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MINUTES
STATE OF THE TOWN MEETING

Rio Grande Hall
121 Civic Plaza Drive
Taos, New Mexico

January 22, 2008

1. CALL TO ORDER: The State of the Town Meeting was called to order by the Honorable Mayor Bobby F. Duran at 6:41 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL: Ms. Renee Lucero, Town Clerk, called roll and a quorum was present.

Those present were Mayor Bobby F. Duran, Councilmembers Erlinda S. Gonzales, Meliton Struck, Rudy Abeyta and Darren Cordova Also present were Town Manager Tomas Benavidez, Town Attorney Renee Barela-Gutierrez and Town Clerk Renee Lucero.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Town Manager Benavidez led the audience in the pledge of allegiance.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Councilmember Gonzales made a motion to approve the Agenda as presented. Councilmember Cordova seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS:

A. Employee of the Year Award

Mayor Duran recognized Tina Torres, Finance Department as Employee of the Year.

B. Team of the Year Award

Mayor Duran recognized the Public Works Department (Street Division, Fleet Division, Transportation Division, Parks Division, Landfill Division and Recycling Division) as Team of the Year.

C. Recognition of the Employee Awards & Recognition Team and the Outgoing Members:

Mayor Duran recognized the outgoing members as follows: Rachel Romero, Thomas Medina, Tina Torres and Charlie Sanchez.

Mayor Duran recognized the following current members: Joaquin Cantu, Eric Fresquez, Gloria Cardenas, Sandra Olonia, Amy Seidel, Moises R. Sanchez, Porfirio Griego, Ron Reinikainen, Shannon Wood, and Paul Krueger.

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B. Employee Service Awards

Mayor Duran, with the assistance of Councilmember Struck handed out 5-year service pins to: Eric Fresquez, Crystal Griego, Francisco Gonzales, Christine Gutierrez, Dorothy Kethler, Mario Montoya, Rudy Perea, James Simmons.

Mayor Duran, with the assistance of Councilmember Gonzales handed out a 10-year service pins to: Francisco Espinoza, Marietta Fambro, Edward Medina, Debbie Medina, Leonard Ortiz, Miranda Quintana, James T. Salazar, Gilbert Martinez, Reuben Martinez.

Mayor Duran, with the assistance of Councilmember Abeyta handed out a 15-year service pin to: Dennis J. Martinez.

Mayor Duran, with the assistance of Councilmember Abeyta handed out a 20-year service pin to: Melinda Vasquez.

Mayor Duran, with the assistance of Councilmember Cordova handed out 25-year service pins to: Elmer Abeyta and Noella Romero.

C. Recognition of 2007 Employee Retirees

Mayor Duran recognized the following on their retirement: Celestino Quintana, James Toumey, Noella Romero, Bobby Jo Spears, Eddie Lucero, Dorothy Kethler, Michael Anaya, and Patrick Vigil.

6. MATTERS FROM THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL

A. Approval of Resolution 08-01; Open Meetings Act, by Councilmember Gonzales

Councilmember Cordova made a motion to approve Resolution 08-01 as presented. **Councilmember Struck** seconded the motion. The motion was approved by an affirmative vote. Those voting **AYE** were: **Councilmembers: Gonzales, Struck, Cordova, Abeyta.**

B. Approval of Resolution 08-03 supporting Taos County’s efforts to seek legislative funding for the new judicial complex, by Councilmember Cordova.

Councilmember Cordova made a motion to approve Resolution 08-03 as presented. **Councilmember Gonzales** seconded the motion. The motion was approved by an affirmative vote. Those voting **AYE** were: **Councilmembers: Gonzales, Struck, Cordova, Abeyta.**

7. STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS

The Mayor delivered his State of the Town Address. (Attached)

1 **8. ADJOURNMENT:** A motion was made by **Councilmember Gonzales** and
2 seconded by **Councilmember Cordova** to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried
3 unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.
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7 **APPROVED:**

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Bobby F. Duran, Mayor

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13 **ATTEST:**

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Renee Lucero, Town Clerk

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2007 State of the Town Mayoral Address 1/22/08

Good evening, and thank you for coming tonight. We welcome you all to this evening's Town of Taos, State of the Town address.

This is a special night in our Town. It is a when we take a moment to acknowledge all that has been accomplished by us over the last year – to celebrate our victories, and to outline some of the challenges ahead and how best to tackle them.

It is a moment when we thank the over 220 full time staff and management team members of the Town of Taos who work so hard to benefit this community. We must also thank our many volunteers from the community who serve on advisory boards, committees, and in other ways to assist the Town. Without them, we could not accomplish all that we do.

This evening is also when we thank our constituents, businesses, and visitors for loving Taos -- and wanting to work with us to continue to make it special.

As Mayor of the Town of Taos, I am particularly proud of our accomplishments this year.

