

## **Observer Report – Bernalillo County Commission**

**October/November 2023**

### **Legislative Priorities, Money for Runoff Election, and Continuing Problems at UNMH**

The Bernalillo County Commission has approved \$1.2 million dollars to fund the Albuquerque City Council runoff election in Council District 6. Election day is scheduled for December 12. Early voting is already in progress.

The county commission also raised eyebrows when it only allowed three state legislators a minute apiece to comment on county priorities for the 2024 legislative session. The clearly frustrated lawmakers were not able to clearly outline their concerns in the brief time they were allotted.

Bernalillo County Major Legislative Priorities are:

\$10 million for affordable housing

\$1 million to purchase technology equipment and train county employees at the Bernalillo County Sheriff's office in its use

\$5 million to design and purchase right of way for realignment of Atrisco Vista Blvd. from Double Eagle Airport to Paseo del Norte

\$1 million to build and equip additional space at the Animal Shelter

\$1.5 million to furnish and equip buildings and grounds at the South Valley food hub and food manufacturing facility

\$5 million for facility improvements to the Mesa del Sol Regional Outdoor Sports Complex

\$2 million to redevelop and replace PB and J family services building and facilities in the South Valley

The commission also hear the quarterly report from the University of New Mexico Hospital Administrator and the news is grim.

The hospital is running \$12 million over budget for the first quarter of the fiscal year. Some administrators have taken pay cuts, and all employees, except medical residents will receive no pay increases this fiscal year. Residents will be a 2% raise.

The reason for the budget crunch is higher costs for medical supplies, Medicare payments from the state that are less than the actual cost of care, and uncompensated care for people who cannot pay.

On the day of the commission meeting the hospital administrator told the commissioners that 79 people were waiting at that moment in the UNMH emergency waiting room for care. The average time spent waiting and receiving emergency care is 6 to 7 hours. UNMH is now in the

process of moving its triage unit into the waiting room to try to decrease the wait time for people seeking immediate care.

The University of New Mexico Hospital is owned by Bernalillo County and residents are ultimately responsible for its financial stability.

The Leagues' state position on health care says in part, "The LWVNM supports a health care system that provides a comprehensive level of health care for New Mexico residents and recognizes the need for efficient management of health care costs."