INSIDE THIS ISSUE
Public Art as vehicle for economic, community development
Our Town: Socorro
The Artesia Public Library
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Risk Services Director .................................. 3
Public art as vehicle for economic, community development ............ 4
Our Town: Socorro ........................................ 6
Artesia Public Library ........................................... 8
News in Brief .................................................. 10
Getting to Know You ............................................ 11
Roles and responsibilities when issuing municipal bonds .................. 12
Spending cuts and tax hikes .......................................... 15
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

With the New Year comes the annual legislative session. This year’s session is a 60 day session which means that anything goes. Prior to the beginning of the session there have already been over 100 bills filed by members of the House and Senate.

For this legislative session, the Board of Directors of the League have designated priorities for the staff to support or oppose various pieces of legislation. Among the priorities set by the board is the amendment of the Whistleblower Protection Act. As of this writing, the League is endeavoring to find sponsors for the amendments.

The League recognizes that people who blow the whistle on truly problematic issues deserve to be protected from retaliation. However, the current language of the act is so loosely worded that just about any statement made by an employee that has a “good faith” belief that she is blowing the whistle regarding the operation of a political subdivision can be allege to be whistle blowing.

Additionally, based on an analysis of the claims being filed, the vast majority of claims are being brought by people in management positions whose job it is to monitor operations and bring to the attention of upper management and/or the governing body things they see and believe are being done in an improper manner.

There is also no requirement that the whistle blowing be done to someone or some organization that can effect change in the practice being pointed out. As an attorney that does defense work for the Fund pointedly said, “I think I could blow the whistle to my cat and bring an action”. While this seems absurd, as the law is currently written an individual can blow the whistle to their wife, significant other, friend or even their bartender and be covered by the act.

The League along with other public interest groups will be seeking amendment to require that the whistle be blown to an entity or individual that can have an effect on what is being pointed out. This change would make the whistle blowing something that can be acted on to correct the alleged problem.

It is not our intention to “gut” the legislation, but rather to make the act have its intended impact when an employee truly blows the whistle.

I look forward to seeing many of you during the session.

“It is not our intention to “gut” the legislation”
RIO RANCHO SEES PUBLIC ART AS VEHICLE FOR ECONOMIC, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

By Finance New Mexico

Finance New Mexico partners with the New Mexico Municipal League on the Grow It! project and other economic development initiatives. To learn more, go to www.FinanceNewMexico.org or http://growitnm.org

Public art has been a force for economic development in New Mexico at least since the Great Depression, when the federal government paid hundreds of unemployed artists to create murals, sculpture and other artworks that grace federal buildings to this day.

Nearly a century later, many New Mexico cities are using public art projects to promote economic vitality by creating a foundation for community identity, centralizing disparate neighborhoods with a collective vision and attracting the attention of businesses that value culturally vibrant communities. One of those cities is Rio Rancho.

“Public art speaks to our culture and how we value the places we live in,” said Daniel Chamberlain, an architect with FBT Architects and chairman of Rio Rancho’s volunteer Arts Commission. “It is a wonderful negotiator of vision. It’s a quality-of-life driver.”

The payback can be enormous, Chamberlain said, even if it’s hard to measure.

Committed to the arts

Rio Rancho created its Arts Commission in 2009 in
response to recommendations by the city’s quality of life task force and as a way to infuse the city’s master plan with financial support for public art projects. The city underscored that commitment by agreeing to set aside 1 percent of the revenues raised through related bond issues to cover the cost of public art projects.

While public art isn’t a major job creator and its merits can’t be evaluated with traditional performance metrics, advocates argue that it contributes to economic development in multiple ways: It highlights a community’s cultural assets, builds community pride, draws people together from inside and outside the city and enhances the natural and urban landscape.

For example, the city in 2012 integrated art into the construction of a flood wall that was built for erosion control along Unser Boulevard, Rio Rancho’s main corridor from Interstate 25. To spruce up the otherwise dull and utilitarian structure, three 11-foot-tall monuments were built and embellished with colorful, weather-resistant murals featuring the area’s plants and animals.

Arts Commission members see public art being integrated into many aspects of the city’s urban planning, including signage and landscape development codes. An example of the latter is the commission’s proposal to substitute works of art for drought-killed trees on arterial medians.

Building connectedness

Chamberlain identified three components of Rio Rancho’s 2016 public arts plan: agreeing on universal and binding themes, obtaining funding and identifying where to place works of art to have the greatest impact on residents’ quality of life.