Many of the special projects – and big changes – we've worked on in the last several years are becoming a reality.

Despite the national downward trend in tourism, real estate, the stock market, weakness of the U.S. dollar – and all of us wanting the war in Iraq to end – despite all these challenges we face together, we're still making progress and moving forward in a positive manner.

As your Town representatives, we're still meeting our obligations, planning ahead, and constantly improving our Town's position when it comes to protecting the health, safety and welfare of all who live, work and visit here.

Other towns and cities try to copy us. We have capabilities and successes for a Town of our size that are second to none.

To highlight a few of these successes this year – many of area-wide significance --

- We have hired bond counsel for the first time, had the Town of Taos rated – and received a Aaa rating – the highest rating a Town of our size can effectively receive. We have moved forward to sell these bonds in the amount of \$6.4 million that will fund the expansion/renovation of Town Hall -- more than doubling its capacity and efficiency. All this done in a manner that will NOT increase the gross receipts tax payments for anyone in Town.

It is a demonstration of the soundness not only of our Town's management, but of our assets – and our ongoing accountability and systems. It will also improve our efficiency for constituents as we consolidate staff, improve our technology, streamline systems further, and give everyone room to effectively work.

- 1 • Part of our success with our bond initiative, and many other financial programs, is
2 our outstanding Town of Taos Finance Department. For the 7th year running, they
3 received the Outstanding Budget Award from the Government Finance Officers
4 Association (GFOA), in addition to receiving for the 10th year in a row the
5 Outstanding Budget Award from DFA.
6
- 7 • When it comes to our ability to secure grants to benefit Taos, we have been
8 successful– garnering funds for capital projects which this year alone total over
9 \$11.3 million. These funds include grants aimed at over –
- 10 ✓ \$1 million in street improvements,
11 ✓ over \$2,700,000 for airport related improvements and programs,
12 ✓ utility improvements of \$2,694,280 (including continuation of San Juan
13 Chama Infrastructure Construction projects, Water System
14 Improvements, completion of Paseo de Canon Drainage Channel, and
15 Este Es Road Utility Improvements),
16 ✓ \$256,530 for buses and infrastructure for the Transportation
17 Department, the Eco Park and Town Hall Expansion designs,
18 ✓ and other smaller miscellaneous projects. The Town continues to
19 aggressively search and apply for grant funds related to capital projects
20 and other Town needs.
21
- 22
- 23 • In addition, our funding abilities have allowed us to successfully partner with
24 Holy Cross Hospital, our community, and the State of New Mexico to complete
25 the design and leverage \$1.1 million in funding for the construction of a new Taos
26 Pediatric Clinic – a clinic which should be under construction this year.
27
- 28 • We have also worked with the Taos Center for the Arts to design, fund and begin
29 its \$2.6 million update and expansion of the Taos Community Auditorium this
30 year – making our much beloved TCA even more comfortable and
31 accommodating for all the events we love to see there.
32
- 33 • The Town has made into reality the vision of the 20-acre Alexander Gusdorf Eco
34 Park and Multi-Purpose Sports Complex that will be a draw for Taos -- in
35 addition to serving our local constituents. It is under conceptual design now – and
36 we’re moving forward with finding the funding to complete plans and build it.
37 This will be a complex that serves many needs here in the community for added
38 soccer, baseball, other sports, outdoor event space, and biking and walking trails,
39 while also positioning us for future project such as a nursery for our park
40 landscaping using recycled water from our waste water facility.
41
- 42 • We as the Mayor and Town Council not only funded nearly \$250,000 in direct
43 marketing projects to help promote Taos this year, but we have committed to
44 increasing future funding over the next four years to at least \$500,000. We know
45 the more we do on this front, the more all of us will make – and the more we will
46 have for budgeting for the types of things we all want to see here in Town. We

1 have also moved forward with other programs to improve what we offer tourists
2 here in Town – taking over operation of the Visitors Center, the hooding of
3 parking meters around Taos Plaza to provide two hour free parking, and the
4 initiation of three separate efforts to create permanent public restroom facilities in
5 the Taos Plaza Historic District.
6

