



San Marcos Association Newsletter

April

2001

The Community Plan

Your Association has voted to undertake the process of being officially recognized as a "Contemporary Community" by the County Commission and proceeding with all the actions necessary to produce a San Marcos Community Plan. Community planning is a very important and powerful part of the Santa Fe County planning process. The County Growth Management Plan (the General Plan or Master Plan) defines this as the way detailed area planning is to be done.

A Community Plan has the power and responsibility to define locations and conditions for commercial and light industrial nodes, for low cost housing, for various densities of residential housing, etc. within the guidelines and structure of the General Plan. The goal (one of many) is to create a future community which is as self sustaining as practical. The Community Plan becomes an element of the General Plan and may change it in cases of specific zoning location and/or new zoning approaches. It is a powerful tool given to local control by the County Plan.

The first step is to define the exact area to be part of the San Marcos Community. While we are the oldest neighborhood association (apart from Pueblo Governments) we have never established strictly formal boundaries. In starting to do so, we will be having a meeting in May to discuss options with representatives from the various areas within our general area. The intent of the planning effort is to be more inclusive than exclusive; none-the-less, should a particular part of the area wish not to be included, the time to say so is at the beginning.

A Planning Committee will be created to represent all parts of the defined community. While various members of The San Marcos Association expect to be on the Committee, it is by no means limited to our membership. If you have an interest in becoming part of this process, please email: plan@sanmarcosassociation.org We will add you to our email list and notify you of meetings. We will be keeping our membership, for whom we have email addresses, informed of all progress, and will be reporting on the web site.

We have been mailing this newsletter to a slightly wider area than we will probably include within the defined Contemporary Community. While our mailing route goes north to the frontage road, the Community northern boundary will probably be at the south of the Prison/Jail land. The North-South line on the East will be at about the western limit of Eldorado. We may go South to include both CR55 and CR55A. To the West, we will probably include all of the Cerrillos Hills Historic Park, and maybe even all of the Waldo Road. As this will involve us with Los Cerrillos, even though they have their own Plan as a Traditional Community, representatives from there are most welcome.

The entire process is expected to take quite some time. Most such plans take about two years, including public opinion gathering and review meetings. The County Planning Department is very short of planners. We are working with various County officials to see what can be done to get us started before events continue to proceed without the benefits which would come from a well developed plan.

WAP Hearing

For those of you not on the emailing list of Commissioner Javier Gonzales, his last message included the following:

CERRILLOS HILLS BUFFALO MTN UPDATE

For those of you interested in the Buffalo Mountain/J.R. Hale issue, I wanted to let you know that the proposal is tentatively on the agenda for the County Development Review Committee on April 26th at 4pm -- pending review of County and State agencies.

We'll keep you posted when we know for sure whether it will be on the agenda for the April 26th meeting.

Your editor (who also manages the SMA email list) is going to be away from all computers for the month of April. The SMA may not be able to inform you of last minute changes. You may be on one of the many telephone trees or other lists to be informed about WAP events. In case you are not, you might consider having yourself added to the email list of Commissioner Gonzales mentioned above. You may email Terry Brunner at: tbrunner@co.santa-fe.nm.us or call: 995-2760.

It is very important to attend this meeting. The influence of community public opinion and involvement cannot be overestimated in cases such as this.

All presentations to the CDRC should be available in written form as well as being presented verbally. This way, a written record may go to the Commissioners who will be hearing the case some six weeks after the CDRC hearing.

When you go to the hearing, take a neighbor with you. We must be sure that everyone understands that this is not just a case of a few active people being annoyed by a proposal which would hurt a small area. It is the concern of an entire community which it would do much harm if allowed.

Our Scenic Byway

The Turquoise Trail or, as some still call it, State Road 14 is a New Mexico and a Federal Scenic Byway. It is the kind of road they mark on maps with little dots along side of it. It is a fun road to take.

There are almost always other roads which are faster, straighter, more direct, newer, and even safer. But they usually have more traffic (making the part about safety somewhat questionable) and just get you there - without the fun.

Think about driving from Albuquerque to Santa Fe on I-25 and on the Turquoise Trail. On both roads you see the Sandia, the Ortiz and the Sangre de Christo. Are they both scenic roads? Well, to some extent - perhaps. I would rather be on I-25 than on I-95 going through New Jersey. It is much more scenic than that! But, I-25 is not a Scenic Highway, and it is no kind of Byway. These are differences which the State Highway Department is slow to understand.

At a recent meeting in Cerrillos, citizens pointed out again and again that the scenic nature of the Turquoise Trail was important to the local people and to the local economy. While I am sure that the highway people understood that, the response was a blank faced request to define what we meant by scenic.

