



October 1, 2023

THE CONEJOS COUNTY MESSENGER

Published Quarterly on April 1, July 1, Oct. 1, and Jan. 1

In this issue:

- Commissioners' Updates, EMS, Sheriff's Office, Mountain Valley Free Transit Service, Land Use, Emergency Management, Treasurer, DSS
- Pages 1-9

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, conejoscounty.colorado.gov

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

Conejos County
Website QR Code



Commissioners' Updates

- **OHV (Off Highway Vehicles) Should Conejos County Become a Friendly OHV County?** At the request of county citizens, the Commissioners have held listening sessions and one hearing to determine support for a OHV ordinance/resolution. The following was reported in the Conejos County Messenger, October 1, 2022 edition, "The Board of County Commissioners, conducted meetings on September 7, 14, and 21 to gather citizen comments. A few major points that need clarifying are when adopted the use is for recreational/personal purposes. The ordinance that will eventually be adopted will not have an effect on current law that allows ranchers and farmers to use these vehicles in their businesses. Also, the ordinance will only effect rural Conejos County, not municipalities." After listening to what citizens wanted, the Commissioners worked on OHV regulations, using language from other counties in the state that have been adopted. For a full copy of the proposed resolution, please go to the county website, conejoscounty.colorado.gov.

On Sept. 20, 2023, the Commissioners held a public hearing to further the process of adopting or not adopting a OHV resolution. Comments in relation to the proposed resolution was opposition to snowmobiles being allowed under the definitions part of the resolution. The other theme commented on during the hearing was the opposition to require OHV's be insured. The exact language proposed in the resolution is "4. No OHV shall be operated at any time, unless the operator of the OHV is insured to the minimum level required by the State of Colorado for automobiles."

At the conclusion of the hearing, the Commissioners promised the citizens that the scheduled action to adopt or not adopt a resolution at the September 21 regular meeting would be tabled and two additional hearings would be scheduled to hear comments from county residents. At the September 21 meeting, the Commissioners scheduled public hearings on October 11 and 24, at 6:00 p.m. in the Commissioners meeting room. Please spread the word and let your friends, neighbors and others know what is going on and invite them to the upcoming hearings.

Commissioners' Updates (Continued)

- At the San Luis Valley Commissioner's quarterly meeting on Sept. 25, all Commissioners from the six valley counties heard budget requests from a few of the agencies and other entities that had submitted an annual request for funds. Conejos County Commissioners will be discussing these funding requests during one of the upcoming meetings. District Attorney, \$325,000; SLV TV \$13,347; CSU Extension \$25,000; SLV Fair \$5,600; South Central Colorado Seniors \$7,000; SLV Hazardous Substance Board \$1,090; Center for Restorative Programs \$500; Food Bank of the SLV \$500; Blue Peaks \$1,000; SLV COG \$14,518; Tu Casa \$640; SLV Veteran's Coalition \$500; Veterans Affairs \$5,306.70; SLV GO \$5,000; Small Business Dev. Center \$1,030. If funded at 100% of request, the cost to the county would be \$420,587. The total cost, if funded at 100% of request to all six counties is \$2,615,083. As per state statute, Colorado counties are required to fund the Office of the District Attorney.
- 1041 Local Government Areas of State Interest:
At the July 20, 2023, board meeting, the Commissioners conducted a public hearing regarding the 1041 designation of activities of state interest in accordance with the Areas and Activities of State Interest Act. The Commissioners then approved Resolution C-28-23, which includes the processes and findings and more which a local government may adopt guidelines and regulations to administer such areas of activities.

Section 1 of the Resolution is the Findings and Determinations: The 4th part to Section 1 is written as: "The municipalities and counties in the San Luis Valley will or have entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement ("IGA") to establish the San Luis Valley Planning Area to Protect Surface and Groundwater Resources to allow a coordinated approach for regulation of these activities of state interest."

The BOCC signed off on the Intergovernmental Agreement to Protect Water Resources as referred to in the above paragraph. As of this writing, all six counties in the SLV have signed the same IGA to protect water resources and many of the municipalities in the SLV are expected to do the same.

