

Gallup looks forward to 5G, higher internet speeds

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent
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Faster internet is on the horizon, in part because of a recent decision by the city council.

During the Aug. 24 council meeting, councilors approved an ordinance that will allow small cell wireless transmitters to be installed around the city.

Gallup City Attorney Curtis Hayes presented the ordinance to the council. In an interview with the *Sun*, he explained that it is necessary to keep the city in compliance with Federal Communications Commission regulations and state law.

The ordinance limits cities' abilities to regulate small wireless transmitters. Hayes explained that some cities have huge fees, and many of them will not process applications for transmitters fast enough. He said replacing a transmitter on a regular cell phone tower could take months in some locations.

Gallup will now have to allow transmitters on utility poles, light poles, and traffic poles.

Currently, the city charges Comcast and CenturyLink \$10 for standard pole attachment. The FCC order allows that to be increased to \$20 and also allows the city to charge a \$250 annual fee for any transmitter placed in its right of way.

Hayes said that once 5G comes to Gallup, it may benefit the city financially because the fees internet and cell phone providers have to pay is high.

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Hayes said the ordinance had been under consideration, but was delayed by the arrival of COVID-19. He said he expects applications to begin coming in soon.

“If it hadn’t been for COVID-19, we might have started having applications by now, but COVID kind of put everything on hold, including infrastructure expansion by the big wireless providers,” Hayes explained.

Overall, Hayes is excited about what 5G will bring to Gallup.

“When it does start rolling out, it’s going to provide just a lot more data capability than what you have with 3 or 4G or LTE,” Hayes stated. “You’re going to see where people are going to start using wireless for their home devices, for their laptops, and that may put the pressure on the traditional Comcast and CenturyLink to upgrade their speeds in this area, because we have slow internet speeds in Gallup.”

Hayes said the current slow internet speed in Gallup is because old coaxial cable TV wiring, old copper wires, is still being used to provide internet service.

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