

## Water line replacement timeline moved up

Written by By Kevin Opsahl Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 19 March 2021 04:22

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The Gallup City Council approved a budget adjustment to begin a water line replacement and road pavement project at its March 9 meeting.

Replacement of the water line — on East Wilson Drive, from McKinley Drive to Marguerite Franco Drive — was slated to take place within two years, with supervision from the city’s utilities department. But since the public works department wants to utilize time-sensitive funds for a mill and overlay on Marguerite Franco Drive, the utilities department proposed moving up the process to get the water line done.

On March 9, Dennis Romero, the department’s executive director, went before the city council and asked for a budget adjustment, which would allow him to transfer \$46,000 in funds from the Water Enterprise reserve fund into a previously unfunded line item — the design and construction management of the new water line. The request was necessary because the project was not included in the budget for the current fiscal year, Romero said.

Romero noted he has not yet asked for the project’s construction funding, which will require him to make another budget adjustment request to the council.

“Funding is never a formality, and requests can always be disapproved,” Romero wrote to the *Gallup Sun* in an email on March 10. “However, given the council approval for design and construction

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management costs, there is a positive outlook for approval of construction funding.”

According to information provided in a city council agenda packet, the water line replacement project would go out to bid in May, with construction beginning the last week or June or first week of July. It could be completed in August, at which point the mill and overlay project could begin the following month.

Romero said this particular water line, which serves about 25 houses, was installed in 1941. Parts of it have been repaired over the years, but now it needs replacing.

“I got here five years ago and we’re hustling to do as much as we can, as expeditiously and responsibly as we can,” Romero said. “There’s still water lines in the area that have been in since 1929 that we’re looking at trying to replace. It’s a matter of trying to keep up with what we need to replace ... and trying to have the money to do it.”

The budget adjustment from the council on March 9 will not only speed up the timeline for the water line replacement, but also save the public works department the unnecessary hassle of tearing up a new and improved road, Romero said.

Robert Hamblen, building construction superintendent and acting public works director, reiterated the point made by Romero.

“Dennis is working with me to get this done, that way it doesn’t delay the mill and overlay and that way, we will be able to utilize the money that the state gave us,” Hamblen said.

He was referring to funds public works receives from the state yearly — though the department can’t sit on the money forever.

“If we don’t end up using it, we’ll end up losing it,” Hamblen said.

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Public works secured the money last year, but was not able to use it due to the way the economy was impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

“The state ended up giving us an extension on last year’s grant, so we were able to combine two grants — last year’s and this year’s — and we were going to be able to knock out a total of eight streets this fiscal year,” Hamblen said.

Hamblen said six streets in eastern Gallup would be paved before public works begins on Marguerite Franco and Wilson Drive, allowing the water line to be installed first. The paving for both those roads should be completed within two weeks after the projects are started.

Romero estimates that the water line project will start in late June or early July of this year and be completed by mid to late August.

Hamblen told Romero he was looking at beginning the road pavement project when the line is completed, around August.

By Kevin Opsahl  
Sun Correspondent