Gallup OKs hard dollar cap resolution

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 24 June 2016 05:35

The Gallup City Council passed a resolution June 14 requesting that the US Congress place a hard dollar cap on the city's obligation under a repayment contract with the Bureau of Reclamation relevant to the near $41-billion Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project. The council approval was unanimous and was not met with opposition.

City Attorney George Kozeliski introduced the matter to council members, explaining that a series of events have occurred over the past two years that has lead city staffers to believe that the cost of the Water Project will far exceed original estimates.

"The federal government is in charge of about 80 percent of the project," Kozeliski explained. "They bid it and award it. Part of the problem is the cultural and environmental clearances seem to be way above the original estimates."

Kozeliski told council members that the city's part of the project is under budget.

"We have to go before Congress and ask our Senators for a cap," he said. "One was placed on the Animas/La Plata project a few years back, so it is possible. For every $1 they spend over the estimates, it costs the city 10 cents to 16 cents. We have no control of the costs."

Kozeliski said attempts will be made to contact federal representatives. He said if legislation ends up being introduced, someone from the city will have to go to Washington, DC, and testify.

He noted that the city has met with Bureau of Reclamation officials to talk about the matter on several occasions.

"The process of putting a hard dollar cap on this project will take five to six years," Kozeliski told the panel.

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When completed, the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply will bring water from the San Juan River to the eastern sections of the Navajo Nation and Gallup, officials have said.

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