



April 1, 2023

THE CONEJOS COUNTY MESSENGER

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Welcome to our **third year** of the Conejos County Newsletter! As elected officials and county department directors, our goal is to inform our citizens of news stories, information and data through the periodic publication of a newsletter. The previous editions of newsletters are archived on the county website, www.conejoscounty.colorado.gov

In an effort to gain more exposure, we are posting this same file on Facebook and the Citizens for a Better Conejos County page.

Conejos County
Website QR Code



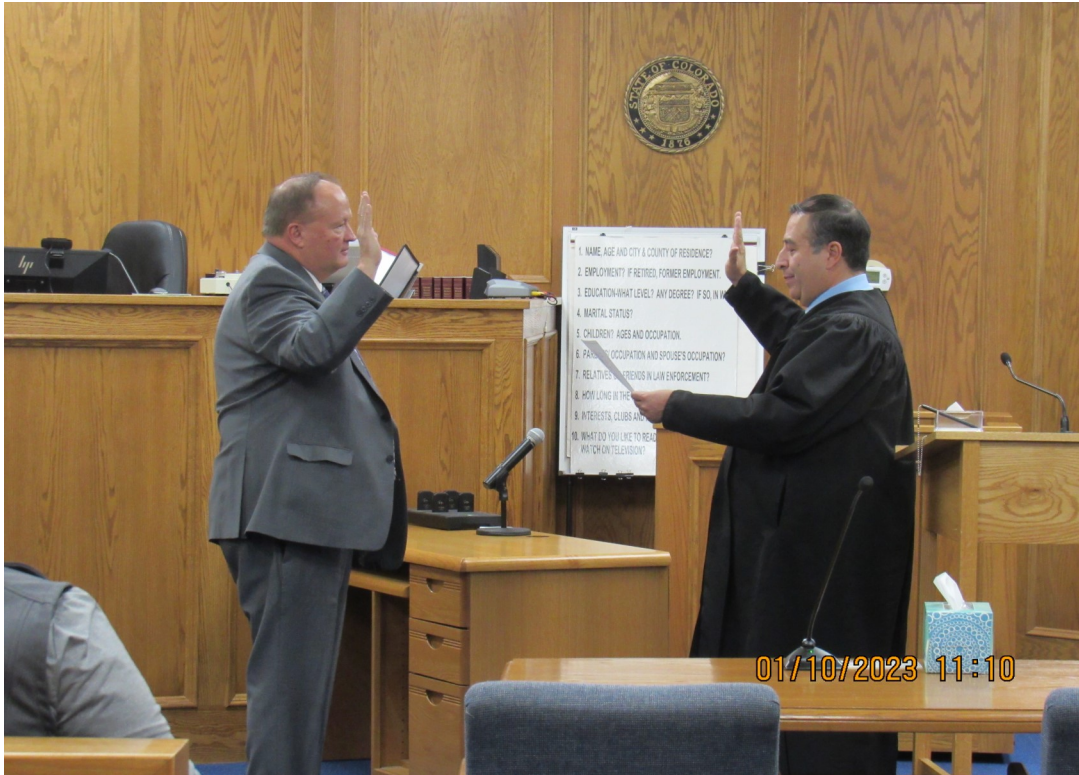
Elected Officials Sworn in on January 10, 2023

Judge Michael Gonzales conducted the swearing in ceremony of re-elected county officials at the courtroom on January 10. Judge Gonzales opened the ceremony with a welcome to all those in attendance, a brief history of the law pertaining to officials taking an oath and his personal

comments of high respect for elected officials.

The following re-elected officials were sworn in for 4-year terms:

