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EL VALLE NEWS

©2008 El Valle de los Ranchos Water and Sanitation District

"Sin agua no hay vida."

*"Without water, there is no life."**

Have a Happy and Safe 4th of July!



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- **Gabriel Romero, Chairman**
- **Mario Barela, Vice-Chairman**
- **F. R. "Bob" Romero, Secretary**
- **Andrew Chavez, Treasurer**
- **Meliton Struck, Member at Large**

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COMMUNITY MEETING & CANDIDATES' FORUM DRAWS SMALL CROWD

May 21st was the annual community meeting for El Valle de los Ranchos which was held at the Llano Quemado Community Center. In conjunction with its community meeting, the District also hosted a candidates' forum for candidates for County Commission, District 3, State Representative and State Senate. The District staff and Board provided the audience with information about current construction projects, past accomplishments and plans for the future. The three candidates for State Senate, Incumbent, Carlos Cisneros and

challengers Erminio Martinez and Archie Velarde presented their plans for the infrastructure needs of the county and, specifically, El Valle de los Ranchos. County Commission candidates Andrew Chavez, Manuel Pacheco, Orlando Santistevan, Sharon de Santo, and Juan Archuleta briefly presented their platforms. State Representative Roberto "Bobby" Gonzales who was running unopposed for State Representative (District 42) also attended and spoke about the needs of the community and the State.



Representative Gonzales addresses audience

USDA PRESENTS EL VALLE WITH A \$1.4 MILLION CHECK

A happy crowd gathered at the sewer treatment plant and then at the UNM -Klauer Campus on May 21st to celebrate the groundbreaking for construction of the new sewer line that extends from the Town of Taos Treatment Plant to UNM-Klauer Campus. The construction of this line will allow the UNM extended campus to open to students in August. New Mexico Director of the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Ryan Gleason, presented the

District and UNM with a ceremonial check for \$1,414,828, which represents the full amount of the loan and grant being provided for the construction of the sewer line. Also present at the ceremony and reception were the Board and Staff of El Valle de los Ranchos, Dr. Kate O'Neill and other representatives from UNM Taos, State Representative Roberto "Bobby" Gonzales and State Senator Carlos Cisneros.



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- **Pat Sanchez, Office Manager**
- **Melene Montano, Administrative Assistant**

UP-COMING BOARD MEETINGS

- **July 9, 2008**
- **August 13, 2008**
- **September 10, 2008**

All meetings are held at the District Office located at 209E Camino de la Merced, Taos at 4:00 p.m. The public is encouraged to attend.

The office will be closed:
July 4, 2008 and September 1, 2008

We're building a website!

See us soon at:

www.elvalledelosranchos.org

ELECTION AUTHORIZES DISTRICT TO BORROW FOR OFFICE BUILDING

On June 12th the District held an election, as required by state law, on the question of whether it should be authorized to borrow up to \$500,000 to pay for construction of its new office building, which is currently being planned for a one-acre site located in Llano Quemado, next to the Llano Quemado Community Center. Although the election was advertised in both the legal and the main news section of the Taos News, only 20 people turned out to vote. The vote was 19 to 1 in favor of authorizing the loan. El Valle is seeking funding from the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, to fund construction of the building.

WHAT ARE WATER RIGHTS? by F.R. "Bob" Romero

In the previous El Valle News, the article entitled "The Water Master Plan and Water Rights Transfers" focused on the challenges for a Water and Sanitation District to develop and implement a public water system. This follow-up article is specifically about water rights and is part of a continuing series of articles that will include topics of the Doctrine of Prior Appropriation and adjudication, the NM State Engineer's role in the administration of surface and water rights and domestic and public wells. First, though, what are water rights?

A water right in the state of New Mexico is the legal right to use water for irrigation or other beneficial uses, such as to drill or sell to an individual or an institution that uses and/or banks water rights. To have a water right does not mean that a user owns the water but instead has the right to use the water. The ownership of water according to the New Mexico Constitution is in the public domain. Nonetheless, a water right can still be sold or leased.

In order to have a water right that can actually be used one has to own property with the availability of water such as in an Acequia. The user must

be a parciante in good standing with an Acequia Association, and be able to physically access and beneficially use the water. In addition, the water right must be recognized and documented in the State Engineer's Office, and the user must continue making beneficial use of the water to retain the right. If one is no longer using the water right one may decide to sell a certain amount of acre feet of the water right. (One acre foot of water is one acre covered by water one foot deep) Once a buyer is secured, the owner of the water right has to provide documentation and verification of the existence of the water right before the Office of the State Engineer will approve the transfer of the water rights in question. If an owner prefers to retain ownership of the water rights attached to a property then the status of the water rights remains the same.

In a nutshell water rights that are attached to property are the most tangible and valuable in the long term and water rights that are sold and severed from a property become a commodity and can be bought and sold on the market. However, water rights that are not being beneficially used by the owner can be lost in time.

SEWER CONSTRUCTION

Construction is on-going on the UNM Sewer Line (Phase 7B), the La Morada Road Sewer Line (Phase 1E) and the Tom Holder Road Sewer Line (Phase 2A). All of these construction projects should be completed by mid-summer and will provide sewer service for approximately 100 additional households and UNM Taos. Pending easement acquisition, the District will also be constructing Phase 1F in the Talpa area.