

Bernalillo County Commission – Observer Report

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Bernalillo County Commission Continues Focus on Housing

All five commissioners, Barbara Baca, Eric Olivas, Adriann Barboa, Walt Benson and Frank Sanchez attended the January 24 and February 11 meetings either in person or via Zoom.

Commissioner Baca has requested the county manager to develop a plan to include intermediate and long-term funding resources for creating, implementing and staffing an Affordable Housing Development Services Division reporting to the county manager.

But Bernalillo County already partners with the City of Albuquerque for the Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative, which is tasked with bringing more affordable housing to the city and county. The collaborative is asking the New Mexico legislature for \$200 million dollars to invest in housing projects, either alone or in collaboration with private developers. The county manager is scheduled to report back to the commission at the February 25th meeting on the cost of establishing a new housing department at the county.

The commission is also considering whether to establish a State Fair District Tax Improvement District. The outlines of the district include only the current Expo New Mexico property, which is owned by the state of New Mexico, so it's a little unclear why the county is involved in establishing a political taxing entity on land it neither owns or controls.

Bernalillo County taxpayers support the operating expenses of the University of New Mexico Hospital through a mill levy on property taxes. Last year the mill levy was worth about \$124 million dollars to the hospital and is used to underwrite operating expenses.

UNMH administrators report to the county commission quarterly. UNMH Chief Executive Officer Kate Beckett told the commission the hospital is now hiring staff to work in the recent expansion, which they are calling the critical care tower. Because the expansion will have more operating rooms and facilities to train residents, the UNM Medical School is apparently planning to double in size to graduate more physicians.