The commission came up with four themes that emphasize members’ desire to work with what nature provides — earth, wind, sky and sun; light and darkness; shade and shadow; and natural landscape and habitat. Commission members proposed to supplement the 1 percent set-aside with grant money and private donations.

And the commission is committed to distributing artworks in each of the city’s six districts and thinking creatively of how natural features like arroyos and trails that wend through different neighborhoods can be transformed by art into cultural corridors that bridge geographical boundaries.

Public art is central to the city’s efforts to connect the city’s neighborhoods, Chamberlain said, and to build a more inclusive sense of community.

For more information about the New Mexico Art in Public Places Act, visit www.nmarts.org/art-in-public-places.
More than two centuries before Christopher Columbus’ fabled sojourn to the New World from Spain, Piro Indians – the southernmost Pueblo tribe – inhabited nearly two dozen villages along the Rio Grande. Along with the Piros, Apache Indians also inhabited much of the area that today is called the Middle Rio Grande Valley.

Spanish explorers made their way north from Mexico, following the Rio Grande and establishing the El Camino Real – the Royal Road into “New Spain.” As a result, they were frequent visitors at the Piro villages.

Socorro got its name in 1598 from explorer Juan de Oñate, whose tired and hungry men were given food and shelter by the Piros. Oñate renamed the Piro pueblo “Socorro,” which means “help” or “succor” in Spanish. 1598 is also the year that the San Miguel Mission, one of the oldest churches in the country, was founded. The church has been restored and is still functioning today. The church, along with a gift shop and museum, is open to the public.

After much upheaval, Socorro was resettled in the early 1800s. Socorro flourished due to the fertile farm land found along the river. However, Socorro remained threatened by occasional attacks by the Apache Indians.

When New Mexico became a U.S. territory in 1848, the region saw some relief as the military established a series of forts for protection against the Apaches. In Socorro County, the Army established Fort Conrad in 1851, and then later relocated to the newly-built Fort Craig in 1854.

In 1889, Socorro, with her mines, mills and smelters, became the center of mining activity. As a result, the government’s new School of Mines (now New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology or New Mexico Tech for short), opened in Socorro in 1893. The university now has over 2,000 students in attendance each semester. NMT offers excellent engineering and science
degree programs to its students, as well as a great performing arts series, providing both students and community members with unique entertainment year round. If recreation is what you are seeking, you will also find a lush 18-hole golf course on the NMT campus.

New Mexico Tech also houses a mineral museum, which is thought by many to be the “great treasure trove of the southwest.” The New Mexico Tech Mineral Museum opened in 1889, at the same time as the rest of the university. Initially, the mineral collection held in the museum was used to help educate the school’s future engineers and geologists. Unfortunately, the mineral collection was lost in a fire in 1928. Before that, the mineral museum had won gold medals at fairs and exhibitions around the U.S. In 1935, the museum was reestablished by donation and purchase. By 1938, the museum held around 3,000 mineral specimens. As of 2016, the museum holds a spectacular 18,000 mineral specimens. “Coronado’s Treasure Chest” is renowned and can be found at invited gem and mineral shows, and in featured articles in mineralogical magazines from around the world. The museum is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, call (575) 835-5490 or visit geoinfo.nmt.edu/museum/.

The city is also home to a world-recognized wildlife sanctuary; the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge is located on more than 57,000 acres and hosts its yearly “Festival of the Cranes” event in November, which draws thousands of visitors from all over the world. The Bosque del Apache features a visitor center, walking and hiking trails, and a driving tour with plenty of opportunities to see the area’s abundant wildlife.

Additionally, eastern Socorro County houses Trinity Site, located on White Sands Missile Range, and is the location of the first nuclear bomb detonation, which

Continued on page 14
LIBRARIES ACROSS THE STATE

ARTESSIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Artesia Public Library opened in March of 2014. The approximately 26,000 square foot structure roughly doubled the area of the previous library building. The additional space not only created an open, bright, and welcoming space; it allowed for the addition of a dedicated teen area and the expansion of all existing areas, including meeting space, children’s area, study rooms, general collection area, and staff work space.

Careful consideration went into choosing the many different technological aspects of the library. Dedicated children, teen, and adult computers were added, each area with its own level of filtering and specific desktop images. Patrons are able to download any software that they need for a specific application and at the end of the session all information is automatically wiped from the computer and the next patron begins a completely fresh session. The computers are centrally controlled so they all turn on and turn off automatically at preset times at the beginning and end of the day, saving valuable staff time. All library drop boxes are automated so that items slipped into a drop box are instantly and automatical-
ly checked in. Self-check stations allow patrons to check out their own books, check their accounts, or renew books.

