

County Manager Lee tenders resignation

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 25 March 2016 04:11



‘People person’ back in the saddle soon at Chamber of Commerce

The rumors swirling about McKinley County Manager Bill Lee leaving the top administrative county job to return to the Gallup-McKinley County Chamber of Commerce were put to rest this week. Lee announced March 24 that his last day as McKinley County Manager will be May 13.

“Working for McKinley County has been a very rewarding experience,” Lee wrote in a March 9 resignation letter to the Board of Commissioners. “I would like to thank each of you for the opportunity and support you have afforded me during my time with (McKinley County).”

Lee, who is originally from Gallup, started the \$93,000 county job a little more than a year ago. He was executive director at the chamber from 2008 until 2014. Lee said he thought it best to leave around the start of the budgeting process, so as to give workers already at the county and the prospective new hire the opportunity at the fiscal process.

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"I've thought about this," Lee said. "I'll obviously miss my duties as well as the people I've worked with."

Besides informing commission members individually of the resignation, Lee said he spoke to staff about the matter at a recent meeting. McKinley County Commissioner Genevieve Jackson called Lee a true "people person," saying Lee worked hard and got along with everyone well.

"He's definitely a people person," Jackson said. "He will be missed."

While at the chamber, Lee oversaw a membership of a little more than 400. Most importantly, he put and kept Gallup and McKinley County on the worldwide map with the city's annual Red Rock Balloon Rally and with the Monument Valley Balloon Rally in nearby Monument Valley, Utah. He's a diehard hot air balloon enthusiast and owner of X-Treme-Lee Fun Balloon Adventures.

Lee even took a chamber trip to China to market and promote the Indian Capital. The city of Gallup at one time awarded the chamber a tourism promotional contract under the direction of Lee.

His departure marks the leaving of three county managers in the past five years. Based on media reports, those before Lee, among them Bruce Swingle and Richard Kontz, locked horns with commission members for a garden variety of reasons.

Meanwhile, Jackson said she wasn't exactly sure when the search process for another manager would begin, but said it would most likely concentrate on the local workforce.

Lee said he's proud of the fact that during his tenure he began to help devise programs to help reduce the recidivism rate at the Gallup McKinley County Adult Detention Center. He said he was equally at ease with the fact that the county successfully rescheduled fees for outside counties to bring in detainees to the facility.

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And, he said, he participated in the ongoing talks with state and federal agencies regarding future funding at Na'nizhoozhi Center, Inc., commonly called NCI and Gallup's sole detox place.

Lee filed to run for the soon-to-be-vacant commission District 3 seat of Tony Tanner. Tanner has said that he isn't interested in running for reelection.

Lee has never held public office before, but is very active in state tourism circles and has worked closely with area politicians.

His official job title at the chamber will be Chief Executive Officer. It wasn't immediately clear how much of a salary he'll be paid at the chamber job. Lee said he starts his new post May 14.

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