

**John Avila**  
**Village Administrator**  
**Village of Taos Ski Valley Council**  
**Monthly Briefing**  
**January 26, 2021**



**\* Ongoing & Past Projects \***

**COVID -19 - Pandemic Emergency:**

Not consistently following the Emergency Health Orders can contribute to this pandemic emergency. However, many staff within the Village were able to start the COVID 19 vaccination process and there seems to be an element of hope for a downturn in the COVID infection rate and death toll in our country. Unfortunately with that new treatment it raises fears that some people may become complacent with the infection rate in danger of rising.

The Taos Ski Valley Chamber has sought positive solutions to helping the Valley stay open. Their work with Mogul Medical and support of the Lodgers Tax Board has had positive results with members:

- **So far community is testing 100% negative.**
- **Register through the Fulgent Genetics email sent to you privately.**
- **Tests take less than 3 minutes.**
- **Negative test results will not be notified.**
- **Positive test results will get a private call from Mogul Medical within 4 days**

Members are also screening daily, using the GoEvo App to allow remote participation before staff enter the Ski Valley. The surveillance testing, like the COVID screening application is a service supporting tourism in the Village and an effective use of funding.

The Taos Ski Valley Chamber of Commerce assistance with the COVID emergency by communicating with members and executing projects for the safety of the business and wider community also includes securing bathroom facilities and organizing a volunteer effort to sanitize these daily.

Additionally the Chamber is part of a volunteer effort to patrol the Core Area and provide friendly reminders to those pedestrians that may have forgotten to cover up with a mask. These efforts compliment the regular patrols by Police and Fire personnel. The Departments are scheduled to enforce COVID safety measures with visitors and provide masks and information as needed.

Despite these efforts, there is some indication that not all businesses are completely on board with the requirements of the Health Order. The Village is required to ensure that the businesses have followed the order and are sending notice of the requirements again with the opportunity to confirm compliance.

The below letter is sent to businesses that require further scrutiny:

This correspondence follows the latest notice provided by the Village of the COVID safe requirements to do business in the Taos Ski Valley.

We do not have confirmation that the business activity located at this address is following all of the requirements of the Health Order.

**Requirements of Businesses operating in the Village of Taos Ski Valley, under the COVID pandemic Health Order are:**

- **Village businesses must have record that they are NM Safe Certified.**
- **Village businesses must have record that all employees have taken the Taos Ski Valley COVID Safe Pledge.**
- **Village businesses must have record that all employees are tested within a week of beginning work in the Village.**
- **Village businesses must have record that all employees complete COVID health screening daily**
- **Village businesses must have record that all employees are tested randomly during the season (15% every 2 weeks).**
- **All lodging businesses must have record that guests have been screened and informed of the New Mexico's Public Health Mandate.**

Use of the Taos Ski Valley Chamber of Commerce facilitated screening app and random surveillance community testing every two weeks, fills the requirements of the Health Orders without the need to keep separate records for Village inspection and keeps HIPA and other information secure.

**Please affirm that you are in compliance with Executive Order 2020-04, by signing and returning this document:**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Village of Taos Ski Valley

Attention, COVID Safety Enforcement

PO Box 100

Taos Ski Valley

NM, 87525

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter of keeping our community safe.

We are hoping that we will get good news on Wednesday 1/27/1 when the Red to Green COVID mapping is updated. Recent Information from the Town of Taos confirms:

- *Testing volume in Taos County is recently decreased over high levels **last week**. Case counts declined also **and the crude 14-day test positivity remains below 5.0% at 3.7%**.*
- *Nationally, cases were down 21% in the last seven days, cases in New Mexico were down 28%, and in Taos County by 19%.*
- *The average daily case count in NM declined to 821 cases per day last week. Down from 1,134 the previous week.*
- *Current hospitalizations continue to decline gradually, the 7-day average is 624 . Down from a high of 932 on Dec 8.*
- *Average deaths per day in NM are rising again and are currently at 29 per day. Having peaked at 36 on Dec 17.*
- *There were no deaths reported among Taos County residents last week. The total remains at 42 for the pandemic.*
- *Cases in Taos County decreased to 69 last week, down from 85 the previous week. Cases averaged 10 per day for the last week. **To meet the Red-to-Green case rate criteria the weekly count has to fall to below 18, equivalent to 2.64 per day.***
- *Testing in Taos County returned to a more typical level with 1,469 tests reported, compared to 2,708 the week before.*
- *Despite the decline in testing, Taos County is meeting the state's red-to-green test positivity target. However, case rate remains well above the red-to-green target.*

## **Facility Undergrounding**

The NM Department of Transportation has been contacted directly for information concerning the application by Kit Carson Electric Cooperative using the Village Contract for a permit to excavate and install underground facilities along NM 150 on the river side of the road.