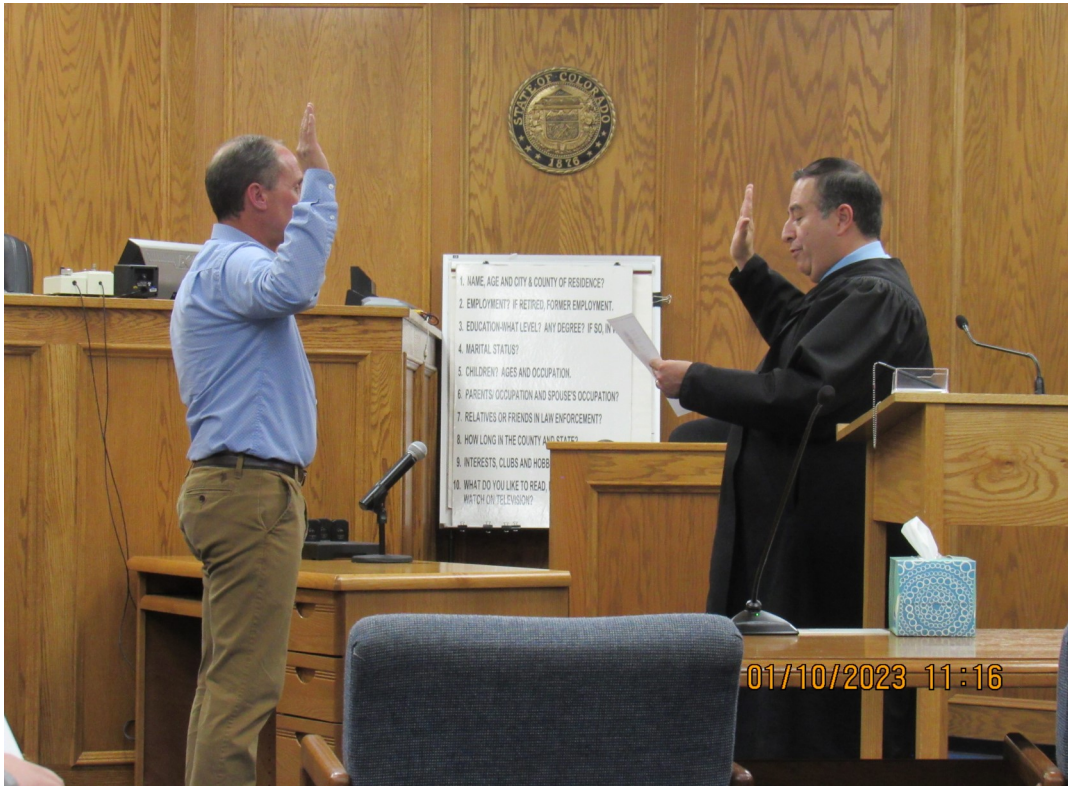
- ◆ Treasurer Mack Crowther
- ◆ Assessor Naomi Martinez
- ◆ Commissioner Mitchell Jarvies
- ◆ Sheriff Garth Crowther
- ◆ Clerk & Recorder Nathan Ruybal



Mack Crowther, Treasurer



Naomi Martinez, Assessor



Mitchell Jarvies, Commissioner



Garth Crowther, Sheriff



Nathan Ruybal, Clerk & Recorder



Assessor's Office

April is the time of the year when certain forms are sent out by the Assessor's Office and to be returned to our office before a late filing penalty is imposed. All taxpayers that have any type of business should have received a personal property declaration form from our office. These forms should be completed in detail and returned to our office by April 15, 2023. Any taxpayer that has a subdivision should have returned the subdivision questionnaire by March 15. All values for 2023, which tax will be paid in 2024, should be set by May 1.

Notice of Valuations will be sent out by May 1. Each individual has from May 2 until June 8, 2023 to protest the valuation or classification of one's property. Protests can be done in person by coming into the Assessor's Office, calling the office, or mailing in the protest form. Attaching documentation as evidence to back up your reason/s for your protest is critical at the time you file your protest. Each protest will allow us to go out and review your property before we make a final decision. Thank you for allowing us to serve you.

Treasurer's Office

Spring greetings from the Conejos County Treasurer's Office! Here's an update for Spring 2023. Our office mailed out the 2022 tax notices on January 13, 2023. Full payments are due by April 30, 2023 and 2nd half tax payments are due by June 15, 2023. If you would like a mailed tax receipt, please provide a self-addressed stamped envelope with your payment. Otherwise, your mailed-in check will serve as your receipt. Please note you can either mail your payment to: PO Box 97, Conejos, CO 81129, or pay online at: conejoscounty.colorado.gov or call our office to make a payment over the phone. Please be aware there is a small convenience fee for debit cards, credit cards and e-checks.

If you have specific questions regarding the Senior Property Tax Exemption, please contact the County Assessor's Office at (719) 376-5585. For questions on the Disabled Veterans' Exemption, Disabled Veteran Surviving Spouse Exemption, or Disabled Veteran Gold Star Spouse, please contact Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs at (303) 914-5832.

If we can be of further assistance in the Treasurer's Office, please contact our office at (719) 376-5919. **HAPPY EASTER!**



CONEJOS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Greetings from the Conejos County Department of Social Services

Greetings,

During the month of March many of our customers have had to experience a dramatic change in their SNAP benefits and prepare themselves for upcoming changes to our Medicaid programs. These changes are a result of the ending of the public health emergency. Many households saw a reduction in their SNAP allotments and others may lose out on their Medicaid eligibility which was locked-in during the pandemic.

We encourage those impacted by these changes to utilize local resources such as food pantries, food distribution sites, and to stay informed by visiting Keep Colorado covered.

<https://hcpf.colorado.gov/keepcococovered>

One can also receive general SNAP updates toll-free at 800-816-4451. Case specific questions can be directed to our local office at (719) 376-5455.

In the month of April we recognize Child Abuse awareness month and would like to acknowledge the difficult work that all of our Department of Social Services employees do to assist those in our community. If you would like to learn more about reporting child abuse or would like to know if you are a mandatory reporter please visit our website to learn more.

