

## Getting bang for the banner buck

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 26 August 2022 05:03

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Those colorful light pole banners that make downtown bright and cheerful and remind people about special events have a downside: they're a huge time suck for city employees. So how many banners are enough, and how many are too many?

Constantly installing and removing event marketing banners is causing wear and tear on banners and city parks workers, and gobbles up a large chunk of the parks department staff hours, according to Parks and Recreation Director Vincent Alonzo.

While they plan for upcoming events, the city council will have to decide now how many banners is worthwhile, without overtaxing staff and resources.

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Alonzo is recommending that from now on, city banners get permanent placement on every fourth light pole along Highway 66. With 380 poles on Highway 66 running the width of the city, that means 95 banners at any given time. But is that enough to be worthwhile?

“If you want to have an impact with banners, you have to do every pole. Every fourth pole is not going to be much to see,” Mayor Louie Bonaguidi said during the Aug. 9 city council meeting. “If we’re going to do it we should do it right. I can’t see doing every fourth pole at all.”

Alonzo said the idea first came up when the city ordered “Most Patriotic Small Town in America” banners, but added, “You’re right, that’s few and far between.”

“We’re going to go all the way east to west, but if we did 300 [banners] that would be a humongous job,” City Manager Maryann Ustick said. “If we put up 380 banners, every time there is a special event they will have to take them down, put up the new ones and take those down and put ‘em back up.”

Under Alonzo’s plan, staff would no longer remove city banners to swap in banners for other organizations, which typically include, for example, about 40 Lions Club banners and about 100 for the Gallup Inter-Tribal Ceremonial. Instead, those banners would be installed and removed in between city banners, based on staff time and availability.

It takes a crew of three city workers, who have been certified to operate a bucket truck, to do banner installation or removal. That’s one to drive the truck, one in the bucket and one on the street to manage traffic.

Other banners, for organizations like the American Legion, aren’t placed on Highway 66 but hang at Courthouse Plaza and along Maloney Avenue, Metro Avenue ( Highway 491) and South Second Street.

Councilor Fran Palochak termed banners on every Highway 66 pole “excessive” and suggested

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doing every other pole. “Let’s face it, we’re having a hard time keeping park staff and replacing them,” she said.

But, she also stuck up for west side businesses.

“Business people call me and ask, ‘how come we’re the stepchildren of Gallup?’ We don’t have any of this out there. We have no brackets on the west side,” she said. “If we’re going to do it, we are going to do it right and we are going to include the west side, because we are part of the city of Gallup. I want them to get banners too.”

In September the City Council is expected to choose new designs for banners to line Highway 66 – the old banners are getting tatty and the city is getting ready for the Highway 66 centennial in four years – so they have to figure out how many banners to buy. They will also review and approve new banner designs.

Banners last about four months, Alonzo said, so the city also needs to order replacements. “If you go down 66 now, you’ll see several that are embarrassing,” he said.

Brackets can be ordered before the banner decisions are made, and the council will probably authorize 400 so replacements are on hand. City tourism funds will pay for the Highway 66 banner brackets.

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