Excavation contractors and Kit Carson Electric Cooperative are required to meet with the Village for planning a public presentation of the electric undergrounding project and projections for the summer building season. A direct request of the NMDOT has been requested for status update.

Although residents are free to use Village contractors, they should be engaged independently by the private owners to finish the connection to their homes. Procurement restrictions do not allow the government to be an agent of the contractor for the private use.

Alternatively, once the underground service is available near a property, the five steps to connecting underground are:

**The Owner** to engage a contract electrician for work on their property,

**Then together** contact Kit Carson Electrical Cooperative with the meter number and request an *upgrade to an underground service*, **KCEC** and the electrician will contact the Village for underground permitting and start credit request for public Right Of Way work,

**Proceed** with underground work and connect to the underground service,

**Make** the credit application for the portion of work done in the public ROW. If the property is undeveloped, the request is for a new service.

Our contractor, Anchor Built Inc. has been coordinating with KCEC and the Village to finish projects on the north side of NM150 they include underground lines on Emma/Gusdorf, Gerson and NM150 up to the Inn of Taos Ski Valley. Kit Carson Electric Cooperative must still finish the permit application with NM Department of Transportation and the US Forest Service before work can begin along the South side of NM 150. Our contractor Precision Service Electric has progressed with underground projects in the Twining Road Zaps area as assigned.

## **WWTP**

Under the CARES funding rule the Village engaged Sauder Miller and Associates for a site review in order to be contracted as emergency backup for certified staffing and have completed review and training preparation. Along with periodic review of plant operations the introduction to the Village system allows them to respond in an emergency when we do not have enough staff reporting.

The upgraded Waste Water Treatment Plant was needed for system expansion, protecting the water conditions of the area. This is required for the increased demands on the system.

In order to increase capacity needed within limited space and funding, a mechanical system was selected by Village for the Waste Water System upgrade. This system has many considerations beyond that of the traditional plant and requires a larger electric demand.

Adherence to disposal agreements still needs verification. Ensuring that sewer waste entering the system is protected against grease deposits also will help the efficiency of the MBR system. This may require updating the ordinances s likely sources of grease contaminant is excluded from the system.

The requests of IWS are to finish all items of the punch list as well as any item discovered in closing the project. Also, pending is the requirement for Arts in Public Places, that is a condition of our funding sources.

As of last reporting, ongoing work for the Waste Water Treatment Plant includes continued optimized efficiency of the Ovivo System along with ongoing training. Ovivo engineers and technicians are in contact to address system operations issues including monitoring programs, improving the ultra violet treatment and plumbing corrections.

*Anthony Martinez, Director of Public Works (field report)*

## **Kachina Water Tank –**

Efforts to secure funding for the Kachina Water Boosting Station are of primary importance for any future use of the Kachina Water Tank. We have had some success obtaining legislative capital funding last year and this year we hope to immediately add funding to that project by reauthorizing planning funds for a delayed planning project at Gunsite Springs to the Kachina Water Booster Station. We have some commitment from our Legislators but still need to verify legislation. Securing funding for constructing and equipping Kachina Water Booster Station takes precedence over planning prospective future projects.

The current temporary pump station upgrades allow for remote automatic operation between the pumps and tank equipment. The temporary pump station operational, the tank is sterilized again and distribution lines have received testing. The temporary pump station has an expected life of less than two years and a permanent Kachina Water Booster Station is required for use of the Kachina Water Tank.

*Anthony Martinez, Director of Public Works (field report)*

### **Village Hall Complex –**

The Village office is operating with a fraction of personnel under the latest restrictions and some apartment units are doubling as remote offices to allow for distancing. The Building Inspector and Police Offices are currently housed in Village Apartment units accounted for under enterprise fund. Dealing with the COVID restrictions has demonstrated that temporary offices can be operational in the apartment

The Public Safety Office is a temporary solution but a workable start to further developing department offices at the Village Complex site. The Police Trailer (a temporary solution in 1997) is being removed and will be listed as surplus for the next Council meeting. The Police Department is continuing to be located in one of the units which now allow them to have a heated space with lavatory facilities and more room for offices.

