

Observer Report – Bernalillo County Commission

December 2022

Karen Wentworth

Bernalillo County Commission Continues to Operate by Telepathy

The Bernalillo County Commission has a busy agenda for their December 13 meeting. They approved millions of dollars in ARPA funding for water and sewer projects, made several appointments to boards and commissions, approved funding for a new property tax appraiser and five new human resource positions, approved the purchase of art for the Westside Visitors Center, approved the demolition of several nuisance properties, approved a renewed lease agreement for the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy, and adopted the Isleta Drain and Trail Master Plan on a consent agenda. There were no questions or comments from the commissioners or the public.

Commissioner Walt Benton introduced an ordinance to slow speeding on major roadways such as Coors, Tramway and Paseo del Norte with speed cameras. The proposed ordinance will likely be voted on next month.

In addition, the commission passed an ordinance to prohibit people standing on roadway medians less than four feet across. This will make panhandling illegal at several major intersections in the county, on the grounds of pedestrian safety concerns.

Bernalillo County also received a clean audit report for 2022, with no major exceptions. The audit has been sent to the NM State auditor.

How or if commissioners work with each other and the county manager continues to be a puzzle. There are no commission committee meetings, except the finance committee. Finance committee meeting tend to be a series of presentations to the commissioners, with little discussion and few questions.

It is not clear how commissioners gather details for what they are voting on. The public briefings are spare and without much detail. It is not clear whether there are private briefings for commissioners, or whether commissioners ever get together publicly or privately to work out proposed ordinances.

The Bernalillo County Commission apparently believes in some transparency. Every contract and proposal is provided to the public in writing as part of the agenda packet. What the public doesn't get is the benefit of hearing elected officials openly discuss public business. We can only guess what they are thinking.