

## County set to adopt new building codes

**By J.R. Logan**

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While the county prepares to implement sweeping changes to its land use regulations, it is also planning to adopt new building codes that have been mandated by the state.

Deputy county manager and planning director Rick Bellis said the new codes could make development “more difficult and more expensive.”

The Taos County Commission will hold a public hearing Tuesday (Aug. 2) at 3 p.m. before voting on whether to adopt the new building codes.

Taos County is currently operating under standardized codes from 2006, but Bellis said the requirement to update to 2009 standards was attached to federal stimulus funding dolled out to the states.

At the upcoming hearing, the county commission will consider the adoption of the 2009 International Building Code, the 2009 International Residential Code, and a modified version of the Energy Conservation Code — all required by the state.

In addition, the county will consider adopting the 2009 International Property Maintenance Code, the 2009 ICC Fire Code, and the ICC 2009 International Wildland-Urban Interface Code, all which would create what Bellis called “more flexibility” in the county.

Copies of the proposed codes are available for inspection at the Taos County Planning Department at 105 Albright St.

Bellis said the baseline international codes were designed more for urban settings rather than rural landscapes. As such, he said the state has made some changes to better reflect the reality of construction in New Mexico.

In addition, Bellis said the county is going to make some revisions to the code where it can in order to make it a better fit for the Taos area.

The county has taken some heat about the quick implementation of both the building codes and its new land use code.

Bellis acknowledged that the timing could give that appearance that the county was trying to pull a fast one.

“Politically I think it’s bad timing because the more regulations you throw at people at the same time the more frustrated people become and the more they think you’re trying to blow something by them,” Bellis said.

Still, Bellis said pairing the adoption of the land use and building codes could have some benefit.

“I think it’s essentially that if development is going to become more complicated on the construction side of it that we have a land use code that is seamless with that process and makes it easier and more encouraging to people.”