

Bernalillo County Commission Observer Report

December 2024

Bernalillo County Commission Learns about Election Impacts, Works to Increase Housing

Present: Barbara Baca, Adriann Barboa, Eric Olivas, Walt Benson, excused Steven Quesada

Oct. 24, 2024

County Assessor Damien Lara explained the impact the passage of New Mexico Constitutional Amendment #1 and #2 may have on the county budget. Both amendments involve increasing property tax exemptions for veterans. Lara says the potential impact would be between 2.5 million and 12 million dollars.

The uncertainty of the impact comes from the lack of data about the number of partially disabled veterans living and owning property in the county. Constitutional Amendment #1 would give partial tax exemptions to veterans according to the percentage of their disability. A veteran who is 30% disabled would receive a property tax exemption of 30%. But the county assessor does not have data detailing partial disability of veterans.

The county will have to decide whether to cut costs or raise taxes to deal with the impact, but the effect will not be immediate. The NM Legislature must pass legislation detailing how the exemptions will be handled by the 33 county tax assessors.

The commission passed a \$205,000,000 Industrial Revenue Bond to assist Sun Lasso in building a battery storage facility, a \$15,700,000 IRB bond to assist NOI Sawmill Mixed Use in building 140 apartments, and extended stay hotel with 101 rooms for the Film Industry and a hotel in the Sawmill area with 115 rooms. The hotel project received a \$76,000,000 IRB.

Nov. 12, 2024

The county also appropriated \$800,000 for a project the City of Albuquerque is preparing. The Recovery Housing Complex will be built at 3401 Pan American Freeway NE and is expected to be 50-pre-manufactured structures with showers, laundry room and community buildings. To qualify for the Recovery Housing Complex, individuals must have a substance abuse diagnosis. The project is part of an ongoing cooperative effort between the City of Albuquerque and the County of Bernalillo to ease the problem of homeless people on the streets.

The commission approved Project Revenue Bonds for multifamily housing of \$33,500,000 to St. Anthony Plaza Community Partners LP to rehab 11 2-story residential building with 160 living units.

The commission passed a revision to the Drug and Alcohol Workplace policy to allow employees to use medicinal marijuana when they are off duty. Firefighters strongly supported the policy

change as a way to manage chronic pain, anxiety and post- traumatic stress. The commission discussed potential problems with enforcement, since there is no accepted way to test whether an employee is under the influence of the drug while at work, but decided to pass the policy revision.

The county Behavioral Health Department is putting together a strategic plan to handle the 145 million dollars the county expects to receive over the next 10 years from the Opioid Settlement Agreement. Among the initial information released was an assessment of who is most commonly overdosing in Albuquerque.

The rate of fatal overdoses occurs most frequently among Black, Hispanic and Native American people. Fatal overdoses occur most frequently among males between 35-44 years old.

In the years 2018 -2022 these zip codes had the greatest number of overdoses:

87108 17.65%

87106 15.35%

87105 9.43%

87102 9.10%

87121 7.67%

Between May 2022 and April 2024 Albuquerque Fire and Rescue Emergency Medical Services responded to 1,450 suspected overdoses.

Between April 2022 and April 2024 Bernalillo County Emergency Medical Service responded to 1,110 suspected overdoses.