

Infrastructure, water top the councilors' list of goals for 2023

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent
Friday, 03 February 2023 04:12



A new year brings a chance for people to get a new start and set goals for the upcoming year. The *Sun* recently sat down with city leaders to discuss their goals for 2023.

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The biggest shared goal among the city council was improving the city's infrastructure.

"Infrastructure affects everything else," Councilor Sarah Piano, Dist. 3, said. "If we don't have money for infrastructure and we don't put more money in the budget for that, then how can we build on top of it? How can we build anything if we don't have infrastructure?"

Councilor Michael Schaff, Dist. 2, agreed with Piano.

"We need to get new infrastructure for the water and sewer lines. We've got some pipes that are 100 years old," Schaaf said. "Hopefully we can get that through the legislation, [so] that they'll give us money for that."

Getting funds for projects is another top concern for the council.

"The things that we want to get done are really heavily dependent on funding availability, and I think that's the thing we've seen over and over," Piano said. "I think every councilor can say we want to get these projects done, but if we don't have funding to support them, there's just no way we can do them."

Along the lines of infrastructure, the city's roads are also a concern for the councilors.

"We've just had failing infrastructure with roads – especially roads – and water," Piano said. "Those are our kind of big infrastructure needs."

Mayor Louie Bonaguidi also chimed in on the subject of roads, mentioning the potholes that are all around town, and the weather conditions this winter that have only made them worse.

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Water is also a top concern for the council. During this year's legislative session, the city is asking the state to budget \$30 million for water infrastructure.

Before the pandemic the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project was projected to be finished by 2024, but now Bonaguidi believes it will be closer to 2030.

Existing pipes will need to be replaced ahead of connecting to the NGWSP when the switch from groundwater to surface water threatens to dislodge whatever scale has built up in the old pipes.

The water rate is also something that's on Bonaguidi's mind. He said the council will be making an official decision on that in the coming weeks since they weren't able to make one by the end of 2022.

This list is just a fraction of the council's priorities. They will lay out more of their goals and priorities during the annual Strategic Planning meeting, which will take place Feb. 27 - March 2.

But the councilors' true goal is just to improve Gallup.

"It's a great place to live, but we need to improve some things," Schaaf concluded.

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