

New faces promise power shift at county

By J.R. Logan

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This issue of the Taos News summarized a number of issues facing the newly formed Taos County Commission. We are excerpting those of interest to planners.

Land use code

Few issues raised the ire of the community as much as the county's proposed land use code, which was abandoned in January after a crowd of angry residents stormed the county commission chambers insisting the plan be scrapped. Barrone and Jaramillo were the only commissioner who voted to oppose dropping the issue.

During the spring campaign, Blankenhorn and Romero said they were behind an overhaul to the county's land use code, and they chided the previous commission for dropping the ball on important revisions.

Since winning the June primary, the new commissioners say they've been meeting weekly with those who raised the most concerns in an effort to find a compromise. Blankenhorn said the document presented in January needed some fixes. He also said he'd like to see new general regulations updated before the county brings in neighborhood associations that have prepared customized zoning maps. The county tried to do all those things at once last year.

Blankenhorn said the board will likely take up the land use code in the next six months, and he's optimistic that the issue will be less contentious. "The mob storming was because people didn't know what was in [the code]," Blankenhorn said. "I think it will be different this time."

Romero also said he won't be dissuaded by a vocal critics as long as the county reaches out to as many people as it can before adopting the new regulations. Romero said voters threw him out of office in the '90s after he voted for a previous version of the land use code: "It cost me my seat, but I felt good about that decision because I knew it was what was best for all of us."