



MyTurn

Seeking an informed and fair decision

Pam Fernández

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I understand that the health care system in Taos County is facing challenges and would like to offer assistance and support for overcoming those challenges.

According to a study by “The Daily Yonder” Taos County was one of the top 50 rural counties with an increase in poverty between 2007 and 2011 — the only New Mexico county on the list. We all feel the effects of the economic downturn every day. We see the homes for sale and the closed businesses. This is a time to come together with honesty, transparency and accountability to plan for an economy better buffered from cycles of boom and bust, an economy designed to benefit all Taos-ers.

This is why we are not in support of more tax dollars being provided to Holy Cross Hospital until such time as it provides 100 percent honesty, transparency and accountability to the people of the county. The county commissioners must be able to examine the books, along with the public. Only then will an informed and fair decision be possible.

We are here to make the following recommendations:

n Delay any decision regarding the indigent fund until more information is available; do not be rushed into a decision. The full impact of such a decision on the health and well-being of county residents should be thoroughly studied and understood.

n Convene a Blue Ribbon Commission of citizens from throughout the county to study the health care system as a whole, including the hospital. Convene at least three public meetings in the county to gather public input. The study report should address at a minimum: the benefits of the implementation of the Affordable Care Act next year and the accompanying reduction in uncompensated care through increased rates of insurance; a comparison of various rural hospital management models to determine if a contracted corporate, for-profit management scheme is best for Taos County; a comparison of various rural hospital programs to determine if another type, such as the Critical Access Hospital, is more sustainable for Taos County.

A Blue Ribbon Commission, study, and public meetings had a central role in gathering information and public opinion to move forward with the bond issue that built the hospital. So there is precedent in Taos County that our need for public hospital be tied to a public process.

n That the County Indigent Fund adopt a policy clearly stating that indigent fund dollars flow to

the benefit of the eligible persons, not to the benefit of a particular facility, especially one which does not and cannot meet all of the health-care needs of Taose-os.

n That Taos County and the public study the examples of Santa Fe County and others, which have run into trouble with the federal government as a result of after-the-fact expenditure adjustments to New Mexico Sole Community Hospital Funds.

Other county residents interested in overcoming these challenges in an open and respectful manner can join our efforts by contacting Pam Fernández at (575) 587-0264 or email health-mattersnm@gmail.com.

Pam Fernández wrote on behalf of the Taos Committee for a Public Hospital with Accountability to the Public.