

**SANTA FE COUNTY  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2026 - 062**

Introduced by: Adam F. Johnson and Hank Hughes

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**A RESOLUTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF PRAIRIE DOGS IN CONNECTION  
WITH LAND DEVELOPMENT IN SANTA FE COUNTY**

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**WHEREAS**, conservation data from NatureServe Explorer indicates that the New Mexico Gunnison Prairie Dog population has declined by more than 90 percent due to poisoning, shooting, habitat destruction, and disease; and

**WHEREAS**, prairie dogs are considered a “keystone” species, with their colonies and burrows supporting over 100 associated species, including badgers, coyotes, and raptors; and

**WHEREAS**, through their foraging activities, prairie dogs contribute to the ecosystem health by increasing plant diversity, supporting essential pollinators such as bees and butterflies, and helping to control invasive or noxious plants, including woody plant encroachment, which can be harmful to prairie ecosystems; and

**WHEREAS**, prairie dog colonies help maintain unique islands of grassland habitat, and their burrowing and foraging activities (bioturbation) improve soil structure, increase water filtration, and enhance nutrient cycling and overall soil health, making their restoration and protection critical to ecosystem health; and

**WHEREAS**, two relocation methods are recognized for prairie dog conservation: passive relocation, which guides prairie dogs to adjacent colonies through strategic burrow closures, and active relocation, which involves safely moving all prairie dogs from one location to another; and professional wildlife relocators can be engaged to implement these strategies.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Santa Fe County Board of County Commissioners directs the Growth Management Department to develop and incorporate prairie dog conservation requirements into the development permitting process. Such requirements may include measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to prairie dog colonies from development impacts, including relocation where appropriate, and may require amendments to the Sustainable Land Development Code, with initial review by the Board of County Commissioners projected by December 2026; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that such requirements shall be implemented in a manner consistent with applicable County ordinances, state law, and best available conservation practices.

SFC CLERK RECORDED 05/15/2026

