



THE TAOS NEWS

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Editorial

Time for town to rethink its approach on airport fundin g

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Eighth Judicial District Judge Jeff McElroy sided with Taos County when he ruled last week the town didn't follow proper procedure when it annexed the airport and a six-mile highway right-of-way.

We weren't surprised by the outcome. The town's goal to improve the Taos Regional Airport is a worthy one, but it failed miserably in its approach.

Yes, we want a better, safer airport. People who fly in and out of Taos, whether they are tourists, business people, firefighters or medical responders deserve that.

The project could eventually lead to regular commercial service, which would be crucial to the area's economy, especially given the sale of Taos Ski Valley and the upgrades there the new owner will undertake. But it's too bad town officials felt they had to pick the county's pocket to get what they wanted. Short on cash to come up with its match for a big federal grant, the town snubbed multiple offers from the county that would have covered the cost of the project without requiring the unpopular annexation.

Mayor Darren Còrdova said he didn't trust the county, and the team at the town said the county could not legally give the town the cash. The town didn't even try to find a mutually acceptable solution; they just steamrolled forward with an annexation.

So the county struck back with two lawsuits aimed at a slew of missteps the town made when doing the annexation.

The mayor told a reporter after the court's ruling, "This is a very political case and we anticipated it might go this way because of political pressure."

Given the facts of the case, we seriously doubt Judge McElroy's decision was political. He noted several areas where the town erred, starting with violating the due process clause of the state constitution when as the owner of the airport it petitioned itself for annexation.

Còrdova said last week that the town would regroup and address the problems addressed by the court. Rather than trying to ram through another annexation, we hope it includes a serious discussion with the county about seeing the airport project through to the end.

After all, this is a project that would benefit the both of them.