

O'Hara: Improving Gallup's economy is key

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 27 May 2016 02:38



Repeat contender hopeful for '16

Bringing the west-side truck up to an economic level where it once was years ago and doing away with a “so what” kind of attitude when it comes to economic development are on Gerald O'Hara's things-to-do list should he gain the McKinley County District 3 Board of Commission seat.

A Pennsylvania native, who has lived in the Indian Capital for more than a decade, O'Hara is a retired geospatial information systems coordinator with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He has never held public office before, but ran for a city council seat a few years ago, losing to incumbent Allan Landavazo. O'Hara is also very active in the community, particularly when it comes to recycling.

“We need to be risk takers more than we are when it comes to developing our local economy,” he said. “Our approach to economic development has to change.”

O'Hara pointed to informal and periodic business meetings at places like Coal Avenue's popular Sammy C's Rock N' Sports Pub & Grille, saying after such meetings are over, nothing, outside of socializing, really comes out of them. He said meetings like those have to carry more “meat” with them.

“That's the perfect opportunity for a lot of progressive ideas to be decided on, given all the people who go to those things,” O'Hara said. About the west-side truck-stop comment, he

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added, "That area used to be a lot more booming than what it is now."

He said he's also a fan of improving education throughout the area at all levels.

"I believe that we need more businesses brought into downtown Gallup," he said. "That stimulates economic development. There are some vacant storefronts in downtown that can be filled."

O'Hara previously ran for the same District 3 Commission seat in 2014, but lost to Tony Tanner. Former Gallup Mayor George Galanis was the other candidate in that race. He said even though he hasn't won political races in the past, that doesn't mean he runs for office "just to run."

"I have some good ideas," he said. "We must make economic development the priority."

The primary is June 7. The general election is Nov. 8.

Also in the District 3 Commission race are former McKinley County Manager Bill Lee, former city Fire Department Chief Johnny Greene, Jr., and former two-term McKinley County Commissioner David Dallago. McKinley County Commissioners serve four-year terms and earn an annual salary of just more than \$19,000.

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