

BID lines up partners for eco devo co-op

By Rodd Cayton

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GALLUP — A potential regional economic development organization is gaining momentum, Francis Bee said Thursday.

Bee, executive director of the Gallup Business Improvement District, told the district's board of directors that four other entities in northwest New Mexico have agreed in principle to join up with the BID and share the costs and rewards of a customized National Development Council program.

"It took a while to get everybody to agree to work together, but we have done that," Bee said.

The other organizations involved are the Greater Gallup Economic Development Corporation, the Cibola Communities Economic Development Corporation, San Juan-Farmington Economic Development and Four Corners Economic Development.

Bee described the National Development Council as a nonprofit bank that would add \$3 to every local dollar invested.

He said that the combined entity would see a cost of \$78,000 for the first year of National Development Council services; the BID would be responsible for one-fifth of that amount.

Bee said that a \$50,000 contribution from the state would lower the remaining cost to \$28,000 and the BID's share to \$5,600. He said he won't know until December what, if anything, the state can provide.

Bee is creating a memorandum of understanding that he will send out to an attorney for review, then pass on to the four partner entities.

After that agreement is finalized, he told board members, the umbrella organization

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would enter a contract with the National Development Council.

Construction update

Gallup MainStreet Executive Director Kara Smith offered a few updates at the meeting.

She said an alley improvement project has been stalled by a delay in placing underground power lines.

The electrical contractor on the job was called away to the Gulf Coast to help re-start power in that region, recently struck by hurricanes Laura and Delta.

She said the organization has also worked one-on-one with business owners on marketing and kept the community apprised of progress on the project.

"I'm glad to see the breadth of what you've been doing," Bee said. "You've been covering us on a lot of different approaches."

Also at the regular meeting, Bee said that New Mexico is among five states being considered as a hub for testing of autonomous vehicles.

Securing downtown

Earlier Thursday, Bee and Smith attended a meeting with police department representatives and others concerning ways to improve downtown security.

They said that while the Gallup Police Department is short-staffed now, two officers will be moved

Smith said the work is tentatively scheduled to begin Monday. Paving and other work will follow.

On the Coal Avenue Commons project, Smith said, the intersection at Third Street is nearing completion and could open next week.

She said authorities are working with contractor Murphy Builders to minimize the impact of the construction on businesses in the area.

That'll be key in the project's next phase, which includes sidewalk demolition. She said the goal will be to keep storefront access open as much as possible.

Smith said that Gallup Main-Street has spent the past three months communicating with business owners in the area, as well as getting word out to the public about available parking and encouraging people to continue to come downtown for shopping.

downtown, and lines of communication have been opened up.

Smith said police representatives had insights for business owners that could help them increase security.

"Having video in your store is a great resource," Smith said. "Not just for the business owner, but for the police as well."

Bee agreed, saying that video won't necessarily stop a crime, but will make identifying the perpetrator - and obtaining a conviction — easier.