

Taos County terminates planning director

By Matthew van Buren
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Taos County leaders are keeping mum about former county Planning Director Dale Osborn's recent termination.

County Manager Sammy Pacheco confirmed Osborn's last day was Oct. 2.

Osborn started with the county March 30 and dealt with issues including neighbors' complaints about concerts at the KTAOS Solar Center, Eliu Romero's proposed \$80 million wind farm, zoning plans for neighborhoods around the county and the controversial Miranda Canyon subdivision.

However, Pacheco declined to comment on the reasons for Osborn's termination, and Osborn could not be reached for comment.

Commissioners Dan Barrone and Andrew Chávez also declined to comment, Chávez Pacheco declined to comment on the reasons for Osborn's termination, and Osborn could not be reached for comment, saying that Osborn reported to the county manager, not the commission.

"We would not be involved in that termination at all," Chávez said.

The planning director position appeared as an item on Tuesday's (Oct. 6) agenda to be discussed in executive session, but Barrone said he could not talk publicly about personnel matters.

Pacheco also would not say whether Osborn was fired because he was working with town of Taos Community Development Director Matthew Spriggs on land-use policies.

Spriggs said he e-mailed with Osborn following a Sept. 15 commission meeting at which Mayor Darren Córdova and Councilor Rudy Abeyta discussed the prickly issue of annexation. They told the commission the town has no plans to annex pieces of the county and presented the commission with a town resolution pledging not to initiate any annexation proceedings, such as arbitration or petitioning, without first notifying the county.

Article 3 of the resolution instructs the town department of community and economic development to work with the county planning department to develop land-use policies for a "planning and platting jurisdiction" surrounding the town.

Spriggs said Osborn indicated county commissioners told him not to coordinate with the town.

Pacheco said the county will start the search for a new planning director right away.

“We’ll try to fill that position by the end of the month,” he said.

Until someone is hired, assistant county attorney Adam Baker will also be serving as the planning director. He said he is comfortable with the department employees’ handling of their “healthy workload” and plans to offer guidance when needed and sign off on things like leave requests.

“They all know what they’re supposed to be doing,” he said.

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