

Pojoaque Valley Planning Committee Meeting Summary
Thursday, September 14, 2006 6:30pm – 8:30pm
Sammy Quintana Community Board Room

(Note: This is a meeting summary and is not intended to give the meeting contents in its entirety. If you would like to get more details about the meeting, please contact either a committee member who was present at the meeting, or the SF County Planning staff.)

The meeting was opened by David Dogruel at about 6:40pm.

News from the Committee

David D. warned that construction on 84/285 north of 503 is beginning. He added that the DOT is discussing plans for a bypass around Española, going through El Llano, on the east side of town. David passed around a card for us to sign for Tony Trujillo who is returning after six weeks of medical leave after surgery. He also announced that the Pojoaque Fire Dept. will be having a pancake breakfast and car show on October 7th. David mentioned that the Tewa Women United were having their annual Gathering for Mother Earth event on September 23rd and 24th and had invited us to set up a booth the way we had last year. After some discussion we agreed that we did not have the resources to do this, especially with such short notice. Announcements were also made about the weekend Pojoaque River Arts Tour and also that the PV high school was having a homecoming parade and their football game on Saturday as well.

Nambe Pueblo Exporting Water

Amelia, Dick and Lee Waite talked about Nambe Pueblo's transporting large amounts of ground water outside of the basin, by tanker truck. Amelia passed around a file of documentation. The water is being used in construction south of Santa Fe. Because the Aamodt settlement is not in place yet, this sale of water is apparently legal.

Dick told us that the Water Alliance has hired a hydrologist. There are concerns that the 1500 ft deep well that the Pueblo has dug to obtain the water might destabilize Nambe Dam. (When water is drawn out of an aquifer, it can cause subsidence of the land.) He added that the dam is on a fault and that the dam developed a crack in the past. In California, dams have collapsed in similar circumstances. The hydrologist estimates that the dam could fail any time in the next 5 years. The only way to prevent failure would be to stop drilling or empty the dam. The dam is currently being dredged to remove sediment to allow the reservoir to hold more water. Unfortunately, more water would put more stress on the dam. The hydrologist is working with the Bureau of Reclamation, which owns the dam, and the Bureau is doing studies. The hydrologist and the water alliance also approached other entities. Nambe Pueblo did not accept their findings. The BIA was unaware that the well had been drilled. The group responsible for New Mexico dam safety does not have jurisdiction on Indian land.

Lee said that the level of his well has dropped 21 ft in the last 3 months, and added that Nambe Pueblo is planning additional deep wells for the planned casino and hotel. He became aware of the problem when he started smelling sulfur in his water. The Pueblo is drawing out and exporting about ¼ acre foot per day. This would be illegal if the Aamodt settlement were in place.

Dick told us that there will be a status report on the Aamodt Settlement before Judge Vasquez on Sept 20th. Dick said there wasn't much we could do about the exportation of water since the activity is taking place on Indian land.

News from the County

Jack told us that he and Renee attended a meeting with Commissioner Montoya and the Agricultural Revitalization Initiative (ARI) group, along with other interested/invited parties and discussed the progress and ideas of this initiative. There was discussion about the need for a pilot project to start get a project going. Harry agreed to introduce a resolution in support of agricultural preservation and revitalization. Jack added that we should look for appropriate places in our plan to include support for these initiatives.

Demographic and Economic Profile of Valley

Renee distributed copies of the final demographic and economic report from the demographer, All Pitts. The updated report includes information from Pojoaque Pueblo, who was very cooperative in sharing their historical housing data and commercial development information.

Jack pointed out the paragraph that noted that we have very few local retail services available compared to other areas with comparable populations. We discussed possible reasons for this disparity. Historically commercial developments have required variances, which can be difficult to obtain. We noted that our plan will address this problem by zoning some areas to easily permit commercial/mixed uses. Chuck commented that there are a limited number of places where commercial development is practical.

