

Editorial

Town leaders: Let's get down to basics, please

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The Barrone administration is nearing its first year in office. So much hope by voters was riding on the election of Mayor Dan Barrone and Councilors Judi Cantu and Fritz Hahn. After all, the three won by a landslide.

But a year in, we see the new council disintegrating into the same petty squabbling that's derailed progress in Taos for decades. What's worse, this small-mindedness comes at a time where the town's most basic infrastructure is literally falling apart.

We give the current council credit for improved relations with the county. During the previous administration, the two governments were openly at war. Probably Barrone's dual role as mayor and county commissioner — until his term expired Jan. 1 — helped ease tensions.

The town has also been behind some wonderful art events organized with local groups. It's part of a renewed effort to define Taos as a cool draw for visitors in Northern New Mexico.

But on the most basic nuts and bolts issues, the council is still grasping for solutions. Yes, these are primarily problems this administration inherited. But our question is what is it going to do about them?

For example, last week we reported on the sorry state of the Taos Youth and Family Center, which is estimated to need \$2.5 million in serious repairs. Most of the center was built in 1999; the pool was completed five years later.

The town's \$20,000 report shows Taos should have gotten a better-built center. Among the deficiencies outlined was the use of interior drywall on the exterior.

We credit town staff for at least quantifying the problem. As for the shoddy work, what's done is done. Now, it's up to this council to figure out how to keep this vital service operating.

There are now hushed discussions about proposing a new property tax to fund recreation. We hope the council shows more stability before the proposal is unveiled, and champions the idea when it's put to voters.

Perhaps an even bigger problem is the condition of Taos' roads. After the economy sank in 2009, money for road maintenance was severely cut. Take a quick drive and see what happens five or so years later. We did, and we can say with certainty there are few roads in town that don't have a pothole, some of which are downright dangerous.

A story in this week's paper highlights the needs and the lack of resources.

This is another question the council needs to address: Where is the money to cover millions in needed fixes?

Instead, week after week, we see a town government that can't focus. The ongoing plots to fire the town manager, and the equally petty political theater meant to counter those attacks, are exhausting.

We say enough of the squabbles and posturing. The town elected you to get things done. It's time to focus. Really focus. Let's see some progress.