- 7 • At the direction of Council, staff have organized and launched a ‘Clean Up Taos’
8 program to remove trash and other unwanted items from our community streets
9 and our outstanding natural landscapes and views. This has resulted in drives,
10 curbside pick up – and this spring, a public auction that will allow us to clean up
11 our own Town buildings, yards and storage facilities. I also plan to introduce in
12 2008 a proposal to ban plastic bag use among retailers in the Town of Taos, in
13 hopes of reducing the appearance of these bags blowing around Taos, snagged
14 and piling up on vacant lots, in arroyos, and road side.
15
- 16 • The Town has passed an impressive collection of ‘Green’ initiatives for the Town
17 including green house gas emission reductions, fair trade, energy conservation,
18 and solar energy production, just to name a few.
19
- 20 • We are in the process of revisiting the Town’s Land Use Development Code to
21 better match constituent’s vision of what Taos in the future ought to look and
22 function like – preserving what we should and expediting the progression of what
23 we need. This process is known as the TaosSmartCode, and the public continues
24 to be a vital part of commenting on the ultimate code we adopt.
25
- 26 • Our Town has appointed a new Town of Taos Police Chief, increased our
27 emergency service payroll rates to be competitive, and **we have proudly**
28 **completed the first phase of accreditation for the Town of Taos Police**
29 **Department.** It is anticipated that final accreditation will occur late this month –
30 and we shall soon be among only a short list of other cities in the state to achieve
31 this status. This all speaks to the fine job our Town of Taos Police force is now
32 doing.
33
- 34 • Also on the public welfare and safety front, the Town has acquired a new
35 emergency Mobile Command Center and new Taos Volunteer Fire Department
36 engine -- Engine 5 – and continue to be committed to helping fund state-of-the-art
37 equipment for our emergency response volunteers and the dedicated staff who
38 work beside them.
39

40 We also are **proud tonight to announce that Town-wide efforts, led by our**
41 **Taos Volunteer Fire Department, have resulted in the dropping of our ISO**
42 **fire suppression rating from a five to a four.** This lower rating means
43 anywhere from \$50 to \$100 per year savings on fire insurance premiums for
44 homeowners in the Town of Taos. This is a rate lowering effort that over the last
45 several years has saved consumers upwards of \$500 a year in their premiums –
46 and is to the credit of the Taos Volunteer Fire Department, Central Dispatch, and

1 our Public Utilities Department. All have worked together to do a fine job in
2 maintaining and improving our Town's fire fighting capabilities, including
3 improved water sources.
4

- 5 • The Town is also looking forward to assisting the Taos Volunteer Fire
6 Department with expanded services. These are to include additional fire support
7 at the Taos Regional Airport in the near future, expanded service out of the Taos
8 Fire Station #2 located on Camino de Santiago (initial funding for the expansion
9 has already been approved by myself and the Council), and development of a new
10 Fire Station near the proposed Alexander Gusdorf ECO Park. This last is to
11 include a training facility for both the Police and Fire Departments. This will
12 allow the Department to stay ahead of future growth in our community that is
13 occurring in these key areas. We are proud that the larger Taos community also
14 continues to support the efforts of the Taos Volunteer Fire Department – again
15 coming forward during the one-day-a year 'pass the boot' fund drive, raising
16 nearly \$80,000 during this last drive in October.
17
- 18 • On the topic of water, **we have recently received top ratings from the State's**
19 **Water Trust Board**, and their recommendation to the legislature to fund, two
20 more of our Public Utility water improvement projects. We scored 69% on a
21 request for \$2 million for phase two of a water conservation, recycling, treatment
22 and re-use project, and a score of 75% on a request for \$1,331,600 for a storage,
23 conveyance and delivery project. This last project was among the top two
24 recommendations from the Board – out of over 50 requests that were submitted
25 from throughout the state for consideration.
26
- 27 • The Town this year was also a leader in seeing to the ultimate resolution of the
28 40-year Abeyta Water dispute – no small accomplishment given our area's
29 ongoing concern about meeting our future water needs.
30
- 31 • Public Works – which includes 39 staff covering our divisions of parks, street,
32 fleet, transportation (Chile Line), the recycling center, geographic information
33 systems (GIS), and oversight of the Taos Regional Landfill, has had a great year
34 keeping us ahead of the curve when it comes to vital infrastructure needs.
35

36 This year these projects included the redo of Kit Carson's frontage outside of the
37 Buena Vida Condominiums, installation of a four-way stop for Kit Carson at
38 Burch Street, rumble strips on Kit Carson Road between Quesnel Street and
39 Roberts Lane, and completion of required basics to further enhance this portion of
40 state road NM 64 within the Town limits to an even greater degree in the next few
41 years.
42

43 Public Works also worked with the State on the complete redesign and
44 construction of NM 585 (Paseo del Canon), which ultimately will include
45 additional lanes, intersection reconfigurations, landscaping, sidewalks, bike lanes
46 and roundabouts totaling around \$8 million in improvements.

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A new much-needed drainage system along Reed Street and Alexander is in the works.

The Town's recycling center was one of only 2 facilities in the State to receive a permit to recycle our area's E-waste.

And, this year the Department completed Ledoux Street entrance enhancements with defined bancos, sidewalks, and signage for this portion of road in the historic district, and other funded and commenced projects have included NM64 - construction to start Spring 2008, and NM240, with design for this project in progress, and a new full cell at the landfill.

