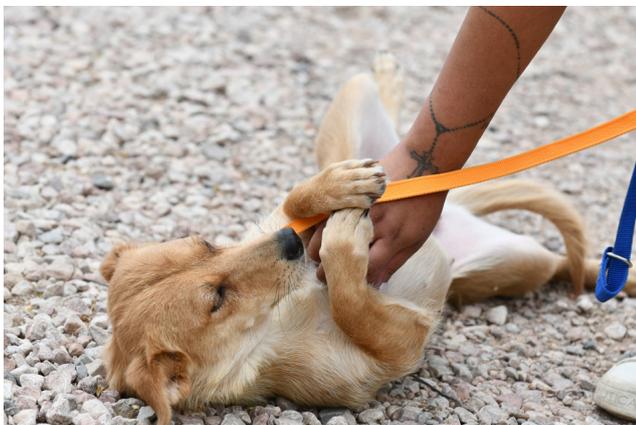


City moves forward with new animal shelter design phase

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Managing Editor
Friday, 16 February 2024 00:00



Council approves proposal for nearly \$600,000

After receiving multiple grants that helped increase funding, the City of Gallup is finally ready to take the next step on the road to building a new animal shelter.

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During the city council meeting on Feb. 13, Planning and Development Director C.B. Strain reminded the council that the city received multiple grant agreements in the past three years, coming out to a total of about \$811,000.

Strain noted that 1% of that total, which comes out to about \$8,000, has to go to the Art in Public Places program, which commissions visual artists who work across all media to create site-specific installations and unique public art.

DESIGNING THE SHELTER

With that 1% still in mind, the city is now ready to start the design phase of the project. Strain asked the council to approve a professional service proposal from Huitt-Zollers, Inc. for schematic, design development, and construction documents for the shelter.

Huitt-Zollers, Inc. did not place a bid for the contract, the city already has a contract with them. The Albuquerque-based architect firm put a price tag of just under \$600,000 for the design phase of the animal shelter.

Strain estimated that the phase would take about a year, and then the city would need to go the state legislators to seek out more funding for the construction.

Councilor Sarah Piano, Dist. 3, expressed her excitement for the project.

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“We desperately need a new animal shelter. I know we need a lot of things, but I’m an animal lover and I’m constantly trying to get dogs and cats adopted,” she said.

While she is excited for the new shelter, Piano did acknowledge the negative feedback the city received when they initially evaluated how much a new shelter would cost.

“[...] I know we’ve run into some pushback about the cost of an animal shelter. ... But this [design phase] should give us a more concrete idea of ‘well, this is what it will be like and this is why we need this much money,’” she said.

Strain said that when the city went to the state legislation with the original animal shelter plans, they were told it was too much money.

“We went and value engineered. We had several preliminary designs done by Huitt-Zollers, so we value engineered those down and got rid of redundant spaces, did some cutting and eliminating where we could.”

Strain was satisfied with the final product.

“I think we’re [in a good spot] where we could get a good building that is going to suit our needs and hopefully, we can afford it if we get money. We always have to go out for money,” he said.

PAY BY THE FOOT

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When it comes to how much it's actually going to cost to build the animal shelter, Strain wouldn't give the council an exact number because of the fluctuating building material costs. He said he's seen a large range of prices, from \$500 a square foot to as much as \$1,200 a square foot.

Mayor Louie Bonaguidi reminded the council that the new police building's estimated cost was only \$15 million three years ago, but now the price tag is sitting closer to \$25 million.

Strain assured the council that everything the shelter needed would be included.

"What we try to do is fit the building to the site and allow for enough room for parking and everything else involved," he said.

Once the design phase is complete, a review committee will voice their opinions on the shelter's proposed design. Strain welcomed the council members to join the committee.

The shelter will be a regional shelter, so Councilor Michael Schaaf, Dist. 2, asked if the county or Navajo Nation would be pitching in.

Strain reminded the council that the county pays 40% of the city's operational costs, but the Navajo Nation doesn't contribute any amount of money to the shelter. He said the city is working to change that.

"We've approached the Navajo Nation to try and get some funding because a lot of those animals do come from across state lines and they just bring them into Gallup because Gallup is the hub," Strain explained.

He said that they tried to approach the Navajo Nation about the issue, but when they met with some of the Nation's officials, they suggested that some of the Gallup Animal Control officers

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pick up animals from Window Rock, Arizona.

“In reality [the Navajo Nation] is not really obligated [to help]. They’re in Arizona, we’re here in New Mexico,” Strain said. “The issue is they don’t have any place to take them on the reservation. The animal shelters they do have, they don’t operate very well, they don’t stay open.”

The council ultimately approved the resolution to accept Huitt-Zollers, Inc.’s proposal.

By Molly Ann Howell
Managing Editor