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THE TRUTH A PARTY

The Price of Positivity Primed for PDV

by Renee Wilkins,
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There's a price to positivity. Yes, feel-good government has a high cost. And if you haven't noticed yet, it will soon become clear that we've been primed for a new project. After months of being fed a constant diet of negativity, we are thirsty for something positive. Something we can all work on together with the common goal of improving Rio Rancho, at a cost of course. What is it, you ask? Wait for it..... "Paseo Del Volcan".

Sandoval Economic Alliance, the Chamber of Commerce, and several politicians have jumped on the Paseo Del Volcan bandwagon. Let's hold our horses and carefully consider risk and reward regarding PDV expansion. No one disputes that having PDV finished would be good for Rio Rancho, however the cost of such a project may be prohibitive or extremely burdensome. Buzz words like "connectivity" are in the air. What are we connecting? PDV would link I-40 on the

western outskirts of Albuquerque with Hwy 550 at Rio Rancho/Bernalillo.

Paving PDV is being sold as a necessity to draw manufacturing and jobs. Travelers would also use it to bypass Albuquerque. The promoters say the cost will be \$96 Million, and they'll solicit federal funding since it's a highway. What's the catch? This cost doesn't include extending utilities (water, sewer, gas, electricity) infrastructure to support development or covering public services. The cost for PNM to run a new sub-station near the City Center cost tens of millions and increased everyone's electric bills.

Without a doubt, Albuquerque and MRCOG need to be fully on board and in sync to avoid a road to nowhere far ahead of its time. We've been sold down this river of no return before with the City Center/Star Center dream, which has given the kiss of death to every team making its home there. County officials also sang the praises of salvation in an inadequately researched and cost-prohibitive desalination plant a few years back. And who could forget the RailRunner?

The salesmen are now rewriting history, stat-

ing that PDV was responsible for bringing Cleveland HS, UNM West, HP, UNM Hospital, CNM and The Star Center, which really puts the cart before the horse. Construction of the City Center was approved before PDV was paved from Unser to Iris. PDV from Iris to 550 was constructed after Cleveland HS opened up. Does this mean all those hundreds of millions of tax dollars invested in these ventures will finally see their full potential if we do this one last thing?

Grandiose projects have their place, but what guarantees do we have that this one will be different from the rest? How soon would we see a return on our investment? Are we expending our limited resources in pursuit of a dream that will not materialize for 20 years, while ignoring more realistic projects that would achieve tangible results within 1-3 years?

In pursuit of positivity, Rio Rancho is being sold an expensive cure-all elixir. Whether or not we buy snake oil is up to us. Read the ingredients before drinking. And be ready for the consequences.



Perception is 9/10 of the Law?

co-written by Chuck and Renee Wilkins

The old saying "Believe nothing that you hear and only half of what you see" is very sage advice. It's easy to be fooled in today's

media-saturated world, and people become overly concerned with perception rather than reality.

Perception now finds its way into the newly proposed ethics ordinance coming forward in March. In reference to public trust it states

Perception is 9/10 of the Law, continued

"Elected Officials...shall not engage in conduct that they... reasonably should know is likely to create in the minds of reasonable, objective, fair-minded observers, the perception that they have used their public positions improperly..." Sure sounds good until you realize that words like "reasonable, objective, fair-minded and perception are purposely ambiguous to allow uncertainty.

There are serious considerations in passing this law; of utmost importance is clarifying those terms more succinctly. The goal should be prevention, protection and creating something that is equitable and easy to interpret. This city staff-initiated policy does include a laundry list of examples of what constitutes "anything of value or benefit". It also includes a requirement for elected and appointed officials to file an annual statement of economic interest, which would be beneficial. Beyond these positive aspects, it is a little murky in some areas. The definition of harassment states; "knowingly pursuing a pattern of conduct that is intended to annoy,

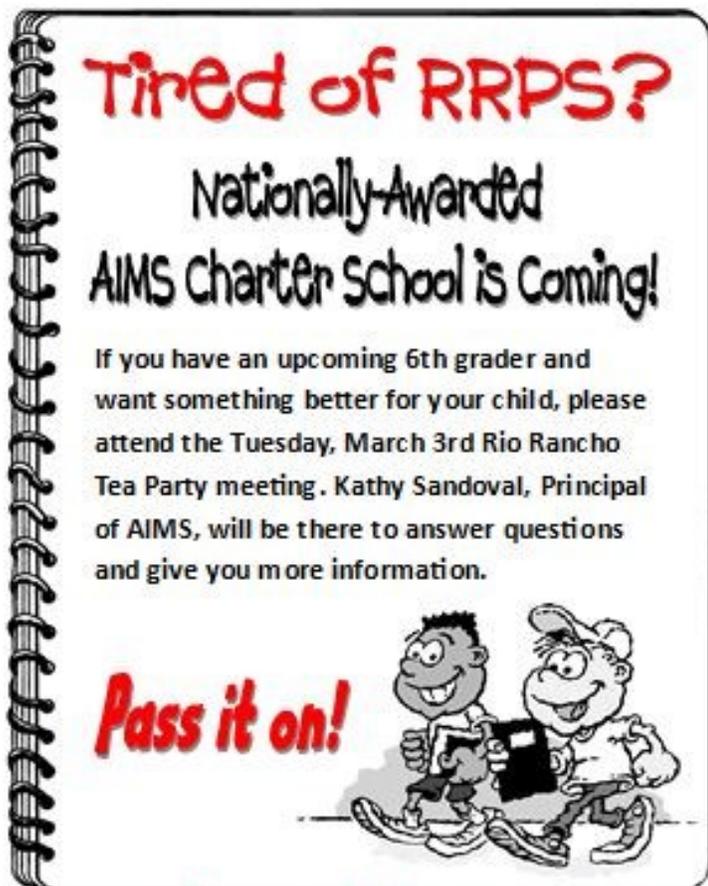
alarm, bully..." Who decides when to consider someone to be purposefully annoying? Many of us who speak up are by nature annoying. Is this the end of the squeaky wheel getting oiled? And again, the word perception needles its way to the forefront.

Differing perspectives can cloud perception. Ordinances are open to interpretation. We see it in the simple sign ordinance when the development services department classifies a sign as an event sign, yet code enforcement identifies the same sign as political. Perhaps it's all in the attitude - a glass is half full vs. glass is half empty thing. An ethics ordinance should be crystal clear and not vulnerable to a skewed outlook or emotionalizing.

But never fear! They have included the creation of a "City Ethics Board" to review any and all charges. Unfortunately, this Ethics Board will consist of seven members appointed by the Governing Body. Hmmm. As part of a "reasonable" ethics ordinance dealing with such serious allegations and legal impli-

cations, this group should consist of outside independent attorneys, rather than politicians and lay people appointed by, quite possibly, the very people making the accusations.

Those creating this ethics ordinance say it is necessary in order to prevent corruption in government. However, concerns abound that it will likely be used to instill fear in Governing Body members, rendering them ineffectual as leaders. Use of such an ordinance to control and suppress elected representatives of the people is in itself corruption of the worst kind. Throwing such an all-encompassing net is bound to catch some innocent fish. Conspicuously absent from this code of conduct is any verbiage preventing Senior Staff Members from attempting to steer policy set by the Governing Body, although they did take time to get in depth regarding Governing Body members interfering in the executive functions of the City Manager.



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