



My Turn

Land use: No time to stop now

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The Taos County Commission did the majority of Taos County citizens a disservice in rejecting the new Land Use Regulations.

At the same time they abruptly stopped a county-wide land use education process that has been in progress for six years and gathering momentum countywide.

Sadly, three commissioners couldn't take the heat and opted to support a small minority of late to the party, accusatory, doom and gloom naysayers.

The responsibility rests with the commissioners who shirked their elected duties.

The angry citizens were reacting because they weren't informed of the existence of new regulations which could affect their property. As a member of the citizen's task force that wrote the main body of the regulations, I remember thinking to myself, more than once I hope that the neighborhoods that are constructing zoning overlays are including everyone in the process.

From Arroyo Seco to Arroyo Hondo people came to the county on Tuesday (Jan. 31) and made their feelings known and neighborhood association leaders have a lesson to learn. That lesson is: It's not possible to be too inclusive when you're trying to make rules that affect people's property.

There's also a lesson for the angry uninformed folks who prevailed that Tuesday. That lesson is: If you don't pay attention and become involved then you risk being left out of important decisions that affect your life.

During the four years that it took for our task force to draft the regulations there were many times that it would have been easy to stay home and skip that week's argument about a particular subject. Had I stayed home I wouldn't have had my say about it and that would have been on me and me alone. I did not and could not expect another task force member to argue my views.

Our weekly meetings were all about discussion, disagreement and persuasion. While we hoped for consensus we often had to make due with compromise but through it all we treated each other with respect.

There's nothing wrong with disagreement when it's accompanied by mutual respect. Those of you that tried to shout the lady down that Tuesday disrespected her and that shouldn't have happened. At that moment all of you diminished yourselves. The people of this county should not stand by and let this shortsighted Taos County Commission decision derail our land use planning process. We might need to stand back and take a little break but it's no time to stop now.

Please consider the following: The current Land Use Ordinance still in effect is a very flawed document and it doesn't work very well for anybody.

The new land use regulations continue the spirit of the overall residential agricultural zoning of our county while streamlining the land use decision process.

In our current economic state, it's vitally important that applicants can easily understand and navigate through the Special Use requirements, so that we can bring good business and good jobs to our county.

Our children, mine included, continue to leave Taos County in order to make a living. When our kids leave town and don't return except for visits, they gradually lose their connection to the lands that they grew up playing and working on.

Once that connection is gone, how can we blame them for seeing an inherited family property as an amount of money rather than a real cultural treasure?

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