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At the regular meeting of the Gallup City Council held July 14, the council voted to renew their contract with the Gallup-McKinley County Chamber of Commerce for promotional services. City Manager Maryann Ustick recommended approval of the contract that will give the chamber $145,000 to be used toward promoting Gallup and for administrative costs associated with those costs.

This money is tapped from the lodger's tax fund.

Ustick said the only change is the administrative portion of the contract is less this year, giving Gallup the benefit of more dollars for advertising. Chamber CEO/President David Hinkle said he wants to study the ways they are investing the advertising dollars to be sure the money is being used wisely.

He also plans to leverage these funds with the State of New Mexico tourism department to capitalize on the state's programs. The money contracted to the Chamber in 2014 was largely used in connection with the New Mexico True campaign, promoting Gallup as an adventure, cultural and recreation destination.

Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments

COG was awarded a contract for $65,000 for the fiscal year. Ustick made a recommendation to accept the contract saying, "COG is wonderful."

The COG works with local agencies to help develop plans for economic development. Some of the areas the COG assists with are long range planning for transportation needs, water and infrastructure resources and legislative relations.

Councilor Allan Landavazo said, "It's amazing the amount of work the COG gets done. They can take a dollar bill and stretch it into a $5 or $10 bill."

Lodger's tax funding

Three requests were made for lodgers tax funds. The Gallup Film Office requested $6,000 for a Native Film Series, and the Good Samaritan Society from Grants requested $5,000 for their

Holy Frijole Annual Alzheimer's Softball Bash. The Lodger's Tax Committee recommended awards of $5,500 and $4,000 respectively.

City CFO Patty Holland said the reduction in awards were caused by the nature of the requests. Some of the line items in the requests are not eligible for funding through lodger's tax.

The Gallup Amateur Baseball Congress requested and was awarded $10,000 after some discussion. The lodger's tax committee recommended only $3,000 based on the requests from GABC. Holland said the recommendation was based on items and amounts requested that are legally funded through lodger's tax funds.

Mayor Jackie McKinney said in the two years since Kevin Menapace, Dr. Lawrence Andrade and other GABC board members took over the organization, they have managed to bring a world series to Gallup and they have been financially sound.

Holland said there are plans to bring applicants in and educate them regarding the lodger's tax application process. At this time there is no program to teach the public how the tax can be used.

Landavazo asked Holland if she could work with GABC to educate them regarding state requirements so they could use the money legally and efficiently. Holland agreed to meet with members of the board.

The council also voted to allocate $10,000 to GABC for the Pee Wee Reece/Willie Mays Baseball Series. Councilor Fran Palochak voted no.

"It is in no way that I don't support the event," she said.

Palochak explained that she is concerned that at this late date the GABC will not be able to spend the allocation for lawful expenses since the tournaments are already underway.

Councilors Linda Garcia and Landavazo voted yes as did McKinney. Councilor Yogash Kumar is a member of the lodger's tax committee so abstains from voting on lodger's tax issues.

Sustainable Gallup Board

Members presented a recommendation for Gallup to implement curbside recycling in Gallup. After the presentation, questions regarding logistics and financing remained unanswered. Northwest New Mexico Regional Solid Waste Authority Director Billy Moore estimated it will cost about $1 million to get the project going. He said a building is needed to house the recyclable materials before they can be recycled. He also mentioned the cost of the recycle receptacles in this estimate.

A curbside recycling feasibility study was prepared by CDM Smith, Inc. Ustick said, "The study was excellent."

McKinney suggested Ustick create a survey to be mailed with city utility bills so the council can get a better idea of how many city residents are supportive of curbside recycling.

Though the council was pleased with the presentation and the work of the sustainable board, they acknowledged that there's more work to do before curbside recycling can become a reality.

Board President Bill Bright emphasized that recycling is a quality of life issue.

Council Comments

Landavazo praised Director of Parks and Recreation Vince Alonzo for his work to keep the baseball and softball fields in good shape during the wet Fourth of July weekend.

He also commended Street Supervisor Rusty Swatzell for the cleanup work done the same weekend as a result of the flooding on the east side of town.

“They were happy to serve the citizens,” he said. “I appreciated the attitude of our employees.”

There have been numerous cases of vehicle vandalism in District 3.

Councilman Kumar said, “It’s important that we, as citizens, keep an eye out. These things happen so fast, it is important to help (each other).”

McKinney said he received numerous emails this week complimenting the staff for taking care of the city. He also received compliments on behalf of law enforcement.

Ustick said the management plan for removal of sludge from the wastewater treatment plant has been updated and resubmitted to the state. Further progress is on hold until the plan is approved.