

**San Juan County Commission
Regular Meeting
October 3, 2023**

Chairman Lanier called the San Juan County Commission meeting to order on October 3, 2023, at 4:04 p.m. in the Commission Chambers located in the County Administration Building, 100 S. Oliver Drive, Aztec, New Mexico. Mike Stark gave the invocation and Commissioner Fortner led the Pledge of Allegiance. Those present were:

CHAIRMAN	Steve Lanier
CHAIRMAN PRO-TEM	John T. Beckstead
MEMBER	Terri D. Fortner
MEMBER	GloJean Todacheene
MEMBER	Gary McDaniel
CHIEF DEPUTY ASSESSOR	John Kuhn
CLERK	Tanya Shelby
TREASURER	Carol Taulbee
UNDERSHERIFF	Cory Tanner
COUNTY MANAGER	Mike Stark
DEPUTY COUNTY MANAGER	Steven Saavedra
ATTORNEY	Joe Sawyer
DEPUTY ATTORNEY	Ellen Wayne
EMERGENCY MANAGER	Mike Mestas
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER	Kim Martin
PUBLIC WORKS ADMINISTRATOR	Nick Porell
FIRE CHIEF	David Vega
DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF	John Gilbert
DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF	Donovan Mack
PUBLIC RELATIONS & FILM MANAGER	Devin Neeley
PROJECT MANAGER	Porter Smith
VISITORS:	6

Regular Meeting

Approval of Agenda

Mike Stark, County Manager, stated that there were no changes to the agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Todacheene, seconded by Chairman Pro-Tem Beckstead to approve the agenda as presented. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

Consent Agenda

1. Approval of FY24 Budget Adjustment #2-Resolution No. 23-24-18

A motion was made by Chairman Pro-Tem Beckstead, seconded by Commissioner Fortner to approve the Consent Agenda. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

New Business

1. Presentation on Engie Shiprock Solar Project

Anthony Crutch, ENGIE Senior Project Developer, presented the following information:

- ENGIE Solar is in the early stages the of design and development of a 360-Megawatt solar electric generation and battery storage facility located on BLM land with 3 private landowners adjacent near Waterflow, NM
- ENGIE is a diversified energy company with experience generating or delivering almost every major existing fuel source and strongly believes renewables will play an increasing role in the future of electricity generation. Current operations consist of 4,000 megawatts of wind and solar farms throughout the United States and Canada.
- Field surveys have been performed to identify bio, cultural, or wetland issues. No federally listed species were identified in the BLM solar generation area but small populations of the Mesa Verde cactus just west of the site were identified.
- The project will benefit the County by expanding the tax base, providing construction jobs, an estimated 13 full-time positions once the project becomes operational, and economic support to local businesses through the purchase of goods and services.
- The project will be conducted with safety as priority and with the goal of pursuing additional programs in the County as follows: children's health/education, environmental awareness and sustainability, and community culture/well-being.

Commissioner Fortner inquired about the management of potential wildfires caused by the solar panels and how decommissioned solar panels are handled. Mr. Crutch indicated that there will always be remote and full-time operations which will collaborate with emergency response in the area; however, the studies have concluded there are no higher risks for wildfires. Additionally, there are contractors that dispose of the decommissioned panels. Commissioner Todacheene asked if the project would affect migrating birds. Mr. Crutch indicated that in project planning, the company formally consulted with the New Mexico Fish and Wildlife which stated that the project would not affect wildlife.

2. State of San Juan County Fire & Rescue

David Vega, Fire Chief, updated the Commission on the state of San Juan County Fire & Rescue. Mr. Vega highlighted the following:

- Mission Statement: Serving a stronger community; Vision Statement: Provide professional and progressive volunteer emergency services
- San Juan County Fire & Rescue serves as an all-risk fire department which serves 5,000 plus square miles consisting of 11 fire districts and 28 fire stations
- There are 19 uniformed full-time staff plus 10 administrative/shop staff and 160 volunteers; only 1/3 of the volunteers are active.
- Annual calls for service estimate at 9,000 (25 per day)

