

Gallup Council approves \$106K wastewater pact

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 30 September 2016 07:15



CH2M to enter plant picture on Oct. 1; permanent negotiations underway

The Gallup City Council approved a 30-day contract Sept. 27 with the Edgewood, Colo.-based CH2M Hill Engineers, Inc., to operate and maintain the city's wastewater treatment plant. The action took place at the regular city meeting and on the heels of the exit of a previous firm that contracted with the city for plant management.

"The short-term contract will not change the fiscal impact, as the budgeted amount for operation of the plant by Severn Trent would be used to pay for services by CH2M during this 30-day period," Dennis Romero, city director of water and sanitation, told council members. "This is for the maintenance and operation of the plant."

Romero, hired into the plant job at the end of July, said the contract is valued at a little more than \$106,000. He said the contract, or professional services agreement, as the document reads, begins Oct. 1.

Among other things, the agreement stipulates that CH2M is to:

Perform preventive maintenance and project repairs that are subject to owner approval. The city is the owner of the plant.

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Maintain the aesthetics of the facility, including maintaining the facility in a clean, neat and orderly fashion.

Operate the plant so that odor and noise are minimized.

Romero told council members that the city is in the midst of negotiating a long-term design-build-and-operate contract with CH2M to run the Mentmore wastewater treatment plant. The current contract with the Pennsylvania-based Severn Trent expires at the end of September.

“The long-term contract is in a negotiating phase and with a goal of execution by Nov. 1,” Romero said. “We think it’s a good contract.”

Fran Palochak, whose council district includes the plant, said things are consistently looking up on Gallup’s west side. She mentioned that, in the past, the plant has been the recipient of bad jokes and comments related to foul odors. The plant is in a neighborhood where there are a number of hotels, motels, restaurants, and residences.

“I haven’t heard any negative comments about the plant in a long time,” Palochak said. “And I’ve heard some good things about this [CH2M] organization.”

The city inked a contract extension with Severn Trent in July 2016 while a proposal from CH2M went through a review process. Severn Trent required a \$4,300 monthly increase during the review. Severn Trent entered Gallup’s public works purview in May 2010 for five years, at a contractual rate of \$1.1-million a year. The Gallup Council unanimously extended that agreement for another year.

At the meeting, Mayor Jackie McKinney reiterated the comments made by Palochak, saying the days of driving Interstate 40 and smelling the plant appear to be a thing of the past.

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“I’ve heard where you could drive that portion of the interstate and the smell was there,” McKinney said. “Things are getting better at the plant, and that comes as a result of some very hard work by a lot of people.”

Officials from CH2M attended the Sept. 27 city council meeting. Romero introduced them to the panel and to audience members. Romero also praised the work of former Water and Sanitation Director Vince Tovar, who, he said, really got the odor under control with chemical injections last year.