All of the effort that went into planning, designing, and building the new library has been rewarded with an increased sense of community pride and support for the library. This has translated into large and demonstrable increase in usage throughout the library. For the last full year that the old library was open (fiscal year 2012-2013), 44,600 people visited the library. For fiscal year 2015-2016, that number rose to 59,028. For that same time period, circulation of print materials rose from 30,233 to 40,343 and circulation of electronic items rose from 154 to 3,191.

The library is located at 205 West Quay Avenue in Artesia and is open from 9:30 a.m., to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Guided tours are available for any size group or for individuals by contacting the Friends of the Artesia Public Library at lbarnett55@plateautel.net. For more information, you may contact the library at 575-746-4252.
NEWS IN BRIEF

In Dixon, federal funds fuel innovation
   “You are literally sitting in a miracle,” local artist Shel Neymark told a crowd gathered in the bright, booklined Embudo Valley Library and Community Center. To read the full article click here

The Linda Gaume Jaramillo Scholarship
   Applications are available for eligible municipal elected officials for the 2017 year. For more information go to nmml.org/certification-program/moli/

Working with municipal Finance Professionals
   Financing a capital project through municipal bonds is a team effort in which many professionals work together to achieve the goals of the state or local government. To read more, click here

City Manager of the Year
   Applications are now available, click here for more information.

What is your leadership philosophy?
   The problem is, in the absence of a thought-through, stated leadership philosophy, we may head down paths that don’t serve our team or our team members very effectively. Leading frantically -- firefighting -- is easy when you don’t have a clear path outlined. To read the full article, click here

How to cultivate a high energy workforce
   The U.S. workforce is rapidly being drained of energy. The 40-hour workweek is disappearing. Today, adults who work full time log an average of 47 hours a week, which equates to working nearly six days a week to read the full article click here

NMML Business Partners
   Are you a NMML Business Partner? Did you know we highlight NMML Business Partner’s Monthly? If you are interested in being featured in The Municipal Reporter, contact Mariah Valdez at mvaldez@nmml.org for more information and deadlines.

This past December at the annual New Mexico Law Enforcement Conference, Bly Pedroni was awarded the Young Citizen’s Award. This award is given to a deserving young citizen of New Mexico who must show a positive and direct impact by aiding/assisting law enforcement in their community and or show courageous behavior in the face of difficult circumstances or danger that aided law enforcement or their community.

Pecos High School Principal Simon Miera nominated Mr. Pedroni who has shown great strength in caring for his siblings after his father’s death and his dedication as a volunteer for the Pecos Fire Station and Police Station.
GETTING TO KNOW YOU

This feature focuses on learning more about the League Executive Committee, Board members and other elected officials. This month is President of the New Mexico Municipal Judges Association Municipal Judge Sonya Ruiz of Silver City.

What was your primary motivation to run for political office in your community?
I had watched from the sidelines for many years and I finally felt like it was my turn to contribute. So I took the leap and I’m confident it was the best decision I ever made.

How do you view your role in serving as an elected official in your community?
I fully understand that the constituents’ of my community have honored me with their votes and their support, therefore, I work very hard every day to keep them proud of me. The job is not an easy one but I work diligently to hold true to the oath of office I swore to.

What do you think is the primary role of municipal government?
The primary role of Municipal Government should be doing everything possible to help and better the lives of the people of our community.

What do you think is the primary role of the NM Municipal League in municipal Government?
The primary role of the Municipal League in municipal government is assisting, guiding and assuring that the municipalities have what they need to be successful.

What is your favorite “after work” pastime?
My favorite after work pastime is watching my daughter play sports (Softball, Volleyball) and enjoying spending time with my grandchildren and family.

The Municipal League in partnership with the New Mexico State Aviation Department and the New Mexico Airport Manager’s Association recently held a two day comprehensive school for forty airport personnel from the military and four different states.

The training, called ASOS (which stands for Airport Safety and Operations Specialists School), was taught by Prather and Associates in Albuquerque. This training was the second in a series that brings much needed focus on topics required to effectively manage our airports. Assisting the training with snacks and lunches was the New Mexico Self-Insurers’ Fund, Delta Airport Consultants and Molzen-Corbin Engineers. Once again our aviation partnerships continue to provide valuable education to members.
Financing a public project with municipal bonds is a team effort in which many professionals work together to achieve the goals of the municipality. But as government officials considering issuing municipal bonds in 2017, keep in mind that it’s your deal. You are the stewards of taxpayer dollars, and you make the decision to borrow. You decide whether to hire a municipal advisor to act as your fiduciary and you select the underwriter through the process—competitive or negotiated—of your choice. Throughout the life of any municipal bond, you assume responsibility for providing investors with information that is timely, accurate and complete.

