

City Council Roundup: Spotlight on agenda items

Written by By Melinda Russell Sun Correspondent
Friday, 26 June 2015 01:42



During the City Council meeting, held June 23 in Gallup, Mayor Jackie McKinney and Councilors made short work of their agenda.

Budget: Chief Financial Officer, Patty Holland presented the budget for fiscal year 2016. City Manager Maryann Ustick said the budget is balanced. She explained they were able to balance the budget by making across the board cuts in overtime of 5.6 percent.

In order to pay for an increase in Community Service Aid salaries, police overtime was cut. Councilors approved the budget without discussion, and forecast nearly \$87 million in expected revenue for fiscal year 2016.

Electric: Richard Matzke Director of Gallup Electric Department asked for final approval for a negotiated \$ 2.575 million deal whereby the City of Gallup will buy the electric substations currently owned by the Public Service Company of New Mexico.

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McKinney praised Matzke's success in negotiating PNM to accept a proposal for appraised value. The benefit to the purchase is the city will no longer pay \$30,000 monthly for maintenance on the substations. McKinney said the deal will pay for itself quickly.

K-9 Grants: Deputy Director, NMCOG Evan Williams presented two grants for public comment. Both 2014 and 2015 Justice Assistance Grant Applications award funding for training of K-9s and their handlers for the city and county. The grants, done by formula, are worth about \$40,000 when successful.

The city police department is requesting training for four K-9 units and the county is requesting training for two K-9 units. Chief of Police Robert Cron said "Since we took on a new trainer, bark and hold, we are not experiencing any bitings. The grants have been very important."

Allison Project Update: Public Works Director Stan Henderson gave the council an update regarding the Allison Bridge project. The project started in 2007 when Rep. Patty Lundstrom started the process by procuring money for engineering studies and other preparatory work. With the \$4.5 million in capital outlay funding recently appropriated, McKinney said, "We should be able to put a shovel in the bridge very quickly."

LEDA Grants: City Attorney George Kozeliski asked for updated wording related to economic development so the city will be eligible for further grants from New Mexico Local Economic Development Act. The funds from LEDA are targeted toward improving and reviving downtown areas of New Mexico.

Wastewater Update: Director of the Gallup Water and Sanitation Department, Vince Tovar requested an extension for services from Severn rent Environmental Services.

Councilor Fran Polachak asked what the chances are the smell will be under control if the extension is granted. Tovar said it is a short extension that will allow him to acquire a permit he needs to start removing sludge from the system and transporting it to another area.

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“The smell is not as bad as it used to be,” Tovar said. “I can guarantee it will get better.”

The department expects to have the permits in place by early July.

Fireworks: Fire Inspector Jacob Lacroix of the Gallup Fire Department gave a presentation regarding fireworks safety. City residents are required to purchase \$15 permits if they are lighting anything with a fuse. The fire department will be fully staffed the weekend of July 4th.