

## **Bernalillo County Commission Observer Report**

**May 2024**

### **Bernalillo County Commission Approves Purchases of Land in the International District for Affordable Housing**

The Bernalillo County Commission has approved the purchase of 3.18 acres of vacant land at 704 Wyoming Blvd. NE. If the purchase is completed the land will be banked for future affordable housing projects. The money for the purchase will come from a \$2.4 million grant from the state Department of Finance and Administration.

The commission also approved the purchase of .48 acres of vacant land at Acoma and Albarado for future multi-family housing. And it approved a \$400,000 purchase of .528 acres at 317 Wyoming for urban agriculture. Community members, who have been working with the county attended the meeting to applaud the action.

The commission also approved ballot language to renew the mil levy set aside for the University of New Mexico Hospital. The levy question will be on the November ballot. The New Mexico constitution requires each county to provide a detention facility and a hospital for local residents, although as several rural hospitals have closed over the past two decades, more of the burden for both urban and rural hospital care has fallen on UNMH, which is underwritten by a property tax in Bernalillo County. In 2023 the tax provided about \$120 million to UNMH to support basic operating expenses.

The commission also formalized a selection process for hiring a new county manager. The current county manager plans to retire at the end of June. The commission has been in a defensive mode since three commissioners apparently agreed to a specific selection process, and named members of the search committee to hire a new manager without consulting the other two members of the commission.

Since that was a possible violation of the NM Open Meetings Act, it was challenged by the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government, and the county decided to re-do the process and add a new member to the search committee suggested by the republican member of the commission Walt Benson. It is not clear whether the search committee will hold any open meetings.

All five members of the county commission attended the meeting. Barbara Baca, Eric Olivas, Adriann Barboa, Walt Benson, Steve Quezada (via zoom)

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