

## Pandemic premium

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent  
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### ARPA funds to be split between employees, pipes

City employees will get an extra spiff in their pay packets and some important water and sewer lines will be replaced soon, when the second installment of American Rescue Plan Act funds are released.

The COVID pandemic premiums will start this month or next month and go on until the funds run out, as a \$254 per paycheck bump for working through a difficult time. Part-time employees will receive half that amount.

“One caveat, we have not yet received this money, despite what the state originally led us to believe,” Gallup’s Chief Financial Officer Patty Holland told the city council Aug. 9. “Anything you do approve will not be set up and will not begin until everything’s in place.”

The council had a choice to give all full-time employees the same amount, or to give more to first responders and other frontline people. They struggled with it, but Mayor Louie Bonaguidi summed up their decision: “We’ve endured two years of this and our employees have stuck by us 100%. [...] I think all employees should share in it.”

The city will receive over \$2.6 million in the second round of ARPA funds. That’s almost \$1.2 million in premium pay for employees, and the rest will go toward much-needed water and wastewater repairs and improvements.

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The projects funded are: \$50,000 for Boardman Avenue sewer realignment costs; \$540,000 to rehabilitate a wastewater treatment facility; \$450,000 for Second Street sewer realignment; \$240,000 for Munoz well rehabilitation and \$220,000 for a variable frequency drive that controls pumps and operations at Yatahey Pump Station.

“The Second Street sewer realignment is a more urgent need than we had previously, based on the current situation,” Holland said, after severe rainstorms Aug. 5 blew out a sewer line on Second Street.

“We had a sewer backup on the Trademart Square line and when the crews tried to clear the blockage, it was discovered the line had collapsed,” Acting Water/Wastewater Director Adrian Marrufo said. “We are bypassing the sewer flow with rental equipment until we can secure funding and get the line replaced.”

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