Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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Council members need not physically attend meetings;

can call in

The Gallup City Council unanimously approved a communications measure Sept. 13 that allows council members to attended regular meetings via telephone or other communication equipment under circumstances that make it otherwise difficult for a member to physically attend a meeting.

The matter was introduced by City Attorney George Kozeliski, who said the ordinance goes into effect in about a month.

“It will be an ordinance in 30 days after it is posted by the city clerk,” he said. “I assume it will be in effect the second meeting in October.”

Kozeliski said as long as there is a quorum of three members of the city council physically present for a meeting, up to two council members may participate in the meeting by means of a conference telephone call or similar communication methods under the following conditions:

• Each council member so participating must be identified when speaking.

• All participants in the meeting must be able to hear one another at the same time.

• Members of the public attending the meeting are able to hear members of the public body who speak during the meeting, including the members participating remotely.

Kozeliski said he doesn't foresee problems in using the newly approved method nor does he anticipate its abuse.

"I don't see it as a problem," Kozeliski said. "We haven't had a total of five absences since 2011."

City Councilwoman Fran Palochak said there are times when she can't be at actual meetings due to unforeseen circumstances. She requested that the matter be put on the agenda.

"I think that's an important thing to consider in using this," she said. "The time or times when I'm not here, I could be on the phone listening and still be involved."

Mayor Jackie McKinney said he doesn't think the matter will be abused, noting that it isn't for vacationers or someone who spontaneously goes on a getaway.

"That's not the intention here," McKinney said. "We're talking about legitimate and unexpected reasons. That's what this is for."

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