And while the issuance of municipal bonds is your deal, municipalities have an important ally in the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board (MSRB), the national regulator responsible for promoting a fair and efficient municipal securities market. Protecting municipal bond issuers is a central aspect of the MSRB’s mission. Importantly, the MSRB does not regulate state or local governments; its rules are designed to make sure you are treated fairly by the underwriters and with the utmost good faith by municipal advisors you hire.

The MSRB also operates a public platform called the Electronic Municipal Market Access, or EMMA®, website, which is your key to accessing important information about the municipal market and communicating information to investors. Additionally, the MSRB provides free, objective educational materials for municipal issuers.

Since issuing bonds may be only an occasional event for certain communities, it’s helpful to understand how the MSRB can support you when you decide to issue bonds.

The Decision to Borrow

The decision to access capital from the $3.8 trillion municipal securities market is always handled at the state and local level. Government officials have a responsibility to their taxpayers to make informed decisions about how to finance a public project. Understanding conditions in the municipal securities market and evaluating your locality’s existing bonds are important steps in the decision to borrow.

The MSRB’s EMMA website provides free access to information and data about the municipal market and nearly all existing municipal bonds. Before deciding to issue bonds, visit EMMA’s Tools and Resources page to see what issues are scheduled to come to market and how they are priced, monitor the trade activity of your locality’s existing bonds and view upcoming federal economic reports or other events that can have an impact on the municipal bond market.

Working with Financial Professionals

Once a municipality has decided to issue bonds, an important step is assembling the deal team—which can include municipal advisors and underwriters. Check the MSRB’s website, at www.msrb.org, to ensure that any firm you are considering is properly registered with the MSRB and that individual professionals have passed the appropriate professional qualification examinations. Working with unregistered or
unqualified financial professionals puts a municipality at risk.

MSRB rules and professional qualification requirements are designed to ensure the advice you receive from a municipal advisor is in the municipality’s best interest. MSRB rules require underwriters working with a municipality to deal fairly, disclose potential conflicts of interest and honor your wishes about some of the ways bonds are marketed and distributed to investors. You can read more about protections for municipal bond issuers in the Education Center on the MSRB’s website. If at any time you suspect a municipal finance professional of violating MSRB rules or acting unfairly, report it to the MSRB by phone at 202-838-1330 or by email to complaints@msrb.org and the MSRB will forward your complaint to the appropriate enforcement authority.

Continuing Disclosure

Once a municipality’s bonds have been issued, it is the municipality’s responsibility to provide investors with required ongoing material information in a timely and complete manner. Annual financial and operating information, notices of major events that may affect bondholders and other information is essential to helping investors make fully informed decisions about buying, selling or holding a municipality’s bonds. The MSRB’s EMMA website serves as the official platform to disclose this information to investors.

Municipalities can schedule free email reminders from the MSRB to alert key individuals of upcoming filing deadlines. The MSRB also offers free phone support, how-to videos and educational resources to support state and local governments with understanding and fulfilling their continuing disclosure obligations.

Whenever a municipality decides to issue bonds, remember – it’s your deal, and rules and resources of the MSRB are there to help ensure the process is fair. Take advantage of these tools and resources to help you make informed decisions about issuing municipal bonds and communicating with investors.
took place on July 16, 1945. Trinity Site is open twice yearly, in April and October, for public visits.

Western Socorro County is home to the Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array, simply known as the “VLA.” The VLA is one of the world’s premier astronomical radio observatories. It has been featured in major films such as “Contact,” starring Jodie Foster. The VLA has an informative visitor center and a self-guided tour for those who are interested in learning more about the purpose of the facility.

A new attraction just added to Socorro’s growing list is the new City of Socorro Rodeo and Sports Complex. The $2.5 million facility has recently completed construction and its inaugural event, “Clint Benjamin Rope for Hope,” is set to take place on February 18th and 19th, 2017. The rodeo facility-sports complex features a covered rodeo arena, an outdoor practice arena, 100 horse stalls (50 covered, 50 uncovered), a 2-mile walking/running trail, a concession stand, a 50 space RV park, 4 regulation-sized soccer fields, and a 5k cross-country track. The City of Socorro has high hopes for the new facility, and plans for various events, including the establishment of a “Central New Mexico State Fair,” are in the works. Plans for a future civic center to be built near the facility have also been discussed.

