



# THE TAOS NEWS

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## Editorial

### Request for Taos Plaza cameras is out of focus

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At their Aug. 11 meeting, town councilors agreed to ask for proposals to install cameras at Taos Plaza.

Why? Because as Councilor Judi Cantu claims: "I see it as critical and crucial for safety reasons and it's not happening." Maybe it's not happening because crime statistics don't justify it. Data show no crimes were recorded against any people while they were at Taos Plaza for the first half of this year. In the same period, only two reports were made regarding crimes against property — and both were done at a business that has a camera.

(Astute observers might note cameras installed a while ago on the visitor kiosk, but according to police officials, they have never worked properly.) Compared to other parts of town, Taos Plaza is rather a crime-free zone. Statistics show crime is much more prevalent in the town's commercial district, south of Walmart. In the Historic District, parking lots (not including Taos Plaza) and Kit Carson park also see more criminal activity.

So why install cameras at Taos Plaza? Perhaps the fact Cantu owns property abutting the Plaza might have something to do with it.

If the town wants to spend more money on public safety, we say go for it. But why not ask those who actually police our community where that money might be best spent?

Installing cameras in parking lots might be a better idea, given the fact that there was a rash of break-ins earlier this year.

This is not the first time Councilor Cantu has come up with a proposal that could have used a bit more thought beforehand.

In May, she pitched a community-wide yard sale that would coincide with a celebration she helped organize for the late civil rights leader Cesar Chavez. She said it would attract bargain-hunting tourists to Taos.

Cantu sought \$36,000 in lodgers tax money but the town pared it down to \$13,000 for strictly the Cesar Chavez event.

And while we are respectful of the work Chavez did to establish rights for migrant workers, we question whether attendance at the events last month justified the amount of money the town spent. We are also awaiting numbers to see if indeed the event put heads on beds at area hotels.

So now the town is seeking requests for proposals for cameras at the Plaza. Town employees will have to spend time away from their other work to process them. The cameras will be the topic of another council meeting.

We say cut out the middle person and ask the police chief what's the best use of taxpayer money to ensure public safety in Taos. After all, that's what he was hired to do.