- In comparison, Durango Fire District has 101 full-time firefighters, 40 volunteers, 16 fire stations, and 6,500 annual calls; City of Farmington Fire Department has 99 full-time firefighters, No volunteers, 6 fire stations, and 15,000 plus annual calls
- Since August 5th, there have been 77 re-tones for service which means that if dispatch does not receive a response from the local district, another district is contacted to respond.
- There has been a continuing decline in volunteers across the nation due to the decrease of the volunteer culture, work to life balance, and training standards.
- The sustainability of San Juan County Fire & Rescue is at risk due to the following:
 - Decrease in staffing- the National Fire Protection Agency standards of cover require 4 trained members to respond to fire structures (current coverage is 3.43)
 - Increase in medical response time
 - Training standards/requirements
 - Rising costs of vehicle maintenance/repairs and capital equipment costs
 - The average cost invested per firefighter is \$22,500- Personal protective equipment (PPE), self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), radio, and pager
 - Capital replacement costs for next five years:
 1. Four engines- current cost \$750,000 (original budget \$400,000)
 2. One Tender- current cost \$530,000 (original budget \$325,000)
 3. Ladder 61- current cost \$1.8 million (original budget \$750,000)
 4. SCBA- replaced every ten years (up for replacement)- current cost \$2 million
- Annual Operations Budget
 - \$2.8 million quarter percent gross receipt tax (222 Budget)
 - \$1.3 million state fire fund (209 Budget)- Based on Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating
 - The Farmington Fire Department FY 2023 budget estimates at \$10 million
- External stakeholders- New Mexico State Fire Marshal and ISO Fire Suppression Rating Schedule
 - ISO evaluates municipal fire-protection efforts in communities throughout the United States. Insurance companies use Public Protection Classification (PPC) program information to help establish fair premiums for fire insurance – generally offering lower premiums in communities with better protection.
 - Fire Suppression Rating Schedule
 - Emergency Communications- maximum of 10 points
 - Fire Department- maximum of 50 points
 1. Fire Flow Requirements- water brought to a scene and that flow has been tested yearly
 - It is difficult to get the water user associations to agree to the yearly testing
 2. Type and extent of training provided to fire company personnel
 3. Number of people who participate in training
 4. Firefighter response to emergencies
 - Water supply- maximum of 40 points
 - Currently, there are seven County District that do not meet the standard of at least four trained members to fires in structures and twelve adults willing and able to volunteer their services as firefighters.

Fire Chief Vega presented the following solutions:

- Amend and restate Ordinance 49
- Consolidate the districts to one fire department identification number which will help with the ISO ratings which requires the consent of the New Mexico Fire Marshal
- Restructure existing administration staff to put more firefighters in the field
 - Continue to seek approval for additional full-time employees
 - Currently, there are 18 new volunteers in the cadet academy with the focus on continued recruitment and retention

Commissioner McDaniel suggested a recruitment campaign and recruiting from high schools. Chief Vega explained that recruitment efforts are done through social media, billboards, career fairs, and high schools. It is difficult to encourage people to volunteer when they receive a small amount of pay for the services provided. Chairman Pro-Tem Beckstead asked about the effect on the volunteers from consolidation of the districts. Chief Vega explained that all the volunteers understand that to sustain, changes are necessary, and they are encouraged to maintain the "house pride" within the district they serve. Mike Stark, County Manager, stated that the amendment to Ordinance 49 will be presented at the next regular meeting for approval which is the first step to moving to one identification number. Commissioner Fortner asked if there is any support being garnered from the legislature. Chief Vega stated that a recruitment and retention bill is being drafted to be introduced in the next legislative session. Chairman Pro-Tem Beckstead requested that Chairman Lanier discuss the importance of testing the water flow of the hydrants with the water commission/rural water users.

3. Consideration of Commission Meeting Schedule for November 2023

Mike Stark, County Manager, indicated that the Regular Local Election is scheduled for November 7th. As required by state law, the Commission has between 6 days and 10 days after the election to canvass the results. It is recommended by Tanya Shelby, County Clerk, that the regular scheduled meeting on November 7th be moved to November 14th to accommodate this requirement. Staff recommended cancelling the regular meeting on November 21st. A motion was made by Chairman Pro-Tem Beckstead, seconded by Commissioner Todacheene to approve the Commission Meeting Schedule for November 2023. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

Report from County Manager

Mike Stark reported the following:

- The San Juan County employee wellness fair will be held on October 4th from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at McGee Park.
- Comcast was awarded \$15.55 million to extend broadband service to unserved and underserved areas in San Juan County.

Reports From Elected Officials And Department Heads

Carol Taulbee, Treasurer, reported that 29 properties were sold at the New Mexico Property Tax auction.

Cory Tanner, Undersheriff, announced that the Sheriff's Department applied for a grant in July for recruitment/retentional efforts and was awarded \$1.575 million to be dispersed within the next 3 years.

Mike Mestas, Emergency Manager, announced the following:

- Bloomfield Irrigation project should be completed on October 9th
- There will be 80 response agencies in attendance at the San Juan County Full-Scale Drill on October 7th from 7 a.m. to 12 p.m. at San Juan College.
- Household Hazardous Waste Day for Bloomfield, Kirtland, and San Juan County will be October 14th from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the San Juan County Administrative Building parking lot.

Devin Neeley, Public Relations & Film Manager, stated that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be performing a nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System on October 10th at 12:20 p.m.

Comments / Input From The General Public

None

Closed Executive Session

A motion was made by Chairman Pro-Tem Beckstead, seconded by Commissioner Fortner to go into closed executive session to discuss threatened or pending litigation in which the Public Body may become a participant regarding the purchase of water rights. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously. Upon return a motion was made by Chairman Pro-Tem Beckstead, seconded by Commissioner Todacheene to go back into open meeting. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously. Chairman Pro-Tem Beckstead stated that nothing other than what was stated in the motion to go into closed executive session was discussed.

Adjourn

Being no further business, Chairman Lanier adjourned the meeting at 5:45 p.m.

APPROVED THIS 17TH DAY OF OCTOBER 2023

BY THE SAN JUAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:




Chairman Steve Lanier

Chairman Pro-Tem John T. Beckstead



Glor Jean Todacheene



Terri D. Fortner



Gary McDaniel





Tanya Shelby, County Clerk