The SLV Council of Governments has secured \$100,000 in grant funding to lead, continue and finalize the documents necessary to complete the 1041 process.

- The County has been awarded a \$125,000 DOLA grant for Architecture and Engineering design plans for a new Ambulance Base/Facility. The services of Reynolds Ash & Associates has been approved and the work will begin soon to design a modern state of the art ambulance facility.
- 2022 Audit, conducted by Wall, Smith & Bateman Inc., Certified Public Accountants: The Statement of Activities for Primary Governmental Activities, which include General Government, Public Safety, Health and Welfare, Highway and Streets, Judicial-District Attorney, Auxiliary Services, Culture and Recreation, and Interest on Long-Term Debt indicated a positive Change in Net Position of \$1,775,703, after expenses and program revenues are calculated and compared with the beginning net position, prior year.

General Fund: The actual revenues totaled \$7,576,275 and actual expenses were \$5,825,214. On the Revenue Side, the net General Property Taxes were \$2,370,788; Sales and Use Taxes—First Year Collections \$2,573,294. The Public Safety expenditures were \$2,251,811, which did not include Ambulance Department expenses.

Commissioners Baroz, Garcia, and Jarvies



CONEJOS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES



Happy Fall to everyone from the Conejos County Department of Social Services!

CCDSS celebrated Child Support Awareness month throughout August. We would like to say a big thank you to all of our child support professionals in our county as well as to our state partners for their assistance in the administration of this program. You can learn more about Child Support services by visiting our County DSS webpage.



LEAP season is right around the corner and we will start receiving applications starting in November. If you received benefits last year you will likely receive a renewal packet in the mail. We administer our LEAP program through Goodwill and will continue to do so this year; however, we would more than glad to assist you in completing your application or scanning over your documents to our Goodwill branch. To learn more about the LEAP program you can visit: <https://cdhs.colorado.gov/leap>.

SNAP COLA change effective 10/1/23. Eligibility standards for Gross income limits will be updated effective 10/1/23. Visit the Conejos County Department of Social Services to review these changes starting in October.

COME JOIN OUR TEAM!!! We are looking for workers in Child Welfare and Eligibility. Applications and information can be found on our website.



CONEJOS COUNTY EMS



WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO?

Our team is growing! As our call volume increases, we are hiring more experienced providers: we now employ 3 Paramedics, 2 Advanced EMTs, and 12 EMTs.

More calls year-to-date than ever before:

Over 900 calls thus far, an **8.7% increase** compared to this time last year

11% of the time, two ambulances are operating

FUN WITH 911 IS COMING!

FREE FOOD!

Cheeseburgers, hamburgers, hot dogs, chips, and drinks

Games for all ages!

2 Bounce Houses
Learn to be a firefighter, police, etc.
Smoky the Bear, face painting, cotton candy, popcorn!

OCTOBER
14th from
10am-2pm

@ the park
in La Jara

32+ different community resources

Free Narcan, Stop the Bleed kits

Bid on helicopter flights, train rides, ski tickets, and enter to win restaurant gift cards!

Ernest Abeyta, Ambulance Dept. Director



SHERIFF GARTH CROWTHER
14044 County Road G.5
Antonito, Colorado 81120

The Sheriff's Office is excited to announce the progress we have made on a project we have been working on over the last several months. With the increase in school violence across the nation, the concerns for our school children and teachers are one of our top priorities. To help ensure we can make school as safe as possible, we have created a position within the Sheriff's Office for a School Resource Officer (SRO). After advertising and interviewing several prospects for the position we feel that we have selected the perfect individual for the task.

Sgt. Rod Noga, who recently retired from the Colorado State Patrol with a long-distinguished career, will be working the SRO position in our schools. Sgt. Noga comes with a wealth of knowledge and experience gained from a long law enforcement career with the State of Colorado where he was one of the best drug recognition experts in the State. He is a wealth of knowledge on drugs and drug use and alcohol abuse. He is an excellent teacher and passed his knowledge to countless others throughout State of Colorado as an instructor in many law enforcement disciplines. He is deeply ingrained in our community and is blessed with the ability to quickly gain trust and confidences among our students and teachers.

