

**Report on Cost of City of Gallup Recreational Facilities
November 7, 2024, by Michael Daly**

Through a series of Freedom of Information requests to the City of Gallup, I have obtained financial information for three City recreational facilities - The Cecil Garcia Fitness Center, the Gallup Aquatic Center and the Fox Run Golf Course.

Here are the numbers:

For the Fitness Center -

Revenues \$271,554.41

Expenses \$232,178.57

Net Income \$39,375.84

Number of visits for the year: 42,887

Income per visit \$0.92

For the Aquatic Center -

Revenues \$41,106.07

Expenses \$327,695.69

Net Loss \$286,589.62

Number of visits for the year: 15,607

Loss per visit \$18.36

For the Golf Course -

Revenues \$143,468.17

Expenses \$2,627,458.18

Net loss \$2,483,990.01

Number of visits for the year: 4,167

Loss per visit \$596.11

Together, the three facilities had 62,894 individual users for the year, with the Fitness Center users representing 68% of the total, the Aquatic Center, 25% and the Golf Course 7%.

These figures are close, but not exact. Asking for something via a Freedom of Act request has limitations. I asked for information for the year 2022. I believe some data relates to calendar year 2022 and other data relates to the City's Fiscal Year July 2022 through June 2023. Also, sometimes the income and expense information provided did not exactly agree with the figure that the staff provided showing revenues. But the numbers above can be relied upon to give a good general indication of the costs for each of the three facilities listed. Note, I did not request utility cost information for the fitness center or the aquatic center, so these comparative numbers do not include the cost of utilities for any of these three recreational facilities. In the case of the golf course I used the current customer charges to determine the cost per visit as the earlier figures were not provided.

Nearly a decade ago the Gallup Independent ran an article detailing the annual cost of the golf course over the nine year period 2007 to 2015. This amounted to just over \$5 million. I mentioned this to then mayor Jackie McKenny because his budget for 2016 included another \$3.5 million for the course.

He said that the \$3.5 million was what the golfers said was needed to fix the golf course. Apparently it was not enough and funds continue to be poured into this expensive enterprise.

I recall reading that City Manager Frank Chiapetti recently said his policies would be based on what is good for the community as a whole and not so much on small special interests.

At a recent City public information meeting discussing the city's proposed budget, the City Public Works Director said \$1 million would pave about 8 city blocks. By that reckoning, the \$2.4 million lost in one year on golf course operations would pave 19 city blocks. Gallup is a small town and golfing is not the recreational choice for most city residents. The question arises, is the quality of life better determined by a green golf course used by a few or by a lack of potholes? The city's basic infrastructure is severely lacking. Many parts of the City lack sidewalks to walk on, many curbs are crumbling. A number of fire hydrants are out of service. Utility rates have doubled and according to some on the City Council they are due to double again.

It's time to have a meaningful community conversation about recreational spending priorities in the City.

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Footnote: The information provided by the City and a bit of other information has been posted on the internet so anyone can view the raw data. It would be too cumbersome to list it here. For that information go to: tinyurl.com/GallupGolfCourse

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