

Gallup Council approves cemetery ordinance amendment

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 16 December 2016 10:37



Power Purchase Agreement OK'd

The Gallup City Council approved a measure Dec. 13 regarding grave sites at the city-owned Hillcrest Cemetery. The action took place at the regular city meeting and was not met with opposition by council members or the general public.

City Attorney George Kozeliski introduced the matter, saying during the past year the city of Gallup has taken over the opening and closing of graves at Hillcrest. There is another city-owned cemetery and that is the Sunset Cemetery on Gallup's west end. The amended ordinance does not pertain to Sunset.

"Since the city changed the rules regarding burials of more than one casket per lot, there has been an increased demand for the burial of cremains," Kozeliski said. "This proposed ordinance (amendment) will allow up to six cremains per lot, or one casket and up to three cremains per lot."

Kozeliski said the matter came about as an agenda item after being under consideration for

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quite a while by the various city departments. He said it came up at the city meeting because all of the departmental players simply had time to put the measure through its proper channels.

“The ordinance sets the rules of the cemetery for burials,” Kozeliski explained.

Kozeliski noted that Hillcrest contains an area for veterans. The state of New Mexico plans to construct a veterans cemetery in Gallup within the next two years.

Kozeliski noted that Rollie Mortuary of Gallup used to do the openings, which were independent of the city. The city took over the openings after Rollie didn't do them, he said. Mayor Jackie McKinney said after the council meeting that the burial matter is something very relevant in Gallup.

As far as previous amendments to the cemetery ordinance, Kozeliski said the city made a small amendment a few years back to allow two caskets per lot, but Tuesday's amendment “puts more specifics in it and addresses the cremains burial, which has become a more often used burial method than five or ten years ago,” Kozeliski said.

Also at the meeting, the Gallup Council approved a power purchase agreement with Mangan Renewables of California to purchase energy production from a photovoltaic facility to be constructed and operated on city-owned property.

Gallup Electric Director Richard Matzke introduced the matter to council members and pointed out that the city council authorized staffers in May 2016 to move ahead with negotiating a power purchase agreement with Mangan, an entity that was selected as the top responder to Gallup's request for proposals.

“The proposed purchase agreement conforms to the city's (RFP) and incorporates the proposal submitted by Mangan Renewables,” Matzke told council members.

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Specifically, Matzke said the agreement provides for Mangan to build and operate a 7.8 MW photovoltaic generating facility south of Interstate 40 between Allison Road and the Muñoz Overpass. Furthermore, Matzke said the agreement provides for the city to purchase the production capability from the plant at a cost of \$0.0475/KWH over a 25-year term. “The city will have the option to purchase the facility anytime after the seventh year of commercial operation at fair market value,” Matzke said.

Matzke noted that the measure will save the city \$20,000 within the first year of operation over power purchased from Continental Divide, and will save approximately \$750,000 over the remaining term of a city power purchase agreement with Continental Divide, he said.

Matzke said the city will perform a \$50,000 system impact study to determine what modifications to the Gallup electric system might be needed to accommodate the connection of the photovoltaic facility.

City Councilor Allan Landavazo asked Matzke if similar projects exist around McKinley County. Landavazo also inquired about “walk away” penalties with respect to the city and Mangan Renewables.

***By Bernie Dotson
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