Amelia said that because we are so close to other areas, like Española, Los Alamos and Santa Fe we don't need commercial development. She would prefer to keep the Valley residential and limit businesses. She does favor small home businesses. David D. suggested that it behooves us to support people who are entrepreneurial, provided their ideas for new businesses are appropriate for the Valley.

Action Plans

Renee distributed the revised versions of the Action Plans for Goals One and Two. She and Elaine had revised them to include changes from the last meeting and to change the wording of some paragraphs. We started discussing Action 2D.

Action 2D: Pursue options for wastewater management and treatment systems

We agreed that the discussion of the water fair should be included in Action 2C rather than 2D.

Elaine questioned the statement under Current Status that said that septic systems will not continue to be a viable option as density in the Valley increases. She commented that as long as we enforce the regulations on minimum lot size and correct septic installation, we should not have problems with contamination of the water table. David D. felt that although this was true in general, there are cases when the regulations are not enough to ensure this. Elaine added that the use of septic systems was considered a strength in earlier analyses because it prevented over subdividing of the land and helped preserve rural character. We agreed that it was important to preserve minimum lot size, and that that goal could be enforced elsewhere in the plan.

Don mentioned that we had voted on a mil levy to subsidize a sewer system in the Valley and asked where the money is going. Nobody could answer this question, so we agreed to ask Commissioner Montoya about this.

We also discussed advanced treatment systems as alternatives to a centralized wastewater system and conventional septic systems. Lee noted that there are contractors who install alternate systems that recycle black water into potable water. He suggested that we invite these contractors to future water fairs. We discussed the position we should take on a centralized waste water system versus advanced treatment systems. We agreed that we should not wait for Pojoaque Pueblo's system to materialize and include non-Indian users, because that could take years. In addition, there will be isolated locations where it would not be practical to hook-up to the centralized system. We agreed to support a mix of solutions. David D. suggested that we support a pilot project for an advanced treatment system in an area where residences are in close proximity to each other; such as the community land trust compound on Helenty's land in Jacona.

Levi noted that one control that we might put in place is that whenever a property containing a septic system is sold or transferred, the system must be inspected and brought into compliance.

Goal 3: Strengthen and build community relationships and communication between neighbors and government entities.

Jack started the discussion of this goal by asking what the role of the community should be after the plan is completed and it becomes an ordinance. He said that the LDRC, which is a typical result of a plan has a narrowly defined jurisdiction to review development and variance requests. However, this doesn't cover most of what is in this plan. We had hoped to create a Valley Council that would include the Pueblos. However, they have made it clear that they want to communicate government to government (elected official to elected official). Jack proposed a PDRC (Planning and Development Review Committee). Harry believes that the Commission would support this idea.

We will need to decide how committee members would be selected (appointed by the Commission? Elected in neighborhood meetings? Would they represent specific areas?) We agreed that such a group would help us have a voice and be a conduit for the voice of the community. It would provide a venue for local discussion. Chuck suggested that 4 or 5 people from the PVPC be semi-permanent members of the group, and that other people would be rotated in and out for shorter terms. Ben concurred that we would need 5 people from the PVPC to keep the effort going. Elaine cautioned that it will be important for the group to have legitimacy, and suggest that some people be elected. She reiterated her previous comments that some people should be appointed to ensure that committee members are really committed to the plan. Don suggested having neighborhood groups nominate people and letting the commission make the decision. Jack said that geographic representation was important, but that it would be important to include representatives from other entities, for example Jacona Land Grant.

Jack noted that the strategic plan method implies the existence of a scanning and monitoring group. Don said that we need more than monitoring – we need a group to implement the plan.

David D. suggested that we include a charter for the group in the plan. The charter would define roles and responsibilities, composition, duties, what the group is empowered to do and how it should function. Jack said that the County would produce a concept of a charter as a "straw man" in order to get us started.

We ended the meeting at about 8:40 pm. The next meeting will be Thursday, Sept. 28th.