

City council discusses local elections

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
Friday, 02 August 2019 06:59



Designates six polling locations

The Gallup City Council heard two items pertaining to local city elections during their July 23 regular meeting.

The first resolution discussed at the meeting designates six polling locations for Municipal Officer Election Day, in line with state law that requires a governing body to designate the polling place of each precinct or consolidated precinct in either June or July of each odd-numbered year.

The following locations were designated by the City of Gallup staff as voter convenience centers: South Side Fire Station No. 1, 1800 S. Second St.; North Side Fire Station No. 2, 911 W. Lincoln Ave.; East Side Fire Station No. 3., 3700 Church Rock St.; West Side Fire Station No. 4, 707 Rico St.; Larry Brian Mitchell Recreation Center, 700 Joseph M. Montoya Blvd.; and McKinley County Courthouse, 207 W. Hill Ave.

City Clerk Alfred Abeita said this means Gallup voters can vote at any of these locations on Election Day.

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“The resolution does also provide for early voting at the Municipal Court office,” Abeita said, answering a question from Mayor Jackie McKinney about early voting.

The resolution to establish the six voting convenience centers was approved with a 5-0-0 vote.

The second election item the city council discussed was deciding to oppose a proposed rule by the New Mexico Secretary of State that would apply to runoff elections.

A runoff election is a second general election between the candidates who received the most votes, with the winner of the runoff election being elected to the target position.

The Secretary of State’s rule said a runoff election is triggered if no single candidate receives 50 percent of the vote, while the Gallup City Charter states a runoff election is triggered if no candidate receives 40 percent of the vote.

City Attorney Curtis Hayes said trouble began when the council was unsure if the rule would apply to just the regular local election in November of odd-numbered years or also to the municipal election held in March of even-numbered years.

Hayes said he asked the Secretary of State if this rule applies to municipalities that did not opt-in to the November election, but has not received a reply as of July 23.

The Secretary of State rule violates Article 7, Section 5 of the New Mexico Constitution, Hayes said, which states home rule municipalities like Gallup will hold runoff elections according to the municipality’s charter.

There is a conflict between the rule’s provision and the provisions of a city’s charter, he added.

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“I am concerned about the overreaching of the Secretary of State,” Hayes said. He added if the rule does apply to Gallup, it would increase the number of runoff elections and could then have an unknown fiscal impact on the city.

Currently, the Secretary of State rule is in an open comment period. The resolution to oppose the rule was approved with a 5-0-0 vote.

Other items discussed at the regular meeting:

A budget adjustment of \$58,992 and cash transfer of \$117,616 for the Best of the Best Timed Event Rodeo, which would allow for outstanding invoice payment and contestant winnings, was approved with a 5-0-0 vote.

The contract for a shared cost of a communications conduit as part of the Alley Project, which would move communications lines underground in the alley between Aztec Avenue and Coal Avenue from First Street to Fifth Street, was approved with a 5-0-0 vote.

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Sun Correspondent