Attempts were made. It was said that roads which are widened, straightened, or leveled lose their connection with the immediate surroundings and become less scenic. More blank looks. They had no trouble telling the assembled that they had the job of increasing road "rideability". They seemed to think this term had a ready recognition for everyone. At least no one bothered to ask for a definition.

So it comes down to the details. If the big picture cannot be seen in the same light by all concerned, the only way to make decisions is item-by-item. It seems this is where we are with the rebuild of our major road. If you care, and you should, you may become involved.

Why should you care? It will greatly effect your life! How wide and how level and how straight they decide to make the road will determine not only how fast people drive on it, but how many people will take how many trips. Increased traffic follows in the wake of road improvements. Development follows both the road improvement and the increased traffic.

As a Scenic Byway, the Turquoise Trail will continue to bring selective tourist driven income and employment. New attractions, such as the Cerrillos Hills Historic Park, will help assure this. We can continue to enjoy our local road with an increase in traffic only proportional to appropriate local growth.

As an improved regional link, feeder route, secondary highway, or whatever term one wishes, we lose all of the above. What we get is more speed, more serious accidents, increased traffic, increased development and increased travel time. With the exception of a few developers, I know of no one who wants any of this. You don't want this. That is why you should care.

Yes, it will be details. And yes, 'the devil is in the details', but this time you should be there too. Please get involved.

State Land, ATVs and Dumping

In the last few issues of this newsletter we have reported on efforts of your Association and the State Land Office to deal with a problem surrounding a section of state land near South Fork. There are no easy answers in sight.

The State Land Office has been most cooperative in being willing to discuss any and all possibilities within their power that might lead to a solution. The S.M.A. has tried to get people local to the problem to step forward to form the local organization necessary to make most of the solutions work. To date, this is where it all falls apart

The problem is that the 640 acres is illegally used for all sorts of activities. Some are harmful to the land and the neighborhood and some are not. But they are all illegal. People ride ATVs there. They disturb the land and any animals on it. They trespass on private property to get there. They cut fence to get there. They have physically attacked people who object.

The land is being used as a dump. While there are varying opinions as to how great a volume is entering the land, any amount is too much. There have even been cattle butchered on the land. Obviously, none of this activity is good for the land or for the neighborhood. The question is how to stop it.

People ride horses on the land. While disturbance of the land is minimal, this is still illegal. The land is leased for agricultural purposes (grazing) and, while there is no actual requirement to have stock on the land, most other activities are not allowed. The exceptions seem to be hunting (in season and with a license) and walking on the land with a paid permit from the Land Office and permission from the lessee.

There is general agreement as to what responsible citizens would like to see happen with this land. No one seems to believe it is possible to control the criminal activity under the existing circumstances, and there is an almost universal desire to have at least half of this land remain open space.

To accomplish this, some use has to be found for the parts of this section most naturally subject to abuse. With the indicated cooperation of the State Land Office, this might be possible. It would be neither simple or quick, but it might be done.

The problem is that the other part of the land - that to be left as open space - would have to be managed by someone. It is not the job of the State Land Office to do that sort of thing. They have neither the manpower nor the inclination. The lessee is technically responsible, but that fact is more likely to keep anyone from leasing the land than it is to provide the needed management.

All of this is more an explanation of why we have, thus far, failed in our attempt to find a workable solution than it is a final appeal to the local community to look within itself to gather the needed resources. But it is both.

The New County Commission

Members of your Board of Directors have had the opportunity to attend a number of meetings of the newly elected County Commissioners. It is such a welcome experience.

We avoided too frequent criticism of the operation of the old Commission. We mentioned names in a negative manner very rarely. But the experience of those meetings was very rarely anything at all positive. There were arbitrary and quite short time limits. There was a tone which may politely be called extremely rude. Commissioners refused to speak loudly enough to be heard by the public. Commissioners would walk out during public presentations. There would be more conversation between commissioners than from the floor to them -- while testimony was being given. In all, the impression was conveyed that they would greatly prefer not to have the public there.

All of this is gone. We now see attentive interest to most presentations. There is responsive and polite treatment of the public. There seems to be a sensitivity to issues and ideas which was not often apparent with the old proceedings.

Some of the Commissioners have always done better than others. Three of the five Commissioners have not changed, so we are not attributing this transformation to any one simple thing. It is just so welcome that we felt a need to comment in a positive way about the Commission.

S.M.A. 2001 Meeting

We had a successful annual membership meeting in February. Attendance was adequate (read that: where were you?) and all the necessary business got done. The current issues (WAP, the Turquoise Trail rebuild, the South Fork State Land, etc.) were discussed. Randy Moorman of NMPIRG spoke about a bill to give planning more legal force.

