

Andrew Chavez
Advocating for Open
Meetings?
The Apocalypse
Must Be Near.

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Students Walk out in Protest

Food, clothing
policies cited
as issues

By **Ralph Chapoco and
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SUN Staff Writers

Española Valley High School was placed on lock-down twice Tuesday because students attempted to leave the campus prematurely as part of a protest.

Students from the high school staged a walkout in response to rules and regulations Principal Elizabeth Lucero and her administration implemented for the current academic year.

"She doesn't care about the students," junior Jasmine Vigil said. "She is in her office all the time and she will only come out to tell us about how we dress."

Students are very upset with a new rule that prohibits them from bringing food to the school, either from home or food they purchased at a restaurant.

Students said Lucero is forcing them to purchase food from



Española Valley High School junior Jesus Carbajal, right, urges other students to join a protest at the High School on Tuesday morning. About 50 students walked out of classes after the fourth quarter to protest Principal Elizabeth Lucero's administration and policies, such as banning students from bringing outside food on campus and forcing them to eat in the cafeteria.

the school and they do not like the food that is served.

There is also an issue with logistics. Some students partici-

pate in extracurricular activities and they cannot wait to eat until

lunch is served, let alone be forced to pay for it. High school junior Maria Padilla said the food policy hurts athletes in particular. She said many athletes would rather not eat and lose energy during practice than eat the food the school offers.

"If administrators see the food, they will throw it away," Vigil said. "If we come to school late, security will go through our cars and check if we brought food to school."

The campus food situation has been an ongoing problem for the District. Over the summer, Española Superintendent Danny Trujillo and Española School District Board members brainstormed methods to generate revenue from food sales because they were running a deficit.

Part of the problem is that students are bringing food from other places and not purchasing food from the schools. This lowers the money the schools bring in and District administrators

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Sheriff Guilty, Won't Resign

By **Wheeler Cowperthwaite**
SUN Staff Writer

Sheriff Tommy Rodella sat with his eyes closed, as a federal judge read his fate Sept. 26: guilty on two counts of violating a Rio Arriba motorist's civil rights and brandishing a firearm while doing so.

Rodella, 52, faces a maximum penalty of 17 years in federal prison for the two charges.

Once the verdict was read, his wife, Rep. Debbie Rodella, D-Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, Taos, began to sob. As plainclothes and unshaven U.S. Marshals handcuffed Rodella and led him out a side door, her bawling progressed to wailing that echoed through the federal Albu-

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School Board Member Gets Juicy County Job

By **Barron Jones**
SUN Staff Writer

An Española School District Board member was chosen for a high-level, high-paying Rio Arriba County job, shortly after the District awarded a County commissioner a lucrative marketing contract.

Board member Annabelle Almager bested several other applicants to fill the County's Human Resources director position nearly two weeks after she and fellow School Board members unanimously awarded a \$50,000 professional services contract to a company owned and operated by District One County Commissioner Barney Trujillo. The contract received negative attention from community members who viewed it as the political maneuvering of Trujillo and associates.

Almager replaces Jessica Madrid, who was demoted to administrative assistant at the Rio Arriba County Detention Center. The demotion means the 20-year veteran will absorb an approximately \$10,000 salary reduction, down from \$58,000 to \$48,000.

Almager will earn \$56,105, just \$2,000 less than her predecessor.

Rio Arriba County Manager Tomas Campos said he is aware

Almager's hiring has the appearance of impropriety, but he assures everyone she was chosen because of her qualifications and not her political associations.

"As the County manager, I had no idea that Barney got that contract," Campos said. "That is something I can't control."

Trujillo denied using his influence and refused to comment on questions regarding his political influence.

Almager's job application lists her most recent position as a program administrator, who was responsible for hiring of contractors at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Before that, she served as recreational director for Los Alamos County and recreational assistant with the city of Española. Her resume doesn't outline any human resource experience.

The interview committee, which consisted of Campos, County Economic Director Christopher Madrid and County

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Almager

Board May Have Violated Act

Superintendent tried to pass through second meeting agenda

By **Ralph Chapoco**
SUN Staff Writer

There are times when administrators send notices to school board members advising them of agenda items for an upcoming meeting, but the topics typically match the items on the public notice. That was not the case with the Española School Board work session Sept. 23.

