

Special Meeting

January 28, 2002

The Board of County Commissioners, in and for the County of Otero, State of New Mexico, met in a Special Meeting at the Otero County Courthouse in Alamogordo, County and State aforesaid. Meeting called to order by the Chairman at 6:00 pm, January 28, 2002; and he announced that reasonable notice for this meeting was given to the Alamogordo Daily News, Holloman Sunburst, El Paso Times, Mountain Monthly, and to Radio Stations KPSA, KINN, and KYEE.

Those being present:

Richard Zierlein	Chairman
Tim McGinn	Vice-Chairman
Ruth Hooser	County Member
Dan Bryant	County Attorney
LaDonna Adams	Administrative Secretary
Robyn Silva	Deputy Clerk

The Chairman called the meeting to order and gave the invocation.

Commissioner McGinn led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance and Commissioner Zierlein led the Salute to the Flag of the State of New Mexico.

1. Commissioner Zierlein stated that the purpose of this meeting is for the re-districting of the Otero County Commissioners' Districts. He stated that they are requesting input from the public and will probably make the final decision tomorrow at the Regular Meeting.

Mr. Bryant, Otero County Attorney stated that he is glad for the large turn out in the room.

Commissioner Zierlein invited the public to come up and make their comments.

1. Patty Posey - Resident of Mayhill. She stated that she would like to speak against a 5 man commission. She stated that Tularosa has a Commission, Cloudcroft has a Commission and Alamogordo also has a Commission. The proposed 5 man commission plan states that all of the Commissioners would have a section in Alamogordo. We do not want a commissioner that lives within a city but rather one that lives out in the County. We want to be represented by 1/3 and not 1/5.

2. Ron Burch - High Rolls resident. Most of the time the mountains don't claim us and the city does not claim us so they don't know where they belong. He stated that we should remain with the 3 man commission rather than add more Commissioners. He stated that maybe we could look at combining the governments which is the City and County Commissions.

3. Mayor Don Carroll - Mr. Carroll stated that he was asked to read a letter from a Gentleman that had a prior commitment to the evening. He is requesting that we change from a 3 man to a 5 man commission. He read that a 5 member board would lead a better government. He felt that if they had a smaller district they could keep up with it better.

4. Maude Rathgeber- Otero County Native. She is in favor of 3 a man board. More government is not better government. Mrs. Rathgeber stated that a few weeks ago the City was in here requesting more money from the County for the City. She stated that if we could not afford that then, how will we be able to afford 2 more commissioners. More government is not better government.

5. Jean Valance - She wants to chime in on the money issues. She feels that by adding two more commissioners we will have to find additional funding. When you have

more opinions it takes longer to decide anything.

6. George Hanawalt - Resident of Otero County for 22 years. Mr. Hanawalt stated that he has been impressed with the way the county has handled the government with the three man commission. If it ain't broke why try and fix it.

7. Frances Goss - Resident of the mountains. Mrs. Goss is against the five man commission for these reasons. Yes, the City is the majority of the population, but the rural residents are the majority of land, cattle, sheep and so forth. We produce your food, your shelter, and your fiber. The decision to protect an owl has cost the county an industry with taxes. She would like to see the three man commission remain the same. It works better for the rural areas.

8. Ilene McClung - Resident of Alamogordo. She stated that 51 percent of her taxes go to the county commissoin. We should have additional representation, more than the City, because we pay more taxes to the County than the City. Lets be fair about this. We need to be represented by the County Commission. She stated that she feels like she is not getting her money's worth.

9. Ed Carr - Tularosa. From an economic development point of view, Mr. Carr stated that he is in favor of a five man commission. In 10 years, there is no way that we can represent our population with a three man commission. From a growth point of view they will not be able to address the issues. He urged the Commission to consider a five man commission for the growth and the future of Otero County.

10. Tony Aguliar - Is requesting that we change to a five man commission. The area around Chaparral is growing so quickly that we will need more representation within a few years. With a three man the two commissioners can gang up on the one. With five they will

have to convince a larger majority.

11. Pres Martinez - Mr. Martinez stated that he is in favor of a five man commission. He further stated that he agrees with Mr. Carr and his reasoning.

12. Jack Rathgeber - Born and raised in Alamogordo - Mr. Rathgeber stated that things do not grow as fast as a lot of people think. We have a lot of people that come in here with new ideas from other towns or states, and the things they are trying to change about Otero County are the very reason they left the other areas that they came from. He stated that too much government is not good. It has taken a long time to get where we are so why change it. Let's stick with the three man commission.

13. Stephanie Dubois - Ms. Dubois stated that she would support the five man commission if it is feasible and we can work out the other parts. She feels that three people will not be able to handle the growth. Ms. Dubois stated that the growth will be quicker than we can handle. She stated that she is from Tularosa and she feels like they have never been represented. She stated if we have more commissioners then maybe they will be represented. She further stated that Commissioner McGinn stated that he has more water rights then the whole Village of Tularosa.

14. George Busing - South County resident. Mr. Busing has lived in Otero County for about 14 years and he has studied the proposals. He stated that he is confused with the different proposals. He stated that initially he was for the five man commission because he felt that five minds were better than three. Mr. Busing stated that, with three commissioners, if there is something that someone wants to pass, they only have to sway one person on to their side. He does feel that the County is better off with three commissioners because it keeps decision making and government simple. His final recommendation is Alternate plan "B"..

For the record, Commissioner McGinn stated that he uses the water rights that have been appointed to him from the State of New Mexico and he is sure that they are a lot less than the Villages' rights.