As the SRO, Sgt Noga will be working in all the school districts in Conejos County including Head Start and Little Treasures. Rod has already developed working relationships with many of the supervisors in the schools. He will be free to attend any of the schools in the County at any time, as he deems necessary or is called upon. He will not only be in the schools during learning hours, but will also be attending extra-curricular activities and sporting events.

As the SRO, Sgt Noga is not there to intimidate or be a "Law Enforcement Threat" but rather he is there to ensure safety and security for our children and teachers. He will be a mentor and someone that all students and teachers can confide in. If there is a problem or someone just needs an ear to bend on a bad day, they can feel free to look him up.

The SRO Program is a great asset for our schools and community. We are hoping to continue to develop and grow in the coming months, by adding another Deputy to the program. There is near nothing as important to our community as our children. We are committed to ensuring their safety in as many aspects of life as possible, especially in our schools where they should be able to learn in peace and without fear.

Sheriff Garth Crowther



MOUNTAIN
VALLEY
TRANSIT

FREE TRANSIT SERVICE



COMING FALL 2023
Connecting Antonito,
Manassa, Romeo,
La Jara & Alamosa



Accessible
for those with
physical disabilities



Bringing your bike?
Our vehicles
have bike racks!



Tired of paying
for gas?
Hop on the bus!
It's free!

Check Us Out!
(719) 530-8980

MountainValleyTransit.com

A new service from Antonito to Alamosa is launching this fall including stops in Antonito, Manassa, Romeo, La Jara and Alamosa. Take advantage of this free service to shop, get to medical appointments, or visit family and friends.

Meet the Land Use Department Staff Planning, Zoning & Building



Land Use Staff: Left to right Michelle Bradford – Address Coordinator & Permit Technician, Oscar Morales – Building Inspector, Pres Romero – Septic Inspector and Zoning Inspector/Enforcement Officer, and Linda DeHerrera – Land Use Administrator

NEW BUILDING CODE ADOPTED: The year 2023 is a historical year for changes in Conejos County. The unincorporated territories of Conejos County have been regulated for development and subdivisions using a Zoning Ordinance adopted in March 1979. The Conejos County Land Use Code (CCLUC,) was adopted in May 2005. Construction permits have been required and enforced since 1999. The CCLUC Article 5 Permits required Land Use Construction Permits for all construction. Permits were enforced to meet zoning requirements like setbacks, height restrictions, lot coverage, water, and wastewater systems.

On June 2, 2022, the State of Colorado approved HB 22-1362 which forced upon Conejos County the adoption of the Energy Code per section 30-28-211 of the Colorado Revised Statutes. The Land Use Staff, Planning Commission Members and the Conejos County Board of Commissioners cooperatively reviewed, recommended, presented, and approved the adoption of the International Building Code effective July 1, 2023. The Codes adopted are the 2018 International Building Codes: 2018 International Residential Code (IRC) the 2018 International Building Code (IBC), and the 2018 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC.)

What does it mean to have a 2018 Building Code? It means that landowners in unincorporated areas of Conejos County are required to build per the specific codes adopted. Landowners are required to apply for a permit to build and inspections of each phase of construction are required. Landowners must plan their building projects to meet the specific code requirements. All building projects in unincorporated Conejos County require building plans be submitted with an application to the Land Use Office. The Building Inspector, Oscar Morales, will review the plans and issue the appropriate building permit. Inspections will follow accordingly.

The Building Codes are available on the internet. Building Inspectors are not allowed to tell you how to build, however we can assist by providing building guides. Please see our Land Use Department webpage for resources and helpful links. All Land Use Staff are available to help you through the building process. Contact Oscar Morales, Building Inspector, by phone at 719-376-6765.

ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS/SEPTIC SYSTEMS: Conejos County, and the State of Colorado in partnership with Colorado Professionals on Wastewater (CPOW), National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA,) declare the third week in September of every year as Septic Smart Week. We encourage all landowners with septic systems to keep a record of all maintenance. We recommend pumping your system every 3 to 5 years. The following link provides a few helpful septic system maintenance tips: <https://www.epa.gov/septic/septic-smart-quick-tip-videos#clean> If you have any questions concerning septic systems, contact Pres Romero, OWTS Inspector at 719-376-6761.

