

Dear Santa Fe County residents:

Unfortunately, I am getting the e-mail about our February 14th meeting of the Board of County Commissioners out a bit late. There have been so many issues going on at the County this last couple weeks, that i have been swamped.

The most charged issue on the BCC's Feb. 14th agenda was an ordinance that had to do with setting policy for dealing with hold requests from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency. I will expand more on that below.

One recent news story relative to the County was the termination of Annabelle Romero, the former Director of the County Corrections Department. It is important to note that this was a decision made by the County Manager and the Director of the County Public Safety Division. Commissioners do not make management decisions at the County, other than whom to appoint as Manager. The Manager decides if the persons filling the positions as heads of the various departments are doing their job appropriately. Also, in the case of the Corrections Department Director, the position is a so-called at-will position. This means that the person can be terminated from that position solely on the Manager's determination that the person is no longer performing the job adequately.

I do understand why this termination was necessary, and I support our County Manager fully. However, I am not at liberty to discuss specific confidential details of Ms. Romero's employment.

Please feel free to send this e-mail on to others. And as always, please feel free to send comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,
-Kathy

P.S. I will try to send out an e-mail detailing our February 28th meeting in the next couple of days to catch up.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE):

Commissioner Anaya requested that we consider an ordinance that would "establish policies, procedures and protocols for compliance with Federal immigration law and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement services of the Homeland Security Department, concerning undocumented criminal aliens committing serious property crimes or other felonies incarcerated at the Santa Fe Detention Facility."

Four of the Commissioners voted against publishing title and general summary to move this ordinance forward to a public hearing.

I cannot speak for the other Commissioners, but I will try to explain why I voted against this. One thing I was troubled by was that this was an ordinance, not a resolution. Normally, the Commission sets policies through resolutions, and then the staff details the procedures for those policies in various documents. By putting this procedure into an ordinance, County staff would be the subject of unspecified *criminal* penalties if they did not comply with the provisions of the ordinance. Further, the directives were vague and wide open to interpretation. Therefore, I saw that the proposed ordinance could lead to confusion and unintended consequences.

Nobody in our County wants to see potentially dangerous criminals released back out into the community. Whether inmates are released pending trial is completely determined by judges, who either set bail or require defendants to be held without bail. But that goes for people who are U.S. citizens, not only undocumented aliens. Whenever people who are a potential threat to the community are to be released from incarceration, the judicial branch of our government needs to be part of the conversation.

In principle, deportation of undocumented aliens should be reserved primarily for those convicted of violent crimes. ICE does not necessarily deport inmates awaiting trial back to their home country. They put them in a holding facility until their trial occurs, and if the person is convicted, they will serve time in a U.S. prison.

I feel that it is important to distinguish between inmates who are potentially dangerous and those who aren't. It costs money to keep people in our jail, so that if ICE determines that an inmate who would otherwise be released should be held, then ICE should pay for those incarceration costs.

Commissioner Stefanics and I are bringing forward a resolution at an upcoming meeting that will clarify our policy. My goal is to protect our community without incurring unwarranted expenses for Santa Fe County taxpayers.

Water Transmission Line (Related to Cañoncito Delivery):

The Board voted unanimously to enter into a contract with Molzen Corbin for engineering design of a water pipeline that will connect the 1.5 million gallon Rancho Viejo reservoir with the Eldorado Area Water and Sanitation District. The ultimate goal is to connect County utility water to Cañoncito, whose residents are currently dealing with water that has high levels of radium and uranium.

Seventeen companies attended the mandatory pre-proposal meeting, and five companies submitted proposals, which were objectively evaluated by an Evaluation Committee. They elected to go straight to negotiations with the highest-rated proposal.

The plan is to run a 12-inch pipe along one of three utility corridors: 1) the NMDOT-owned right-of-way, 2) the old abandoned narrow-gauge railroad, or 3) the existing power transmission corridor. The engineering firm will investigate the pros and cons of each of these routes, followed by a public meeting to present that information and to get community feedback.

Ultimately the water will be wheeled through the Eldorado Area Water and Sanitation District's system, and another pipeline will be installed from the area of the Hondo 2 Fire Station out to Cañoncito.

Bringing utility water out to this part of the County could have several benefits. One, of course, is to solve the problem that Cañoncito is having with contaminated water. There are many people in that area who have private wells and are not part of the Mutual Domestic (MD) system, due to supply problems. Many of those wells have the same problem as the MD water. Now there will be more water available, and other neighborhoods in that area can opt to hook into the MD.

In addition, this water supply can provide backup to other systems in the area (like the EAWSD), should there be water shortages due to future drought conditions.

Sole Community Provider Contributions:

The Board of County Commissioners was required to approve the commitment by the County for the sole community provider contribution to local hospitals by February 15th. Unfortunately, this commitment must be decided on before the County has really had a chance to review its entire budget for the coming fiscal year.

With that in mind, the Commission asked the County's Health Policy and Planning Commission (HPPC) to make a recommendation based on consideration of the requests from the hospitals, the current state of the County's finances, and past history.

This was a challenging task for the HPPC. They had several new members, and this is the first time that the HPPC has been asked to directly consider this issue. They had an intense meeting with much thoughtful discussion.

In the end, the HPPC recommended arriving at the figure for the contributions by using the indigent claims as projected for this fiscal year with an escalator of 3.2%. The majority of the members recommended that the County's commitment be within available resources (i.e., no extra from the General Fund) and that, if possible, the County consider additional resources when the opportunity for supplemental funding occurs in September.

The Board of County Commissioners voted for this recommendation.

The final amounts for the total contributions (including the Federal match) are as follows:

Christus-St. Vincent	\$6,301,479
Española Hospital	\$482,926
Los Alamos Hospital	\$54,070

Keep in mind that these numbers are estimated since we are not entirely sure what the Federal match will be. In this estimate, the County's portion of the total figures will be around 31%. (So,

for example, the County's portion of the total contribution to Christus-St. Vincent would be \$1,953,459.)

The vote for this item was 3-2, with Commissioners Anaya and Mayfield voting against. Their preference was for the County to give the maximum amount allowed by the State to Christus-St. Vincent at this time, while my view is that we can always give more in September when the supplemental contribution is considered.

Sheriff's Department Report:

Sheriff Garcia reported on the current state of the Sheriff's Department. (This was the latest in a series of departmental reports that the BCC is receiving at the request of our County Manager.)

The report contained a number of interesting statistics, as well as highlighting some of the accomplishments of the last year.

Overall there were 51,304 calls for service that were routed to the Sheriff's Department in the last fiscal year (July 1, 2010 to June 20, 2011). The number of burglaries reported was 748, which is a 12% decrease from the previous year (with a total of 848). This was a positive development. But on the other side of the coin, the number of violent crimes showed an 8% increase. In addition, the number of DWI arrests increased by 17.5% (302 in 2011 versus 257 in 2010).

Two of the major initiatives of the Department were to increase security (to end the threat of internal property theft) and to increase media transparency.

With regard to staffing, there were 13 new hires in 2011. However, there are still 6 openings to be filled. In addition, 18 of the deputies were promoted in the last year so that their position more accurately reflected their duties.

I am very proud of our Sheriff's Department this last year. They have made a real effort to put extra forces toward dealing with burglaries and DWI incidents. They do an incredible job when you realize that they are responsible for about 1900 square miles of territory.

-Kathy Holian
4 Camino Cielo Azul
Santa Fe, NM 87508
505-995-9979
Kathleen.Holian@comcast.net