14. Ronnie Merrill - Resident of La Luz -Mr. Merrill stated that he is in favor of a five man commission. He stated that we are too worried about where the power is coming from. He feels that five people will represent all of the people. When there is a five man commission and one is out of office there would never be new a completely new board. We need more representation and with more commissioners there would be more people involved because they will have their family.

Commissioner Zierlein apologized for not stating this at the opening of the meeting that Commissioner Nivison is in Santa fe on County business.

15. Kim Carr - Mrs. Carr stated that she started out in favor of three man commission. She stated that she has taken the time to study the different proposals and feels like the best plan for the county is the five man commission, Option "G".

16. John Colquitt - Resident of Chaparral, New Mexico. Mr. Colquitt stated that he is in favor of the three man commission because it is smaller, and simpler is better. He stated that he has watched the five man commission in Dona Ana, and three of them side up and vote time and time again together and the other two are always out.

17. Brad Rasch - Cloudcroft resident and one of the village trustees. Mr. Rasch stated that he is in favor of the three man commission and all of the trustees are as well. He stated that when government grows, taxes grow also.

18. Melton Chestnut - Resident North of Alamogordo. Mr. Chestnut stated that he is favor of the five man commission. He feels that we should take the current salaries of

the three commissioners and divide them by five, that will pay the two new positions.

19. Bill English - Born in Alamogordo. Mr. English stated that he has been listening to every one. He stated that he agrees with the three man commission. He pointed out that if the city commission has such a hard time finding solutions and agreeing on items, why would it be any different if we added more county commissioners? Why would we think by adding more commissioners it will turn out better. Mr. English stated that he is in favor of a three man commission, because our county commission has already done something nobody else has done with three commissioners. We should keep it simple, that works.

20. Don Cooper - Mr. Cooper is a city commissioner and he has been working with all segments of the city and county. He feels that if we all row in the same direction we will get somewhere. Both Commissioners stated that we do not need an increase in size because we do not know what we are going to get. What we need to look at is to maintain a commission of three and if we have an influx of 90,000 or 100,000 in population, then we can look at increasing the number of commissioners.

21. G.B. Oliver Jr.- Resident of La Luz. Mr. Oliver is a resident of La Luz and has lived here for 75 years. He also stated that he was a prior county commissioner and he is in favor of a three man commission. He stated that when he was a commissioner they would set down and discuss the issues and we never had any problems that we couldn't compromise on. Government is all too big. The best thing we could do is cut our legislature and our congress in half. We have too much government.

22. Rick Lessentine - Mr. Lessentine stated that he is for the three man commission. He stated that everyone wants to add two more positions but no one knows where the money will come from. The only way to pay for two new positions will be to raise taxes.

23. Don Carroll - Mayor of Alamogordo - Mr. Carroll stated that he is speaking as a citizen. He stated what troubles him the most is that it is urban verses rural, city verses county. He stated that as long as we have this mind set it will not be good for the whole county. Mr. Carroll stated that we need to decide what we really want and what the overall good of the county will be. We need to do what is best for the growth as a whole. He stated that he is for the five man commission.

24. Bobby Jones - Mr. Jones is a rancher that lives on the mesa. He feels that it is not rural against the town as far as the farm and range community is concerned. Mr. Jones stated that he is in favor of a three man commission because he it is more efficient.

25. Junior Stoots - Mr. Stoots is a resident of Alamogordo. He stated that when he retired from the military he had a choice to make on where to live. He chose Otero County because of the way the people were and the way of life. The current three man commission is doing a fine job, so why change it. Mr. Stoots is in favor of a three man commission.

26. Bettye Stoots - Mrs. Stoots is a resident of Otero County and she feels that the three man commission should not be changed. She asked if the city commission would like to take a cut in pay just as the gentleman suggested that the county commission divide up the three commissioners' salaries and have five. Mrs. Stoots further stated that this is the best county in the world. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

27. Rudy Clark - Mr. Clark stated that he is a resident of Otero County and the City. He stated that it feels like it is us against them. We are all in this boat together. He stated that when he had a business in the city he relied on the people in the rural areas also for business as well as the city residents. We should not be worried about money but about the quality of

Maybe we need to look at how the servants are doing. Not the mountains and not the city.

28. Sam Fairchild - Mr. Farichild is a county resident. We in the county support the city to a certain extent. As county residents we don't always get the support of the city. Mr. Fairchild stated that he is in favor of the three man commission.

Commissioner McGinn appreciates everyone coming out and getting involved. He stated that it shows that you have an interest in what is going on. He stated that all three commissioners could be elected from the city. He further stated that he feels that our representation over the last 8 years has been for all areas of the county. Commissioner McGinn stated that the county has grown in population by about 10,000 in 10 years. They have been looking at all of the options and will make their decision at the Regular Meeting tomorrow.

Commissioner Zierlein stated that this is the biggest turnout we have had for the re-districting discussions. He stated that the majority of the counties in New Mexico were three man commissions when he came into office but the majority have now gone to five man.

Commissioner Zierlein stated that he has talked to the commissions that have been three and then gone to five and he has taken all of the input. He stated that, overwhelmingly, the commissions that have gone from three man to five man are not happy. He stated that their costs have gone up dramatically. Their legal fees have gone up drastically. Commissioner Zierlein stated that he feels that he is leaning toward a three man and he is pretty confident on how he will vote tomorrow.

Commissioner Zierlein thanked the public for coming and for all of their input.

The time being 8:00 pm, the Chairman adjourned the meeting.

DRAFT

COPY

Chairman

ATTEST:

OTERO COUNTY CLERK

SPECIAL MEETING JANUARY 28, 2002 TO DISCUSS COUNTY COMMISSION RE-DISTRICTING.