Socorro is also firmly rooted in tradition; the City puts on several annual events, such as Socorrofest, a two day Oktoberfest-style celebration that will be celebrating its 15th year this October. Socorrofest features wineries and breweries from around the state, food vendors, handmade arts and crafts vendors, family-friendly performances, as well as several music stages which often feature well-known performers such as Sim Balkey. Other annual events include Blues, Brews, and BBQs, which has formed into a well-attended St. Patrick’s Celebration. Hot August Nights combines fun, food, and music with action-filled basketball tournaments held throughout the day, and the Electric Light Holiday Parade gives Socorro residents a chance to break out their brightest lights and display their floats for all to see. The Parade ends at the Historic Plaza, where the community luminaria-lit art stroll takes place. Here, families can grab a cup of hot cocoa and do some Christmas shopping while visiting locally-owned gift shops and art galleries. Be sure to get your photo taken with Santa!

Socorro’s rich and diverse history has contributed to the city it is today. With its friendly spirit, incredible bird-watching opportunities, world-class science and technology developments, fascinating cultural attractions, and year-round outdoor recreation, Socorro offers everyone something to love. For more information, and to plan your visit, please visit www.socorronm.org.
NEW MEXICANS DON’T WANT CUTS, BUT LUKEWARM ON TAX HIKES

By Sandra Fish, New Mexico In Depth

New Mexicans overwhelmingly oppose spending cuts on education and health care for the poor. But they also don’t want to see taxes on gasoline or internet purchases. They are willing to raise taxes on booze or tobacco and on those earning $200,000 or more a year, however. That’s according to a new poll commissioned by the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty.

“I think if you look at the percentage of folks who oppose education or Medicaid cuts, that percentage far outweighs the percentage of opposition there might be to any of the revenue measures,” said Edward Tabet-Cubero, executive director of the center.

Some 72 percent of those polled oppose cutting public school funding, while 67 percent opposed cutting Medicaid services.

The poll conducted by the firm Research & Polling Inc. comes as lawmakers are struggling to fill a $69 million budget gap in the current budget year. Then they’ll try to plug a gap of between $300 million and $500 million in the 2018 budget.

Democratic lawmakers have suggested delaying corporate tax cuts for two years, taxing internet sales in the state and potentially increasing the gasoline tax to pay for road repairs.

Continued on page 17
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“Design built on a foundation of Quality and Integrity”
But those methods weren’t popular among the 402 New Mexicans surveyed by telephone, half of them by cell phone. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9 percent.

Among the highlights:

▪ 58 percent opposed raising gasoline taxes; 18 percent supported and 23 percent didn’t support or oppose that option.
▪ 43 percent opposed taxing internet sales, while 27 percent opposed it; 28 percent were neutral.
▪ 40 percent oppose delaying the corporate tax cut, while 39 percent support that delay. Another 19 percent are neutral.
▪ 54 percent support raising taxes on households earning $200,000 or more, while 29 percent opposed that and 17 percent were neutral.
▪ 66 percent support raising taxes on alcohol and tobacco, with only 19 percent opposed and 14 percent neutral.

Here’s a more detailed look at the results:

And even the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce is softening its stance on potential revenue increases.

“We do want efficiencies to be identified, cuts to be identified and government restructured before a tax increase is discussed,” said Terri Cole, chamber president and CEO. “But if all of that gets in place and at the end of the day we need to look at tax increases, then we are very amenable to supporting that discussion.”

Cole said taxing internet sales is one measure the chamber might consider. But the group will definitely oppose a tax on food.

That is heartening news to Tabet-Cubero.

“I think that people are just coming to realize that we can’t cut our way to fiscal solvency,” he said. “We have to be open to a variety of revenue measures.”

But the Governors spokesman reiterated her opposition to any tax hikes in an email Tuesday.

“The Governor is open to tax reform that closes loopholes and modernizes the tax code, but she will not support any tax increases,” wrote Michael Lonergan.

“The governor presented nearly $350 million worth of solutions without any tax increases. We agree with the Chamber that tax increases should not be considered when there are so many other options on the table.”

Meanwhile, the center on law and poverty is suing the state over the inequity and inadequacy of New Mexico school funding, with an eight week trial scheduled for next summer.

“The claims are basically that the public education system is grossly underfunded, to the tune of probably $600 million per year,” Tabet-Cubero said. “And there are certain programing aspects that are desperately needed by certain populations of our students… those would be Native American students, English language learners, students with disabilities and students in poverty.”

This article originally appeared on www.nmind dept.com
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