

Dear Santa Fe County residents,

I am now in the midst of a campaign for re-election. I do not believe in taking anything for granted, so I am going to give it my all. This means that I will have a little less time in the next two months to prepare my usual reports on the interesting issues presented in our County Commission meetings. However, I will still send on notices of interest as I get them. The campaign gives me an opportunity for hearing everyone's concerns about how we can all work together to solve problems and continue to improve the County's services. I look forward to seeing as many of my constituents as I can when going door-to-door, particularly in my new precincts, as well as in neighborhood meetings over the next two months.

In this e-mail, I would like to report on a presentation at our March 13th meeting on the topic of General Obligation (GO) Bonding. The reason that I would like to cover this now is that we may well have a GO Bond issue on the November ballot, and I would really like your feedback on this issue.

In addition, I would like to include a piece prepared in our County Office of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency. It covers some of the programs out there that can help homeowners move toward the goal of using less energy or in producing some of their own energy.

As always, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or issues in your community or neighborhood. My Constituent Services Liaison, Tina Salazar, is also available to help.

Sincerely,  
-Kathy

### **General Obligation (GO) Bonding:**

General Obligation Bonding is important because it is the source of funding for many of our capital projects. That is, we need funding to provide infrastructure that people use on a daily basis in the County. GO bonding is one way that we get the funds for water and wastewater projects, road projects, community centers, other buildings (like the County Courthouse), and County open space for recreation.

The County Commission cannot just arbitrarily decide to sell bonds and commit the taxpayers to paying back those bonds. Prior to issuance, General Obligation Bnds must be approved by the voters.

The County has done polling in the past to find out things that the voters are most willing to spending money on. In general, voters favor roads, public safety equipment and buildings, water, open space, and other projects related to quality of life. They have not expressed so much enthusiasm for spending funds on administrative buildings and recreational facilities.

The County has had the philosophy over the years of maintaining a steady, recurring capital program. In order to keep the funding steady, as well as the payments on capital improvement

bonds steady, the County strives to put bond issues on the ballot every four years and to do the bond sales every two years. The benefits of this approach are that we have a steady stream of projects, rather than a glut every now and then. This helps to use staff time efficiently. Also, it ensures that there is a constant reliable supply of work for local contractors. Perhaps most importantly to the taxpayers, this assures that there is never a sudden tax increase. Rather, the amount of tax going to paying off the bonds is steady and predictable over time.

The County's bonding capacity is determined by State law and is limited to 4% of the County's total assessed value. Right now the total assessed value of the property in Santa Fe County is around \$6.8 billion. So the bonding capacity is roughly \$271 million. We have outstanding debt of about \$122 million which means that we have a remaining capacity of \$149 million (about 54.9% of the total allowed).

It is important to note that our total assessed value of property in Santa Fe County has gone up very little since 2008. The big increases occurred in the period from 2000 through 2008, when the total assessed value increased from around \$3.2 billion up to \$6.6 billion. (By the way, those are rough numbers that I read off a graph that was presented to the Board.)

Another important point is that the mill rate for the County has stayed essentially constant since 2006. (The mill rate is the percentage that a homeowner pays in property tax on the taxable value of their property.) The mill rates for the City and the schools has varied more.

In 2008 voters approved five out of six general obligation bonding questions on the ballot. They approved bonding for open space and trails; acquiring, improving and constructing roads; acquiring, constructing and equipping fire safety facilities; designing, constructing, and improving water facilities; and acquiring, constructing, and improving solid waste transfer stations. The voters did not approve the question about improving and equipping the County Fairgrounds.

We are currently looking at what general obligation bonding questions we might put on the ballot this coming November. Our County Manager and Finance Director have determined that it would be reasonable to put about \$30 million of proposed bonding out to the voters. This would not increase taxes, due to other debt that is being retired. It would also allow the County to move forward on some projects that are important for the infrastructure needs of the County. By the way, I get many suggestions from my constituents on roads that could be improved as well as requests for help with water projects. And I often have to tell people that it will be a while before we have the funds to move forward on those projects -- as necessary as they might be.

To help analyze our current situation, our Public Works Director is compiling a list of capital project needs and requests. He is also implement a process to prioritize those projects using a number of different factors. Once the list is compiled and the projects ranked, I will ask that it be posted on our web site. I will also get a copy to send out. I think that it will be very instructive for people to see all the requests and needs that exist in the County.

Your feedback on this issue is very important to me.

## **Santa Fe County Assessor Will Host Public Meeting on Data Collection Project:**

The following was sent out as a press release:

The Santa Fe County Assessor would like to invite residents to a public meeting to provide information on the Data Collection Project on Thursday, April 5 at 6 p.m. in the County Commission Chambers, 102 Grant Ave, Santa Fe, NM. The Assessor's Office and the Data Collection Contractor, Tyler Technologies will have a presentation that outlines the project. Once the presentation is complete the floor will be open for questions on the project.

The purpose of the Data Collection Project is to simply verify existing data, correct erroneous data and generate missing data to ensure all information used in appraising property for tax purposes is taken into account.

In conjunction with the meeting, the van that contains the automated equipment that will be used during the countywide project will be on display in the back parking lot of the County Administration building, 102 Grant Ave. from 4 p.m. – 6p.m.

The Assessor's Office has also started to implement a new Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal system, which will be fully functional once all data is from the Data Collect Project is put into the system. This appraisal system will ensure more accurate, fair, and equitable taxable value for all property owners. It will also help Santa Fe County conform with mandates of the Property Tax Law.

For more information contact Gary Perez, Chief Deputy Assessor at (505) 986-6332.

## **Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Information:**

I am also including (as a pdf attachment) an informational hand-out prepared by Craig O'Hare, County Energy Specialist, which contains interesting information about what a homeowner can do to improve the energy efficiency of their home or to install a renewable energy project.

Also, I would like to make you aware that Craig O'Hare and Erik Aaboe, our other County Energy Specialist, are available to speak to business groups, neighborhood associations and homeowners associations regarding the benefits of installing solar power systems and energy efficiency measures. Please feel free to call on them for that purpose. For instance, Craig just gave a presentation last Saturday at a solar forum arranged by the residents of Eldorado where 80 people attended.

In addition, Craig is planning a Residential Energy Forum on Thursday, May 3rd and a Commercial Energy Forum on Monday, May 7th. Both events will be held in the Commission Chambers beginning at 6:00 p.m.