

Angel Fire, Eagle Nest officials ponder new county boundaries

By Jesse Chaney

from the *Sangre de Cristo Chronicle*
The Taos News, 12/27/2012

Although the mayors of Angel Fire and Eagle Nest are disappointed with their own county government, they are wary of a proposal to put the villages in Taos County.

“It wouldn’t be any different than where we are with Colfax County right now — with little or no representation,” Eagle Nest Mayor Richard Còrdova said. “No service, it takes forever for them to get a snowplow up here to the county roads, most of the tax dollars go (elsewhere) ... and we don’t hardly get anything up here.”

During a meeting this fall with representatives from municipal governments throughout the Enchanted Circle, Taos Mayor Darren Còrdova suggested that Taos County may be able to serve Angel Fire and Eagle Nest better than Colfax County does.

“I believe that Angel Fire and Eagle Nest have always been the stepchild of Colfax County because of how displaced they are,” Darren Còrdova said, adding that Taos is about 40 miles closer to the Moreno Valley than the Colfax County seat of Ratòn.

With four ski resorts within a 20-mile radius, Darren Còrdova said, Taos County and the Moreno Valley have a lot in common. Taos County is home to Taos Ski Valley, Red River Ski Area and Sipapu Ski and Summer Resort, and the Angel Fire Resort ski area is in the Moreno Valley.

“We share more in common with Angel Fire and Eagle Nest than Angel Fire and Eagle Nest probably share with the biggest city in Colfax County, which is Ratòn,” Darren Còrdova said, adding that many Moreno Valley residents already travel to Taos for groceries and medical services.

Darren Còrdova also said governments in the Enchanted Circle could more effectively promote the region with shared lodgers tax from Taos County. He said he would like to see a single county commissioner representing Taos Ski Valley, Red River, Angel Fire and Eagle Nest.

“All those communities have so much in common. It just makes sense,” he said.

Red River Mayor Linda Calhoun said she supports the idea. “We’re all the same type of community, we’re all tourist- oriented, we’re all totally dependent on the tourists, so it just kind of makes sense,” she said.

But leaders in Angel Fire and Eagle Nest said they fear officials in Taos County are gunning for the Moreno Valley's property tax revenue. "I feel that we at this point are already a stepchild to Colfax County, and I foresee that would be the same way with Taos County as well," Angel Fire Mayor Barbara Cottam said.

The Moreno Valley generates more than half of Colfax County's tax base, Richard Córdova said, and he wants the money generated in the local area to stay there. He believes officials in Taos County want Moreno Valley taxpayers to help support Holy Cross Hospital, which is suffering from a \$10 million shortfall.

"Darren Córdova asked us if we wanted to annex, and I said 'Absolutely not,'" Richard Córdova said.

Darren Córdova emphasized that he would not support the potential annexation if leaders in Angel Fire and Eagle Nest opposed it.

Darren Córdova said Taos County's possible annexation of the Moreno Valley has been discussed in the past, and the most recent proposal is far from finalized.

Both Richard Córdova and Cottam said they would prefer to see Angel Fire, Eagle Nest and Red River establish a new county altogether. "I would go for that immediately," Richard Córdova said. "...We'd be in the top 10 or 20 counties as far as income, because it's all based off of the property taxes."

Though she would support Taos County's annexation of the Moreno Valley, Calhoun said she would also be happy to see Red River, Angel Fire, Eagle Nest and maybe even Taos Ski Valley start a county of their own.

Under New Mexico law, a county may annex another area if it is more convenient and economical for that county to serve the area and the annexation makes it more convenient for residents in the area to travel to their county seat. Annexation would require a petition signed by at least 51 percent of the voters in the area to be annexed and then an election of voters in the area.