually reduced the amount of trash collection we have in there, because people are not dumping anymore,” Ustick said. “So it’s been very successful — no reports of anybody on the roof, and I think the businesses are pleased.”

Ustick spoke about the possibility of having more gates installed in other alleys around the city.

The city recently got a request for gates for the alley between Fourth and Fifth Streets. She said after visiting the site with city staff recently, it was determined that it wouldn’t be possible to set up gates in that area.

“It’s very difficult when buildings are set back or they don’t have barricades like fire stone; so not every alley is going to be able to be gated at either end,” Ustick explained. “But it’s certainly something we can consider in the future for alleys that work.”

The idea of gated alleyways has the support of Mayor Louis Bonaguidi, although he did voice a concern about what would happen if someone got locked inside the alley at night.

Bonaguidi was pleased with the gates’ solid construction.

“They’re built to last for sure,” he said.

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