

The city of Gallup – missing the mark on infrastructure improvements

Written by Gallupsun Staff
Friday, 26 February 2016 02:54

Editor, Gallup Sun:

The letter to the editor from Brett Newberry struck a nerve. The City certainly is not keeping up with infrastructure. It appears to me that several factors are involved. A clear lack of direction as Mr. Newberry pointed out is obvious. This combined with the Gallup one-percent – the golfers – getting their share first and also an attitude of provincialism by entrenched locals.

There is such a thing as “opportunity cost”. If a community spends all its extra cash on recreation it will not have enough money to fix the street when repair is needed. For this example I will use street repair and storm drainage, but the same could be said for water or sewer infrastructure, curb and gutter/sidewalk replacement or other needed infrastructure.

By my reckoning the City has invested at least \$8.65 million into the City Golf Course for the ten year period 2007-2016. This, for 200 golfers. And what do we have – a skuzzy golf course. This amounts to a subsidy over the 10 year period of about \$43,000 per golfer. [Source – A local newspaper earlier reported that the City spent \$5,150,000 on the golf course for the years 2007-2015. We added \$3.5 million reported by the newspaper for “Golf Course Overhaul” reported in July 2015 as the 2016 expenditure.]

For less than the \$3.5 million spent on golf course improvements this year, the City could have rebuilt Ciniza Drive from Toltec Drive to Vanden Bosch Parkway. Proponents of the golf course call it a quality of life issue. For the residents on Ciniza, some of whom have to drive through a foot deep pond entering their driveways every time it rains, better drainage is a quality of life issue also. There is a problem here. There are drainage problems in the Indian Hills area but the City has no master drainage plan to deal with the drainage. My information is that the last citywide drainage study was conducted 41 years ago and can now be considered useless. How much would a citywide drainage study cost and how useful would it be compared to investing year after year in a golf course for the Gallup’s One-Percent?

Alternatively a “back of envelope” calculation indicates that the \$8.65 million spent on the golf course in the last ten years is more than enough to replace all the bad sidewalk, curb and gutter and sidewalk in town. That would affect several thousand families.

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The provincialism comes from the terrible grades on cross gutters and drainage structures in town and the ignoring of State Law with regards to traffic control.

There are federal standards for street construction and traffic control. The State of New Mexico has codified these standards as State Law. But the City of Gallup ignores this and imposes reprehensible obstructions to traffic movement.

Here are two examples from many available. At the residential intersection of Piano and Verde, there is a cross-gutter with a 22% grade change. The federal standards and the City's own Standard Plans call for grade changes no greater than 10%. This obstruction to traffic was excused as "traffic control" by a former City Manager. I pointed out to him that the cross-gutter occurred at a stop sign and tee intersection. Just how much more "traffic control" is needed?

A second example: On Country Club Place on the south end of Red Rock Elementary the speed limit has been reduced to 10 miles per hour and two speed bumps within 700 feet or so of each other have been installed. The same federal standards adopted by the State requires that when speeds are posted at 15 mph and below full time a traffic study by Professional Traffic Engineer be obtained to justify such a restriction. In the case of Country Club Place, the Professional Engineer was replaced by a City Councilman and several residents observing traffic for a few minutes. Would a speed reduction have been accomplished by simply putting a stop sign at Linda Drive? Who know? Who Cares? We don't need "no state laws or outside engineers".

In short it seems that the provincialism and cronyism in this town are overriding good sense.

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Gallup, NM