

Observer Report – Bernalillo County Commission

September 2023

### **Bernalillo County Commission Struggles with Transparency**

The Bernalillo County Commission has proposed two revisions to the Transparency Portal. In my last report I discussed the revisions. Subsequently we sent this letter, approved by the board to the commissioners.

September 11, 2023

Dear Commissioner Baca,

The League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico has some concern over proposed changes to the Bernalillo County Transparency Portal Ordinance. We are particularly concerned about the proposed addition of a sentence to section 3.

That sentence reads. ["Contracts which could compromise the safety and security of the County will not be included in the contract listing."](#) During the oral presentation of the proposed ordinance change there was no mention about why the county is seeking the change. On the welcoming page of BERNCO VIEW, the County's official Transparency Portal, its stated purpose is "...to bring better visibility, openness and accountability to county government." How would citizens know that a contract has been entered into if the contract is not listed on the portal. It is also not clear how this would be a benefit to the county.

We would like to urge the county commission to consider a way to list all contracts the county enters into on the Transparency Portal. If there is a specific reason to shield some information about a particular contract, the general purpose of the contract, the reason should be stated, and instructions for making an Inspection of Public Records Request, such as a link to the formal form, should be placed in the Transparency Portal. The language that "contracts which could compromise the security and safety of the County" is too vague to be useful, and appears to be antithetical to the spirit and purpose of the ordinance.

Voters need the opportunity to see and understand the public business of Bernalillo County.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this item.

Sincerely,

Donna Sandoval,  
President, League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico

After seeing the letter, the commission postponed a final decision on the change for two weeks. Commissioner Eric Olivas, then asked to meet with representees of the League and we are in the process of arranging that meeting. We will let you know what happened.

Karen Wentworth