

Preparing for the Fourth of July in November

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Managing Editor
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Council hears plans for drone show

Between severe drought conditions, the pandemic, and a lack of companies offering to provide firework shows, the City of Gallup hasn't had a fireworks show in the past four years despite being deemed the "Most Patriotic Small Town in America" by map and atlas publisher Rand McNally some years back.

But now a new solution may have come into play: drones.

In an effort to find a bidder early, Gallup's Tourism and Marketing Director Matt Robinson began trying to find a company who would put on a fireworks or drone show for the summer holiday about nine months before the Fourth of July. He sent out requests for proposals to multiple firework and drone companies, but only one replied: Pixis Drones.

He came in front of the city council during its Nov. 28 meeting to present on the Pixis Drones and their interest with the city.

Pixis Drones, whose slogan is "Stories in the Sky" was launched in 2021. Robinson said that the company is rapidly becoming the top aerial drone provider in the country. They've put together

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shows for the NFL, NBA, and many national companies.

While some people may be disappointed over the idea of the city putting on a drone show instead of a fireworks show, Dist. 3 city councilor Sarah Piano showed some initial excitement.

“I know we had looked at some drone shows in the past, I feel like drone shows are kind of the way of the future,” she said. “They’re more safe in terms of fire restrictions, and I’ve seen some drone shows that are really cool.”

The company is offering four different price points for the City of Gallup: 200 drones for \$40,000, 300 drones for \$60,000, 400 drones for \$80,000, or 500 drones for \$100,000. Robinson said city staff was interested in the \$100,000 show.

“We really think that’s going to take a huge impact,” he said. “That’s really going to shoot for the stars and make a really good show.”

In comparison, the city spent about \$20,000 on fireworks pre-pandemic.

The price evens out to \$200 per drone, and Pixis includes all their travel, set up, safety protocols, design, and the creative work that will go into the show in their pricing.

However, the show would only be 10 minutes long.

The councilors balked at such a high price tag for such a short show.

“... [Spending] \$100,000 for 10 minutes seems just like an astronomical amount of money to spend. Maybe I’m just delusional because I also still don’t want to spend \$20 for a sandwich,” Piano said.

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Dist. 2 Councilor Michael Schaaf noted that a higher price tag is usually associated with a higher level of design detail in a drone show. Robinson also explained that a higher price tag equals “a higher quality” of show.

Pixis will work with the city on the design of the show. Robinson said the design could even be made to look like fireworks. The city would have complete creative control. The drones allow for a 3-D design, and music can and will be a part of the show.

These drones will fly 600 feet above the ground, and people will be able to see the show from about a mile away. Robinson said he plans to host the drone show at the Sports Complex, where a big hill will provide the best vantage point.

The council ultimately approved the \$100,000 show. The cost will be coming out of the Lodger’s Tax fund. Robinson assured the council that there is sufficient funding in the account for this purchase.

As for the rest of the Fourth of July festivities, Robinson said that is still a work in progress. He hasn’t put a committee together yet, but he said he has a lot of ideas, including a watermelon eating contest, a jalapeno eating contest, music, and other live entertainment.

More information will become available as more plans are developed.

By Molly Ann Howell
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