

## **My Turn**

### **It's time we all support Kit Carson and its efforts**

**ANNETTE PATTERSON STONER**

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I am a 42-year-old, full-time student at UNM-Taos. I have had several occasions to listen, read and discuss issues surrounding the Kit Carson board recall effort and opinions surrounding the broadband project.

Putting emotions aside and accepting the fact that no one favors a rate hike, I have yet to hear a clear and substantiated charge put forward. As a mother of a 9-year-old, I felt compelled to learn more about this situation rather than ride the coat tails of local rumors.

I chose to educate myself and attend the most recent Kit Carson hearing which was to decide the fate of nine of the 11 Kit Carson board members. After listening to both sides, I feel it's time for myself and our community to step up and get educated about what is really going on at Kit Carson, the broadband initiative and why the recall petition of these board members?!

I can go on about the well established "Justice 101" expectation of due process requiring specific and credible charges be brought and shown, but Judge Nelson already clarified that with her recent ruling. The Kit

Carson Board members who were evaluated by the members of the Cooperative and endured an election process to serve us all — a group of protestors should not be able to undermine an election process of the people with ambiguous accusations.

Thank you Judge Nelson for showing us that due process is the standard that we expect to follow in our community and setting an example for the generations to come.

From what I could gather, one major bullet of the recall petition says that the trustees would "Subject you and other members to a \$19 million loan for broadband without any business plan to recover it?"

Someone really lent them \$19 million without a plan to pay it back? Where can we get such a loan? They were awarded a \$45 million grant without a plan?

We learned that this accusation on the face of the recall petition was a complete falsehood made to all the people that signed it.

People need to know that as part of the Obama American Recovery Act, we were asked as a community to determine what our town needed in order to receive this potential funding from the

government. A meeting was held, and those who showed up requested more accessible and improved broadband.

Leadership heard Taos citizens ask for something that would encourage growth for our local businesses, cater to the needs of tourists and would solidify the education for our children and those of us enrolled in continuing education programs. The result was Kit Carson winning the largest grant offered by this act in the state on our behalf — and why are people fighting this?

In class we learned that there are many ways to evaluate a business situation. One good way is benchmarking: How do our rates compare to the surrounding utilities? I understand that our rates are equal or lower than most. How many utilities can say they have not raised rates in 25 years? I understand that the rates were actually reduced twice in that period!

How many utilities can match that benchmark?

It's been 25 years, while I don't have the funds for a rate hike, I understand that it's business and it's time. When we had no natural gas for six days, I was grateful for my reliable electricity! We have saved on propane since Kit Carson provided competition to the market, now we can expect better, more affordable broadband services.

Finally, as a mother and student who wants to be able to stay and pursue a career in the community of which I love, I could not be more excited about the high-speed Broadband initiative. Immediately, we will enjoy the educational benefits, limited only to our imagination in this growing industry.

I see the recall as nothing less than an effort that would undermine the future of our youth and the growth of our community.

It's time we all support Kit Carson in its efforts to keep the economy flowing in our community.

Support their foresight for the needs of our future.

Support a company who in our darkest, coldest moments, has warmed our families and simplified our lives.

*Annette Patterson Stoner is a Taos resident.*