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Police union deal, church appeals on council agenda

By Rodd Clayton Staff writer

GALLUP — City councilors Tuesday will consider rinking a new deal with the Gallup Police Department.

The proposed update to the collective bargaining agreement includes a 5% increase in compensation for the 38 officers and sergeants in the bargaining unit.

The amended CBA also increases the annual clothing allowance from \$1,000 to \$1,200, effective August 2023.

Language has also been amended to show that the city will pay 80% of the cost of dental and vision coverage.

A new subsection has been added to grant full authority to any outside agency hired by the city or its police chief as if the agency were an in-house investigator.

"A good faith effort will be made by the department to complete investigations within six months," the agreement reads.

The six-month timeline would not apply to officer-involved shootings or criminal investigations.

"These investigations will take whatever time is necessary, within the law, to conduct a thorough and complete investigation," the agreement states.

The Gallup Police Officers Association was to review and vote on ratifying the agreement Friday.

Speed-hump policy

Also on the agenda is a discussion of Gallup's speed-hump petition policy. The current policy requires that 100% of the residents of a block agree for speed humps to be approved.

The catalyst for the item, on which no action will be taken, was a recent request from residents of Box Canyon Avenue who sought an adjustment to the policy after 23 of 24 signed a petition.

The Door denied

The Door Christian Fellowship Church is appealing the denial of two special event permit applications. The council will conduct a public hearing on the appeal.

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In NM's war on DWI, bigger problem of addiction not the focus

By Ted Alcorn New Mexico In Depth

"I want to see bad driving." New Mexico State Police Lieutenant Kurtis Ward scanned traffic, weaving his Ford Expedition through northbound traffic on Interstate 25.

The workday of the DWI Unit had just begun. "I watch for that car that's doing something that's different," he said. "The one that stands out: I want to

watch that car." For a generation, the state has spent tens of millions of dollars a year to curb intoxicated driving and its toll on New Mexicans. In-school programs and public information campaigns advertise the legal and physical consequences intoxicated drivers risk.

drivers, and alerting other motorists that the state is watching.

The efforts have saved hundreds of lives and, for a time, made New Mexico's roads safer. But a New Mexico In Depth analysis of traffic fatality data shows in the last 15 years, progress has stalled.

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Marjorie Childress for New Mexico In Depth State Police Sgt. Toby LaFave speaks to a driver he pulled over on Interstate 40 in Albuquerque, under suspicion for driving while intoxicated.

Space tourism on Navajo?



Courtesy of World View

This rendition shows a space balloon floating about Earth.

Space company World View wants balloons to descend on Dinétah

By Vida Volkert Staff writer

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Imagine catching a balloon into space from a port in the Grand Canyon: ascend slowly for two hours; reach a peak at 100,000 feet above the ground while watching the curvature of Earth and stars against a dark space.

In a nutshell, that is a concept World View, a space company headquartered in Tucson, Arizona, has pitched to the Navajo Nation.

"The whole concept is that we are honoring and respecting, and giving exposure



Courtesy of World View

See World View, Page 5 This rendering depicts a space balloon ascending into the clouds on its way to outer space.

5 New Mexico jails less than half staffed; 1 moving inmates

Albuquerque Journal

ALBUQUERQUE (AP) — Five of New Mexico's 26 county jails and detention centers are suffering from staff shortages that have pushed vacancy rates among correctional officers above 50%.

At least one has resorted to transporting inmates to other facilities, including one in Texas 166 miles away, the Albuquerque Journal reports.

The Otero County Detention Center in Alamogordo, which is half staffed with 32 officers, reached a critical point two weeks ago when there weren't enough officers to

walk the floor among the inmates. Otero County Attorney R.B. Nichols said.

That prompted the administration's request for help from other facilities. Five agreed to house more than 100 inmates between them, he said.

All are at least 60 miles from the detention center, including the Otero County Prison Facility, the Lincoln County Detention Center and the Doña Ana County Detention Center.

The others are farther — 132 miles to the Luna County Detention Center, and 166 miles to the Hildesheim County Jail in Sierra

Blanca, Texas. The jail tried to keep inmates who are going to trial soon in Otero County, Nichols said. But inmates at other facilities have missed hearings, including ones held remotely.

"There was some kind of confusion on where they were and what the responsibilities were of the facilities that took them on," said Nichols. "There were a lot of logistics that come with it. It's not ideal. We're working through those difficulties trying to do the best we can."

While the Otero County Detention Center is the only jail that has had to take such drastic steps, the

staffing situation has become dire in many other facilities around the state.

New Mexico Counties, an organization that represents counties in the state, reported in May 2021 nearly all the statewide detention positions were filled. A year later, 40% of the positions were vacant.

Joining the Otero County Detention Center with vacancy rates of more than 50% are jails in Bernalillo, Chaves and Curry counties, as well as the Bernalillo County juvenile detention center. Grace Phillips, general counsel at New Mexico Counties, said the situation is unprecedented.

"We've had facilities in the past, on occasion, that have had staffing issues," she said. "But ... this extreme vacancy level and so wide-spread is not something that we've seen before."

As of Aug. 1, there were 14 county jails that had staff vacancy rates above 20%.

"The problem with having high vacancy rates in a jail is it becomes much harder to recruit anybody because they're concerned about working in an understaffed secure facility," Phillips said. "I think it's a problem that contributes to itself."

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Diné College professor Ami wins award

By Marley Shebala Diné Bureau

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Christine Ami, who holds a doctorate in Native American Studies and is a Diné College associate professor, was one of 25 professors nationwide selected to receive a National Endowment for the Humanities Award for Faculty.

"I am venerated and extremely grateful not only for this award but for the support from Diné College and our Navajo community members who allow me to research projects that speak to the realities of our Navajo ways of knowing," Ami stated in a news release last week. "This book project recognizes rich practices, like sheep butchering, which continue to flourish within our communities.

Our home-butchered meat is much more than food — it is a representation of how we carry ourselves and how we care for ourselves and those around us."

Jazzmine D. Martinez, interim marketing and communications officer, stated that the award will support the completion of Ami's first book that focuses on the significance of sheep and the practices of traditional sheep butchering in Diné history and culture from Diné perspectives.

Grounded within the Diné practice and philosophy of Dìbè éí Diné be' íiná át'è (Sheep Is Life), Ami's book will explore the nuances of sheep butchering techniques, stories, and teachings to understand how sheep actively co-construct Diné identities, histories, and ways of sensing the world even during the dismembering process of traditional butchering, Martinez stated.

She also stated that in addition to the book manuscript, Ami will create three new courses associated with the book project:

- Indigenous butchering practices of the Americas.
Introduction to traditional ecological knowledge.
Indigenous perspectives of animal studies, which will contribute to the growth of the Native American Studies program at Diné College and

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Driver position available for Bernalillo area. Applicant must be familiar with area. Applicant must have a registered and insured vehicle. A drug test is required upon hiring. Please call 505-863-6811 extension 204 to apply.