

## City presents plan to help businesses during construction

By Rodd Cayton

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**GALLUP** — Business owners in the downtown area are going to be impacted by the Coal Avenue Commons project construction, which started Monday.

The city council Tuesday evening authorized some steps to try to minimize the impacts of the project, which aims to revitalize the area through infrastructure improvements.

City councilors approved a \$50,000 professional services agreement with **Gallup MainStreet** for construction mitigation services.

City Manager Maryann Ustick told councilors it was clear from the start of the project that “it would take a Herculean effort” to communicate with the businesses affected by the project and help them continue to operate, and therefore money for mitigation efforts was placed in the budget.

### Communication key

**Gallup MainStreet** will provide communication services to impacted businesses, as well as promotion and marketing efforts to encourage residents and visitors to patronize businesses in the area.

Businesses will also receive training to help ensure their continuity of operations during construction, Ustick said.

Jennifer Lazarz, **Gallup**’s tourism and marketing manager, played for councilors a video highlighting construction plans. She noted that the project will impact parking and walking options in the area.

“But more importantly,” Lazarz says in the video, “it is going to revitalize and beautify this gorgeous downtown with some incredible new assets.”

### Project features

One of the features will include a “scrambled crossing” at the intersection of Coal with Third Street — it will permit pedestrians to cross in any direction when the light changes.

Other improvements will include new streetlights, landscaping and bike racks, along with removable bollards that would allow the street to be closed off for special events.

Infrastructure work will include replacement of storm sewers, sidewalks and the street surface. Special pedestrian walkways will allow access to businesses during construction.

Ustick said the city and contractor Murphy Builders have mounted a plan for keeping the public apprised of progress

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## Coal Avenue Commons

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on the project.

### During and after

In the video, Lazarz encourages shoppers to park near

### In other business

The council also approved the following:   
Ratification of a new three-year collective bargaining agreement with the United Mine Workers of America. The union represents 136 city employees, including blue collar workers and some lower-level

the Rex Museum, 220 Historic Highway 66, or in one of the lots along nearby Aztec Avenue. She said that after the project is completed, the new commons will be a “huge asset to existing businesses” and a catalyst for recruiting new businesses to the area.

Councilor Fran Palochak asked **Gallup MainStreet** Executive Director Kara Smith whether she would be able to handle the workload promoting the project would send her way.

Smith said that she expects work on the commons project to comprise the bulk of her day-to-day tasks and that she hopes to be able to contract out the management of some other **MainStreet** projects.

Ustick said earlier that the Coal Avenue Commons project is modeled in part on successful “placemaking” projects elsewhere, including in downtown Las Cruces.

Councilors also approved a two-year renewal of a memorandum of understanding with **Gallup MainStreet** and New Mexico **MainStreet**.

technical staff. † An application for a private security guard business license for Desert Wolf Security Inc. † Purchase of vacuum enclosers for the city solar farm from Western United of Albuquerque. The units protect downstream circuit loads from any faults emanating from the solar farm. The bid is for \$31,843.88, including gross receipts taxes.

As the meeting closed, Palochak and Mayor Louie Bonaguidi encouraged citizens to remain vigilant about protecting themselves and others from the spread of COVID-19. Bonaguidi said **Gallup** residents appear to be taking guidelines from state officials more seriously than people elsewhere, and Palochak offered a reminder that individuals out in public should wear masks, even when outdoors.