

Gallup Council approves G-22 agreements

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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City unveils \$90M proposed 2018 budget

The Gallup City Council approved two measures at an April 19 special meeting related to surface water backup of the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project.

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The two measures dealt with the approval of a settlement agreement on G-22 water application litigation with Whispering Cedars Mutual Domestic Water Users Association and a separate approval of a settlement agreement on G-22 water application litigation with Juniper Trails Water Association. Both matters were introduced by City Attorney George Kozeliski.

Gallup City Manager Maryann Ustick unveiled the proposed 2018 operating budget during the second half of the special meeting.

“These two settlements were two of six settlements,” Kozeliski said, about the water deals. “We (the city) have two other protestants to either settle with or go to hearing on. It is litigation and had to be approved by council.”

Kozeliski said council members unanimously approved the settlement terms. He said the terms are that the city monitor water levels in wells, and if the city starts pumping more than 500-acre feet per year from the Hogback well field on the east side of Gallup, and the city affects other water wells, then the city agrees to offset that problem in a variety of ways which is required by state law,” Kozeliski explained. “We have the same agreements in place at the Yatehey wells that we currently use,” Kozeliski said.

The term G-22 refers to a deep underground water basin that is known as the San Andres Glorieta formation. The main well field will be near Indian Hills and a back up well field near the Ciniza Refinery, Kozeliski said. “This will be our backup water supply should anything happen to Navajo-Gallup, like long-term drought in Colorado, and there not be enough, or another Gold King Mine spill that polluted the San Juan River for a while,” Kozeliski said. Kozeliski continued, “We have pumped this aquifer for many, many decades and the water levels are dropping in these wells and we need to secure another source of water, and that is why G-22, a deeper, separate aquifer, is being pursued.”

Kozeliski noted that neither Whispering Cedars or the Juniper Trails associations have any connection to the Navajo-Gallup Pipeline Project.

“The Navajo-Gallup project is surface water coming from the San Juan River. The G-22

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application is for ground water coming out of the well in the ground.” Kozeliski noted that Whispering Cedars protested the city’s use of Glorieta aquifer as this is the same locale in which they get their water, he said.

“We do not think this supply (G-22) will be used very heavily, if at all, but we do have to have water to drink,” Kozeliski said. “This is sort of the suspenders that go with the belt.”

Gallup Council reviews proposed \$90M budget

Gallup City Manager Maryann Ustick introduced the fiscal 2018 operating budget at the special meeting. The document is valued at \$90 million, with a proposed general fund set at \$28 million.

The Gallup City Council followed with a work session in which department heads went through requests. Ustick prefaced budgetary talks with the fact that the document doesn’t call for new personnel positions.

“There are no new positions in the draft budget,” Ustick told council members. “This is the first of several work sessions.”

Some of what the proposed budget calls for includes the elimination of a full-time program senior center specialist position. The move practically assures that Gallup will have just one senior center in the months to come, Mayor Jackie McKinney pointed out.

Gallup Library Director Mary Ellen Pellington said her proposal came in \$200 less than last year’s budget, due to the lesser cost of equipment,” Pellington said. Pellington noted the recent hiring of a new deputy director at the Octavia Fellin Library, saying one of the things the new person will oversee is the improving of Fellin’s community archives program.

Special activities funding calls for \$120,000 to go to the Business Improvement District, \$5,000 to GallupArts, \$40,000 to MainSteeet and \$20,000 to the Southwest Indian Foundation. A little

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more than \$424,000 is proposed for Red Rock Park, which, among other things, includes maintenance and staffing costs.

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