

## Candidates gear up for city council elections

Written by By Rachel Pfeiffer Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 18 February 2022 05:51

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### Municipal Election set for March 1

The election for Gallup City Council will be held on March 1, with candidates for Districts 1 and 3 up for election. Voters can cast their ballots at any of the voting convenience centers located

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at the Southside Fire Station #1, Northside Fire Station #2, Larry Brian Mitchell Recreation Center and McKinley County Courthouse Rotunda.

For Dist. 1, Linda Garcia is running for her third term. Garcia was born and raised in Gallup. She worked in various positions for the police department and courts for 25 years. Garcia has served on the City Council for nearly eight years, and in that time is proud of what she and her fellow council members have been able to accomplish.

Some of the recent infrastructure improvements, including the Coal Avenue Commons area, are projects Garcia believes have been crucial for the city. By running for a third term, she hopes to see other important projects reach completion, such as improved pay for police officers. The proposed New Mexico state budget plan would give a 16 percent raise to state police, and Garcia believes that a pay raise for the Gallup police officers is crucial as well.

“We need to do something for our local police because we’re going to start losing them again. We’re already down like six officers. I’d like to work on getting bonuses for the officers here because crime is up in Gallup, and downtown is taking a beating,” Garcia said.

Sarah Piano and Julia Azua are running for District 3. Neither has served on the City Council or held a political office before.

Piano currently works as the regional director for the nonprofit Big Brothers Big Sisters. She moved to Gallup when she was very young, and she said the Gallup community is important to her.

“My slogan is ‘Your Vote, Your Voice,’ because I think it’s important that the person who wins represents the community voice and really listens to their constituents,” Piano said.

Piano has been active as a private citizen, attending City Council meetings, building relationships with those in local and state government, and learning about problems the city is facing.

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Some of her goals for a potential City Council term include strengthening the relationship between the city, county and tribal governments, increasing transparency with decision making around city projects and finding new funding opportunities to support infrastructure projects in Gallup. Additionally, she would make supporting small businesses and retaining police officers priorities.

“I’m 100 percent in this community, and I have been for over 30 years,” Piano said. “People that know me know I work for Big Brothers Big Sisters. I’ve been the director there for over 14 years, and people know that I’m honest in all my dealings and that I care about this community. I’m passionate, and I think that I can bring the same commitment and passion to the City Council.”

The second candidate running for Dist. 3, Julia Azua, has also lived in Gallup since she was young. Azua worked as a flight nurse and then as an executive for a couple of air medical companies. Azua will soon be moving into semi-retirement from her business career, which prompted her to think more seriously about using her experience in healthcare and business to help her community.

“I really want to see where the gaps are and how I can bring some of that experience to the table and work with a team of people in this community to see Gallup grow where it needs to be,” she said.

If elected, Azua hopes to work on improving local infrastructure and bringing in more affordable housing. She also would plan to listen to the concerns of the community to gain a good understanding of what citizens’ concerns are and how local government can address them.

“I’m trying to look at the bigger picture, absorb as much as I can and bring my knowledge to the table so that I can be a good team player to help the city,” she said. “I’m so deeply rooted here. I have an investment here. I’m not going anywhere. This is where I’m going to retire, so I really want just to be somebody who can help make a difference.”

**For more information, visit: <https://www.gallupnm.gov/438/Elections-and-Representatives>**

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