



# THE TAOS NEWS

Best U.S. Weekly Paper- NNA 2007, 2008, 2010  
Inland Press Nation's Best Weekly Newspaper 2009

## Residents address county commission on proposed Des Montes subdivision

By Elizabeth Cleary

*The Taos News*, 3/20/2014

The agent for a proposed subdivision in Des Montes has altered plans for the development after hearing citizens' concerns, but some still say the subdivision could be catastrophic for the area's water supply.

The 400-acre subdivision, proposed by developers Jerome de Bontin and Randy Havevutt, was originally going to have 36 10-15 acre lots on which residents would be allowed to build swimming pools.

The entire subdivision was originally allowed to use 18 acre-feet of water per year. Alex Abeyta, the engineer for the subdivision who is also acting as agent for the subdivision, said that after locals raised concerns about water usage, the development will be able to use just 12 acre-feet of water per year and swimming pools will no longer be allowed.

Because each lot within the subdivision is so large, each resident will drill his own well.

A hearing before the Taos County Commission on the subdivision was scheduled during a regular commission meeting Tuesday (March 18) but Abeyta requested the hearing be postponed to give him time to continue talks with Taos Pueblo. The proposed subdivision is located adjacent to the Pueblo, and Abeyta said Pueblo representatives are among those concerned about the water supply.

Representatives from Taos Pueblo present at Tuesday's commission meeting said they wanted to wait to elaborate on their concerns until the hearing date. Commissioners agreed to postpone the hearing until May 1.

Still, a number of Taos County residents went before the commission Tuesday to speak either in favor of or in opposition to the proposed subdivision.

Among those was Pam Harris, who lives in Arroyo Hondo and is on the board for the Upper Arroyo Hondo Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association. She told *The Taos News* that her principal concern about the subdivision is the fact that because each resident will have his own well, the residents won't be required to form mutual domestic water associations. Those associations, required for wells shared by 10 or more homes, monitor the water for hazardous substances such as uranium. Although Abeyta says other measures will be in place to monitor the wells at the subdivision, Harris says she is skeptical the wells will have the same kind of oversight.

In addition, Harris says that the county faces drought conditions in which no one can be sure what the water supply will look like in the future. She also says that because, according to developers, most of the lots will be second homes, the owners won't be part of the community nor will they be invested in it like those families whose history here dates back centuries.

"This is an issue of class," she said. "This is an issue of money over people."

Michael Silva, who is vying for the county commission's District 5 seat in the upcoming election, also addressed the commission with a more favorable view of the proposed subdivision. He told

*The Taos News* that he would rather see the large lot sizes such as at Beausoleil than a more crowded subdivision, which would use more water per acre.

"If we stop developing we're going to die as a community," Silva said.

However, Silva said he's glad to see the subdivision will no longer allow residents to have swimming pools.

"If anyone is going to propose a swimming pool (in Taos County) they ought to be shot down in a heartbeat," he said.

Abeyta is the agent for another subdivision planned near Beausoleil called Sierra de Taos. That subdivision will have 24 2-acre lots and use four shared water wells. That subdivision will also have a limit of 12 acre-feet per year, as approved by the state engineer.

The application is on file with Taos County planning and the hearing before the commission is scheduled for April 9. Abeyta said he has yet to hear much feedback from the public on this subdivision.

"We're trying to listen to people's concerns and address all concerns that are reasonable," he said.