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Town comprehensive strategy filling out

By Andy Dennison

The Taos News, 1/21/2010

State law requires that if a town wants to enforce zoning, it must do so in accordance with a comprehensive plan.

While the town of Taos has had its Vision 2020 master plan since 1999, that document is too broad, vague and contradictory for use as a guideline for zoning and zone changes, say town officials.

Therefore, long-term planner Matthew Foster has been working for six months on a new document, officially called a comprehensive plan, that would align with state law and modern planning principles. Foster noted 120 objectives and 125 policies in Vision 2020.

"It would be very difficult to evaluate zone change requirements because of all the elements in the 2020 document," Foster told the Taos Town Council Tuesday (Jan. 12). "A comprehensive plan will be simpler and more consistent."

The proposed plan will include seven elements: land use, infrastructure, community and economic development, housing, open space, historic and cultural preservation, and parks and recreation.

To start with, Foster said he will introduce the land-use portion of the plan first, likely in June, and have the Town Council adopt each section by ordinance, one at a time.

"A comprehensive plan is a legally defensible document, as long as public input has been taken," said Matthew Spriggs, community and economic development director for the town.

Although state statutes refer to such a document as a "master plan," Foster told the Town Council that too much confusion exists with the Vision 2020, so comprehensive plan will be the operative term.