District Superintendent's Assistant Eileen Ulibarri posted the agenda for the construction work session Sept. 19, per Open Meetings Act guidelines.

However, District Superintendent Danny Trujillo sent an email to Board members approximately two hours before the start of the meeting, which provided further details of the itinerary, but was amended with additional discussion items.

"What I have done is detailed out these two items, it all falls under general obligation bond," Trujillo said. "All of the other items are lumped together under that one in the public agenda."

Española Board member An-



(SUNfoto by Ralph Chapoco)

Española School Board member Andrew Chavez listens to audience members during a previous Board meeting. Chavez challenged other members and Superintendent Danny Trujillo about the agenda during the Sept. 23 construction work session.

drew Chavez disagreed and said several of the items are separate issues.

"You modified the agenda before the meeting," Chavez said. "Your email, Dr. Trujillo, describes the agenda for the meeting. It may have been your intent, but your email does not mention anything about the general obligation bond. There are some items that are bond-related, but not everything."

To emphasize his point, Chavez asked for a roll call vote when the motion to approve the

agenda was called. All members, except for Chavez, voted to approve the agenda.

According to the Open Meetings Act, agendas for public meetings must be made available to the public at least 72 hours in advance. The agenda cannot be altered past the 72-hour mark, except in cases of emergencies. Trujillo's email with the revised agenda would be considered a violation.

The revised agenda should have also been posted publicly, not made available only to

Board members and relevant staff. The posted agenda was not updated on the District's website to reflect the supplementary topics.

According to the original agenda, there were two topics set for discussion: a general obligation bond update and an update regarding the construction work for the Los Niños Kindergarten Center facility.

Trujillo's email included facilities issues with the individual schools, security camera and boiler system problems at the high school and, perhaps most important to Velarde and Mountain View parents and staff, a discussion of an updated facilities master plan that would size-right the District.

There was a PowerPoint presentation that accompanied the email that provided more details about the "revised" agenda. There were line items dedicated to renovations at Alcalde Elementary School and what to do with the former Española Middle School and the Cariños Charter School.

The packet included ancillary items, such as a letter from P.W. Enterprises, Inc., that provided details about the security cameras that survey school grounds. The letter, dated Sept. 23, states that nine cameras went out in

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Man Sentenced to 3+ Years for Killing His Mother

By **Wheeler Cowperthwaite**
SUN Staff Writer

Rocky Dixon will spend three years and eight months in state prison for killing his mother while fleeing from an Ohkay Owingeh tribal police officer after District Judge Glenn T. Ellington sentenced him Monday.

Ellington found Dixon had committed a serious violent offense, which means he must serve 85 percent of the six-year prison term. Dixon entered into a

global plea agreement on Aug. 6, through which he agreed to serve the maximum sentence.

The sentencing hearing was merely to determine if he must serve 50 percent of his sentence before being eligible for parole or the 85 percent required for a serious violent offense.

Dixon's global plea meant he pleaded guilty in three separate cases. While he was on bail for the vehicular homicide case, he was arrested on Jan. 31, follow-

ing a search of his house by State Police officers and Department of Homeland Security agents. He also pleaded guilty to a domestic violence charge from Aug. 1, 2013.

He received credit for time served — a year and five months.

Dixon's defense attorney, Arturo Nieto, said Dixon had not committed a serious violent offense and the law had not been satisfied that he had. Ellington said he disagreed and that all

three theories used to prove a serious violent offense had been satisfied.

According to an incident report, Patsy Dixon had been holding on to the back of the truck to conceal the license plate number from Rocky Dixon's child's mother, Marissa Beareagle, so she could not call the license plate into police, following a verbal altercation.

Beareagle, 22, told Deputy Gilbert Atencio that Rocky Dix-

on came to her house, yelling at her and calling her a whore, the night of Patsy Dixon's fall, Atencio wrote in an incident report.

Patsy Dixon fell off of the back of the truck Dixon was driving as he sped on Po Pay Avenue, and across State Road 68 on March 3, 2013. Once she fell off the truck, which swerved through the four lanes of highway traffic, her body traveled another 28 feet, before stopping in the middle of the highway.

Atencio testified during the sentencing hearing that he found a 28-foot trail of blood and gore.

After she fell, two separate motorists stopped to protect her body, lying in the middle of the road, they testified in court. She was flown via helicopter to the University of New Mexico Hospital, where she later died.

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