Office space for a Fire/EMS Administration can also be located on site. Doing so would free the current Fire Department office to be used an apartment for overnight coverage near the equipment bays on 7 Firehouse Road. The State Fire Marshal has also indicated that a correctly staffed Fire Administration Office will allow the Village to gain approximately \$80,000 more grant funding per year. The funding could not be spent on salaries but could pay for equipment and capital expenses that can lower the risk rating by the Insurance Services Organization.

The additional cost estimated to convert the Taos Mountain Lodge Property into The Village Complex ranges from \$150,000 for basic conversion of the office building to more than \$3,000,000 to include complete accommodations. Investigating sources of funding has been a priority.

**TIDD** – Progress of the TIDD project - Thunderbird/Ernie Blake Roads nears completion with some adjustments needing to wait for the spring. Apparent drainage issues on Thunder Bird Road are currently not being addressed and expected to be address in Project Meetings are on hold until April.

The TIDD Board meeting included information that we are near to final information being submitted for a pending dedication application.

*Patrick Nicholson; Director of Planning and Community Development (field report)*

- The fiscal mid-year Work Study and Budget Review originally scheduled for January 20, 2021 had to be moved to January 19, 2021 due to competing meetings. There was lower than expected public attendance and limited input. We should have an understanding of how a reduced season opening translates into revenue and expenses for estimating Village operational status for the rest of the fiscal year.

The New Mexico Municipal League has flagged some 2021 session budget impact legislation beyond Capital Outlay, they include:

Potential for Local Government to share in revenues from internet sales with the State, perhaps 20%,  
 Potential for Local Government to share in revenues from cannabis sales with the State, perhaps 20%

Danger that the Legislature will again consider removing the Hold Harmless % paid to municipalities  
 Danger that HB4 will be passed and damage governments by escalating litigation costs:

#### **House Bill 4 (HB4) “Civil Rights” > Remove Qualified Immunity of public officials**

NMML concerns

- ***More litigation does not create less bad behavior.***
- Qualified immunity is about protecting our law enforcement community when they make reasonable mistakes. Instead of talking about behavior, and how to correct it, our Civil Rights Commission suggests creating more ways to sue our cities. The idea that bad actors will behave better when both good and bad actors can be sued more has no basis in fact. And it does nothing to the bad behavior the Commission so roundly criticized.
- ***Accountability is everything.***
- More litigation means more payouts by more insurers. Solutions must be consequence-driven, and we already know how to do that: hire the best applicants, create the best policies, provide for the best training, and hold the bad actors accountable. If bad actors are not held accountable, they are a continued risk to their communities. And if bad actors may incorrectly *take a life*, the least our State could do is *take a look*, especially at its LEA Board and its significant backlog of decertification hearings and requests.
- ***It’s your money.***
- Every judgment and settlement – every single one – is paid by you. All risk management dollars are taxpayer dollars. We shouldn’t ask New Mexicans to reach into their pockets *yet again* for more attorney fees, settlements, and judgments, which themselves increase the premiums taxpayers already pay. We can’t answer every problem we face by asking folks who already pay too much to pay just a little bit more.
- ***Preventive care is risk management.***
- The Fund will now be forced to craft the very solutions that escapes the bill drafters. Investments in programs such as de-escalation, mental health, peer intervention, and reality-based training are critical to affecting and correcting behavior where it matters – on the front end. If we can create a culture that ultimately makes fewer errors in judgment, we can put together behavioral solutions to behavioral problems.

## What is an ISO fire rating?

A New Jersey-based statistical and actuarial company called the Insurance Services Office provides frequent fire department ratings for more than 50,000 communities around the country through their ISO Public Protection Classification Program.

The rating is based on the program's Fire Suppression Schedule (FSRS), which is the criteria the company measures to generate a score for each locality. The score indicates how good or bad a fire department is at suppressing fires. The FSRS evaluates four primary categories of fire suppression:

- **Emergency communications** - The quality of your community's emergency response systems (911) accounts for 10 points of the total classification
- **Fire department** - The quality of your local fire department, including their equipment, pump capacity, engine companies, ladder companies, training, and personnel, accounts for 50 points of the total classification
- **Water supply** - Your community's water supply system accounts for 40 points of the total classification. The FSRS considers hydrant size, type, and installation, as well as the quality and frequency of hydrant inspections and testing
- **Community risk reduction** - Your community's ability to prevent fires, enforce codes, and implement fire safety educational accounts for 5.5 points of the total classification

After evaluating these four categories, ISO then evaluates the data, totals the points, and assigns a score between 1 and 10, with 1 being the best and 10 being the worst. Scoring 90 or more earns a Class 1 rating, 80 to 89.99 earns a Class 2 rating, and so on. Most municipalities want to aim for a score between 1 and 3.