- Our Youth & Family Center is another large Department – employing 35 staff – which each and every day accomplishes a lot for our entire community. One proud accomplishment noted by the Director of the Center was the featuring this year of the **Taos Coyotes Youth Ice Hockey team – which plays out of our Center – as the January cover story by the national *USA Hockey* magazine.** The center each year makes more and more inroads as a nationally acclaimed state-of-the-art facility, annually serving tens of thousands of clients from throughout the region – families and youth involved in everything from special holiday, art and ‘Touch a Truck’ events and contests, to sports training, summer educational and enrichment programs, ice and roller skating, swimming, and many other recreational undertakings.

Open 360 days per year, the dedicated Youth & Family staff create a wonderful and safe place for children of all ages and their families – with most activities sponsored for free to the community. The total Town budget to fund this facility, including its special events, programs and capital improvements, is around \$1.3 million annually. This truly is a commitment to our area's youth.

- This year also saw the ultimate completion of a Men's Homeless Shelter in conjunction with numerous community volunteers and supporters – and interdepartmental effort led by our Buildings Department.
- The Town has organized its community contributions into a new process. This year the Town issued three request for proposal (RFP) processes. This allowed everyone applying to better compete on a more level playing field for the finite funds available. This year being the first year for the new set up, approximately \$120,000 was granted to groups applying for three different RFP offerings. These included Community Development, Economic Development, and an RFP to Impact and Reduce Youth Violence and Crime. Next year we hope to go even higher with the funds – and the number of submissions we get.
- However, it should also be pointed out that we assist many more nonprofit and community organizations than those who received funding through the RFPs this

1 year. We also help groups through being their fiscal agent for funding they
2 receive from the State, we house many at very reasonable rents in buildings we
3 own and maintain – including UNM Taos, CAV, DreamTree, TCA, and Ancianos
4 -- and we also have funded advertising projects promoting Taos through
5 organizations who are also promoting their own events. This year these included
6 the Taos Gallery Association, New Mexico Women in the Arts, and the Santa Fe
7 Film Festival.

- 8
- 9 • The Town this year led an effort to improve the transparent manner in which the
10 Town does business by creating and filling a new public relations coordinator
11 position. This staff member has helped in communicating information to
12 constituents about the Town's actions – and in listening to their input and
13 effectively getting it to staff to act on.
 - 14
 - 15 • Many other new staff members have joined our ranks to improve our
16 professionalism and the quality and effectiveness of what we do on behalf of all
17 those we serve. Among these management positions are a new Librarian,
18 Director of Human Resources, Director of Conventions, and Sales & Marketing at
19 Conventions – with positions of Assistant Town Manager, Planning & Zoning,
20 Buildings Official, and Community & Economic Development Director yet to
21 come. Filling these key positions are among our challenges. But, they are ones
22 we feel we are effectively tackling as we continue to become more and more
23 competitive both inside and outside our region.
 - 24
 - 25 • As we move forward, the Town is also focused on raising the millions of dollars
26 needed to fund the actual construction of an expanded Taos Public Library. The
27 plan is to double its current 14,000 sq. ft. While the planning and design have
28 been funded, this is a future project that is among our priorities as we move into
29 our 2008-09 budget period. Our Library, a key community asset, currently has
30 over 24,000 registered borrowers, although the library's 'legal service area',
31 which is the Town of Taos, has only 5,000 constituents. The Town is the sole
32 financial supporter for the Taos Public Library, serving not only the Town, but the
33 entire Taos County area and area visitors. The Library now has 70,355 print
34 books, 2,753 Audio Materials (audio books, CDs, music CDs), and 3,727 video
35 tapes and DVDs. The Library subscribes to 144 periodicals and newspapers, and
36 pays for three databases – with the State Library underwriting ten more than the
37 Department accesses.
 - 38

39 I know I could go on for hours about all that has been accomplished this year – but the
40 list I've just gone through gives you an overall idea of the width and breadth of all the
41 Town of Taos accomplishes day in and day out each and every year on behalf of its
42 community.

43

44 For over the last 5 years, I have been proud to serve the Town of Taos as its Mayor. I
45 was born and went to school here – married, had my family and raised my children here.

1 I represented Taos in the state legislature for 6 years, have been a councilman for 17
2 years, and have run many different and successful businesses here for over 40 years.

3
4 I will continue to use my experience and leadership skills to work with our community
5 and employees to preserve Taos – its history and its culture – but also provide a friendly
6 and helpful atmosphere for smart, controlled growth.

7
8 I invite all of you to join me – even to call me directly whenever you have input you
9 believe I should hear. I have an open door to everyone in Taos to sit down and discuss
10 your ideas – and when necessary, resolve our differences.

11
12 Together, in this way, I believe we will continue to make Taos an enduring – and ever
13 improving – place for ourselves and our children.

14