PHYSICAL ADDRESSING & REFLECTIVE ADDRESS SIGNS: Conejos County requires that a physical address be assigned to any residence/mobile home and commercial and/or industrial business. You must provide a legal description, proof of legal access, driving directions/map and a processing fee of \$50.00. (The fee includes a reflective address sign.) Coming Soon – an online application process. Contact Michelle Bradford, Address Coordinator, for more information 719-376-6762.

MINOR SUBDIVISION AMENDMENTS: The Planning Commission will be reviewing the Minor Subdivision regulations at the October 20, 2023, 6:00 p.m. monthly meeting in the Commissioner's meeting room. We will specifically discuss potable water supplies and the Division of Water Resources water supply plans regarding Minor Subdivisions. If you have any comments, please contact Linda DeHerrera at 719-376-6764 before the October 20th meeting.



Conejos County Office of Emergency Management

1. San Luis Valley Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)

I have been working on Emergency Plans for our Tier II Chemical Plants, after completing the CAMEO course in June. These plans will be discussed and presented at the next SLV LEPC meeting in November.

2. Conejos County EPA Listening Session, Sept. 27

This meeting was held at the Commissioners Board Room at 5:00 on September 27th, 2023. We discussed various concerns on Environmental Issues including Health, Environmental Justice and Equity. We will follow up with more information including grant funding for selected issues. I anticipate future meetings with Brent Campbell, Environmental Protection Specialist for Region 8 – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

3. Crisis Track Account is Operational for Conejos County

Crisis Track is disaster management software that The State of Colorado has adopted for all the Counties and Tribes in Colorado. It will help identify disaster costs and complete FEMA paperwork for faster disaster assistance in the event of a large scale disaster in Colorado.

4. Special Project Grant from the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management

I have applied for a Regional Grant from funds at the DHSEM – Emergency Management Planning Grant. We were awarded a little over \$10,000. We will provide a 50% match from our SLV R EOC funds.

This grant is for some extra equipment to be used in the event of a large scale disaster, and will provide more resources for our mobile Emergency Operation Center.

Thank You for the opportunity to serve the citizens of Conejos County, as Your Emergency Manager.

Rodney King

Treasurer's Office

For fall 2023 the Treasurer's Office is preparing for our Annual Tax Lien Sale on Wednesday, November 15, 2023. The sale will be on-line with SRI Inc. at www.zeusauction.com Please check back on the website for updated information. Advertising for delinquent real estate taxes is published on October 14, 21, & 28, 2023 in the Valley Courier. The list will also be available on this website.

For your information we are in the middle of our computer conversion from Pueblo Shares Services to Tyler Technology. We hope the conversion will be completed later this Fall. If you have any questions regarding your taxes, please call our office at (719) 376-5919. Thank you and have a great Fall. Happy Halloween 2023!

Mack M. Crowther – CONEJOS COUNTY TREASURER/PT



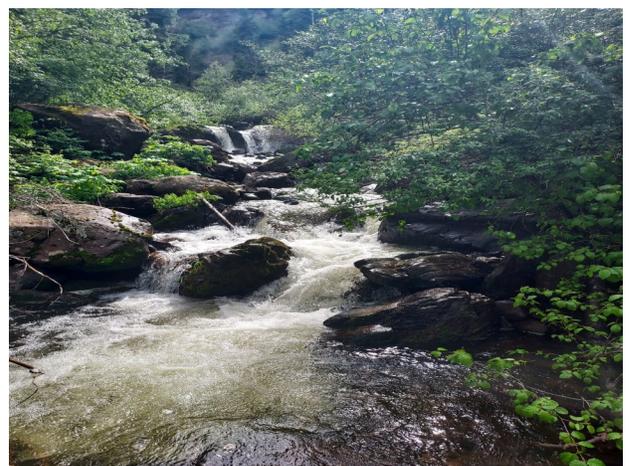
On BLM land near County Road BB and FDR 255



Big Horn Sheep, Overlooking Terrace Reservoir



Cumbres Subdivision



Waterfall, Lake Fork Trailhead behind Rocky Mountain Estates