

Editorial

Town, county: Why can't we just get along?

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The town of Taos has decided to annex the airport and move dispatch into the Regional Command Center — the county be damned.

The town council approved both measures at its March 12 meeting despite offers from the county to find other solutions.

So much for that collaboration touted by the town when new county commissioners Tom Blankenhorn and Gabe Romero began their terms in January.

Instead we see paternalistic posturing and distrust by town officials. That's too bad, because we believe having the county as a willing partner would be beneficial. Perhaps town officials expected the new and improved commission to roll over and do whatever they wanted — like letting the town annex six miles of highway and the airport unchallenged, or moving dispatch into a building without knowing exactly how much it will cost. The town didn't appear to seriously consider other alternatives.

The county has made what we could characterize as reasonable offers to shoulder some of the financial burden of upgrading the airport — thus avoiding annexation. As for dispatch, the county suggested relocating operations to one of its now-empty buildings and thereby saving the cost of leasing space in the Command Center.

But such overtures by the county weren't appealing to the town. We believe sending a list of 33 questions was not a friendly response to the county's proposal. It seemed to us more like a stall tactic than an earnest effort to move forward collaboratively.

Town officials say they don't trust the county. Well, gentlemen, that's why we have legally binding contracts. The town and county lawyers could have at least sought a solution, but no effort was even made to flesh out a possible plan.

During this whole episode, we've heard the town complain about the burden of funding such regional services as the Taos Public Library and Taos Youth and Family Center — institutions that add to our community's quality of life. Rather than take the county up on its offer to share those costs, the town now plans to take on the airport and dispatch by itself.

There is plenty of irony in this scenario: the county has threatened litigation that could derail the airport expansion entirely, and the town's decision to move into the command center could fracture dispatch rather than unite it.

Like Town Councilor Michael Silva, who voted against annexation, we believe a better solution could have been worked out with the county concerning annexation.

The same holds true for dispatch. Perhaps the Regional Command Center is the best option, but in its hurry to enter a lease agreement with Kit Carson, the town left many questions unanswered.

We had hopes that the town and county could come together for the good of their constituencies. But with its shortsighted actions we believe the Town Council has sentenced Taos to more of the same.