

## County discusses hiring freeze, budget cuts

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 11 September 2020 04:05

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The McKinley County Board of Commissioners had two items on the agenda of their Sept. 1 meeting that reflects the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the local economy.

County Manager Anthony Dimas, Jr. presented the items to the board. Both items involved adjustments in the county budget that was discussed at a prior meeting.

“When we presented the regular budget back in May, Sara [Saucedo] and I said we knew the pandemic was going on, and that we’d look at the first quarter results of FY21 and then we’d have the results for you by October,” Dimas said. “With the recent announcement of the Gallup refinery losing their number three taxpayer, we felt it best to bring to the commission that we freeze all non-essential hiring, at least until the beginning of FY22.”

Marathon Petroleum, which owns the refinery that has operated for over 65 years, announced in August it would be shutting down operations by the end of the year. The refinery had been idling since the pandemic arrived in March.

Dimas said the recommendation came from the management office.

The second item Dimas presented was a five percent budget cut across the board, which also

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comes in the fallout of the refinery closure. The cut will apply to programs that are not grant-funded.

“It behooves us to make sure we are financially stable going forward,” Dimas said. “I do ask the county[to] work with public safety departments that may or may not need it.”

Commissioner Bill Lee said the budget cuts should be easy to ascertain since travel restrictions have been put in place and will not need to be budgeted.

“I appreciate the departments working hard, and these are tough times for everybody, including the county,” Lee said.

The board voted to approve both items with a 3-0 vote.

By Cody Begaye  
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