The bill died without final action in this session (as do all too many in this system of brief sessions). We were alerted by this bill and by comments made by State Highway Engineers at meetings about the road. We came to see the need for planning in our area (see story - pg.1). The highway comment was to the effect that we could only protect the future use (the volume of large trucks and cars) of the Turquoise Trail by planning the use of the lands near the road.

They pointed out that there is a lot of undeveloped land and that its use will determine the needs of the road. As we have already said in this issue, the build of the road also determines its use and the use of the land. It is a complex situation, and there was nothing in the works to address it in the long run.

At its March meeting, The S.M.A. Board voted to undertake the process detailed on page 1.

Ortiz Mountain Health Center

This facility, next to the Post Office in Cerrillos, provides truly excellent medical coverage. They are reliable and prompt. They are affordable for all! Those who have insurance (or a LOT of money) pay full price. Others are seen on a sliding scale. If we do not use this facility we may lose it. For more information, please call: 471-6266 and ask for Jane or you can email at: LuAnn Wosick@pmsnet.org.

The San Marcos Newsletter is published by The San Marcos Association, P. O. Box 722, Cerrillos NM 87010. Contributor articles are signed; those by the editor are not. Meetings of the Association are announced on the web site. The next Board meeting is April 19 at The Trail Grill. The public is welcome.

Directors, Officers and editors are listed below:

Donna Herring - President	Alexis Higginbotham
Walter Wait - Vice President	Reneé Ingold
Virginia Eldridge- Secretary	Bill Rodriguez
Hugh Nazor - Treasurer - Editor	Archie Tew
Linda Murnik - Copy Editor	

PLEASE!

We hate to beg. Many of you have filled out the membership form (on the back of the newsletter). Even more of you have not. We are a little like public television. We want to do what we are doing whether you join or not. It just gets hard to do at times.

As you can see from this issue, there are many things going on which will effect your quality of life and that of your neighbors. Your Association is working on your behalf in all of these issues. We listen to you; we try to inform you. We represent your interests to government and to business. To date, all of our funding has come from the very small membership dues we receive.

As has been said in past newsletters, things are changing. We no longer stuff 750 newsletters into mail boxes (it was never legal). We now mail 1,700 newsletters to people from I-25 down to CR55 and 55A. This is expensive, but there is no alternative. We must reach those who do not have email addresses or do not give us the address even if they have one. We are here to serve the entire population of the area, not just those who become members.

The amounts received in past years will not support this mailing for much longer. Plans are under way for an event which might help us with our increased funding needs. There will be more about that in the July Newsletter. Right now, you can help us with your membership support.

Noise

Not the of noise which might come from an industrial operation, but from your neighbor's property. Most of the San Marcos area is open enough and has houses far enough apart so that residential noise is not a problem. There are exceptions.

We have received a few notes from citizens asking about residential noise ordinances. There do not seem to be any in the county. Creating a public nuisance is against the law, but defining that is hard, and law enforcement is not likely to be very interested.

The best approach to neighbors who do not value quiet as much as you do is probably to try a direct approach to reach a local understanding. Some other neighbors may agree with you and be willing to help.

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Membership is open to any resident/property owner in the San Marcos area.

Please know that all the funds of The San Marcos Association come from your annual dues. 2001 dues are \$15 per person or \$25 for a household membership. The mailing of the newsletter is a considerable expense, and the Association does need your dues as well as your involvement.

If your year 2001 dues are owing, please send a check to **The San Marcos Association, P. O. Box 722, Cerrillos, NM 87010-0722**. Please fill in and include this form.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

email: _____

Particular concerns: _____

Thank you, your support adds to the "clout" of the organization as well as to its ability to fund its activities.

The Great Mandala

In case it did not jump out at you, let us point out that most of the stories in this issue are connected. And they all have to do with planning and land use. Now, for a community organization, this is not unusual. The connectedness of all the issues is the thing we would like to focus on.

If we had been smart enough to have done two years ago the kind of plan we now hope to do, many current issues would be very different.

The road would have been addressed in the plan, and some of the key issues about the road would have been decided there. It is certain that open space and State Land will be addressed in the plan. While the specific issue of the one section would still be a difficult one, it would have a context and perhaps be handled more easily than is now the case.

The WAP proposal would have been dealt with under ordinances which do not now exist and would have first gone to the Local (San Marcos) Development Review Committee (LDRC).

We are coming late to the game, but we are here at last. Your involvement is absolutely necessary! Please come to meetings and answer questionnaires when they come. Together we can help assure that we not only keep as much as possible of the things we love, but also make some things even better.

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