

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Gallup City Council, City of Gallup, New Mexico, held at Gallup City Hall, 110 West Aztec Avenue, at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, June 18, 2020.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Louie Bonaguidi. He provided instructions to the public viewing the meeting through Facebook Live on how to provide comment regarding Discussion/Action Topic #1.

Upon roll call, the following were present:

Mayor:	Louie Bonaguidi
Councilors:	Linda Garcia Michael Schaaf Yogash Kumar Fran Palochak
Also present:	Maryann Ustick, City Manager Curtis Hayes, City Attorney

Presented to the Mayor and Councilors for their approval were the following Discussion/Action Topics:

1. Request for Street Closure on Coal Avenue Between 2nd and 3rd Streets for a Temporary Street Mural Project to be Held on Friday, June 19, 2020 Beginning at 6:00 P.M. – Kara Smith, Executive Director, Gallup MainStreet/Arts and Cultural District

Ms. Smith presented the request for the street closure for the street mural project. Gallup MainStreet is representing a group of community members who would like to paint a unity mural displaying the message “disarm racism” with a hummingbird figure on Coal Avenue near the downtown walkway. The message will also be translated into different languages in the mural. Local artist Jerry Brown with the help of volunteers will paint the mural in the street. The intention of the date and time for painting the mural is to commemorate Juneteenth. The volunteers will practice social distancing and will wear a mask as they work on the project. The street will be closed to allow the paint to dry overnight and will be reopened at 6:00 a.m. the following day.

Councilor Garcia asked if the group received any negative comments from business owners on Coal Avenue about the project. Ms. Smith said she has not received any negative comments; only positive responses. Discussion followed concerning the assignment of volunteers to work in shifts during the project, the practice of social distancing by the volunteers and the use of masks and hand sanitizer that have been donated to the group.

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Councilor Schaaf said he was contacted by constituents concerned about their ethnic backgrounds not being included in the translation of the message in the mural. Ms. Smith said the languages on the mural are meant to be inclusive of Gallup's diverse and cultural history. She said if anyone feels that a language is missing to send those translations to the group for inclusion on the mural. Ms. Smith also said members of the community may add their translations or messages with the use of chalk.

Ms. Ustick made reference to a revised sketch of the mural and said there will be sketching by the public with the use of chalk in the downtown walkway. Ms. Smith said community members may inscribe the names of victims and additional translations in the downtown walkway as their way to contribute to the project.

Discussion followed concerning the messages to be written on the walkway with chalk. Councilor Garcia asked if people could write something negative about police officers in the walkway. Ms. Smith said they would not encourage people to write negative comments about police officers; however, she was not sure if they could control every message written in the walkway.

Councilor Palochak said she does not feel comfortable with people making disparaging remarks about the police. Discussion followed regarding a previous proposal to inscribe the name of Larry Casuse in the mural and how the proposal may cause hard feelings for some in the community due to an incident involving the kidnapping of the Mayor during the early 1970's.

Mayor Bonaguidi said the mural itself will not have any names inscribed on it. Ms. Smith concurred.

Councilor Garcia expressed her concerns with the word "disarm" in the mural. She recommended the word "stop" with a stop sign or another suitable word. Councilor Garcia also does not support the inclusion of any names on the mural.

Mr. Hayes cautioned the Mayor and Councilors about allowing people to write messages on the walkway with the use of chalk. He said there may be some hateful or racist viewpoints expressed by some people. Chief Franklin Boyd, Gallup Police Department, said police officers will need to be available for the event; either on standby or physically present at the walkway should anything happen.

Ms. Smith said the invitation for community members to mark inscriptions in the walkway is for the entire weekend. There is no set date or time for the public to mark the walkway because the event is not intended to have the presence of people all at one time. Also, the public will need to bring their own chalk since chalk will not be provided by the group.

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Councilor Schaaf said the proposed mural will be temporary since construction on Coal Avenue will begin in approximately two weeks.

Mayor Bonaguidi agreed with Councilor Garcia regarding her concerns with the use of the word “disarm” in the mural. He asked Ms. Smith if the message could be changed to “end racism now.” Ms. Smith said the message “disarm racism” is in solidarity with other communities and brings to mind issues about police brutality and the victims of racism. She also said “disarm” means to disarm people’s initial emotional reactions, to step back and to have dialog with each other in moving forward.

The following members of the public commented on the proposed street mural project via telephone:

Rathika Ramadoss said she is one of the organizers of the project and supports the message of “disarm racism” because it conveys the feelings of the group. She said it takes a lot of effort to end racism since it is persistent and difficult to remove. The message “end racism” is not realistic and seems to be hype to her. She asked the Mayor and Councilors for their approval of the street mural as presented.

Connie Liu also said she is one of the organizers of the project which is supported by diverse members of the community. She spoke in favor of the “disarm racism” message because it has more of an active connotation to it rather than the “end racism” message. She said people are hurting due to the violent acts of racism and people do not talk about it. By inviting people to write messages in chalk allows people to express their hurt feelings and it initiates a dialog about the problem.

Deanna Crask spoke in favor of the “disarm racism” message instead of “stop racism” for the mural. She said people do not pay attention to the word “stop” and the word “disarm” is strong and more powerful. The purpose of the project is to get people’s attention and to start conversations about ways for the community to unite. She said the community needs to heal from all of the bad things that are going on.

Following public comment, Councilor Kumar made the motion to approve the street closure. Seconded by Councilor Palochak. Roll call: Councilors Kumar, Palochak and Mayor Bonaguidi voted yes. Councilors Garcia and Schaaf voted no. Motion carried.

There being no further business, Councilor Schaaf made the motion to adjourn. Seconded by Councilor Palochak. Roll call: Councilors Schaaf, Palochak, Kumar, Garcia and Mayor Bonaguidi all voted yes.

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Louie Bonaguidi, Mayor

ATTEST:

Alfred Abeita II, City Clerk