Last year our DSS staff sponsored a local Easter egg hunt in partnership with the Head start located in Conejos as a way to bring child abuse awareness to our community.

Graduating seniors, please apply for the Conejos County DSS scholarship which is due 4/30/2023. You can visit the Conejos County Department of Social Services website for more details regarding the application process.



Commissioners

Conejos County Approved as a Rural Jump Zone County

At the February 2 meeting, the Commissioners approved county resolution C-08-23 to officially declare Conejos County as a Rural Jump Start Zone County. This designation is intended to encourage economic development and job creation by offering new businesses or businesses that move to these zones significant financial benefits. Through the Rural Jump Start program, businesses that start in or move to counties that have adopted the zones can qualify for relief from the state business income tax, the sales and use tax, and county/municipal business personal property taxes.

Qualified employees also receive relief from their state personal income tax. In addition, businesses are eligible for a general operating grant of up to \$20,000 and up to \$2,500 per qualified new hire. These grants are intended to support regional economic and workforce development activities that expand local business, create new good paying jobs, and create more diversified and strong local economies.

These zones are designated to spur economic growth and job creation in economically distressed, rural counties of Colorado. To become a rural jump start zone, the commission was required to approve a resolution and submit it to the Colorado Economic Development Commission, which in turn approved the application on March 16.

Commission Reports:

- ◆ At the March 16 board meeting several Conejos County residents took the opportunity to address the Commission on the proposed updated Excel transmission line from south of Antonito to Alamosa. The residents were informed that as of the board meeting, the County has not received an application from Excel for a special use permit. Once the County receives the Special Use Permit from Excel, the Board of County Commissioners will hold a public hearing and at that time residents of the County will be allowed to comment for or against the proposed updated transmission line. Conejos County, like other landowners, on the proposed new transmission route has also received a letter from Excel requesting permission to have access on a county owned parcel of land. The Commission did authorize the county attorney to begin discussions with Excel only regarding the specifics of the county owned parcel.
- ◆ At the March 2 board meeting, the commissioners unanimously approved the Map 1 option for the newly formed commissioner districts. The law requires the Board wait until 30 days had passed after the January 24, 6:00 hearing. New maps of the new commissioner districts will be on file at the County Clerk & Recorder's Office. The Dec. 21, 2022 newsletter had a full page story on the commissioner redistricting map options and legal process in forming new districts.

Commissioners (Continued)

- ◆ At the Feb. 16 board meeting, the commissioners approved Department of Social Services January monthly expenditures of \$1,146,188.45 and accounts payable of \$19,726.31. They also heard from Director, Nicholas Barela, the additional SNAP benefits that were implemented during Covid would be ending at the end of the month.
- ◆ At the Feb. 16 board meeting, Denise Jiron, Public Health Director, reported there are 28 Personal Care Providers. She also reported the Commodity Supplemental Food Program had a total participation of 456 households in January. For those households that qualify and cannot drive to the curbside delivery at the Public Health Department, there is home delivery service two days monthly. Curbside delivery at the Public Health Department occurs weekly on Tuesday and Thursday.
- ◆ At the Feb. 16 board meeting, Ernest Abeyta, Ambulance Director reported a total of 108 calls in January: Transports 77; Cancelled Calls 10; Standby 1; Refusals 19; DOA 1; and Null 5.
- ◆ On February 7, Mack Crowther, County Treasurer, reported to the Commission The Colorado Pacific Rio Grande Railroad, (the new railroad owner) sent a wire transfer to the county's bank in the amount of \$682,865,58. This amount is the total of all taxes due to the county for years 2013 through 2022. Hopefully, this new entity will continue transporting products in and out of our county and be a long term successful railroad company in the SLV.
- ◆ The Commission authorized County Attorney, Nick Sarmiento to submit a Notice of Intent by December 30, 2022 to the Public Utility Commission of Colorado. The Notice of Intent had to be filed by Dec. 30 in order to file comments prior to the Feb. 3, 2023 deadline. Filing the notice of intent was a collaborative effort with the other five counties in the SLV. Mr. Sarmiento wrote, "it is imperative to note that the issue of a new transmission solution into and out of the San Luis Valley is of critical importance to the county and the citizens of the entire San Luis Valley. Furthermore, while increasing the capacity, and improving the reliability of the current transmission line over Poncha Pass would enable additional exportation of renewable energy sources, it does not address the grave concern of redundancy. As the ONLY transmission line in to or out of the San Luis Valley that serves nearly 19,500 homes, the focus should be on additional locations and routes other than Poncha Pass." Frequent power outages have been a driving force for a redundant line into the San Luis Valley. Some of the more frequent causes of extended power outages are wildfires, extreme winds, and other natural disasters.

Commissioners Baroz, Garcia, and Jarvies