

Commissioners vote on district boundaries, wireless tower ordinance

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent
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At the previous McKinley County Commissioners meeting on Nov. 16, commissioners put some voting items on hold due to a need for more information. But on Nov. 30, they were ready to vote on the 2021 district boundaries and the wireless tower ordinance.

On Nov. 16, the commissioners asked McKinley County Bureau of Elections Manager Marlene Custer if they could see a map with precise district boundaries.

Custer returned with a map detailing what the current districts look like and Plan D, the proposal that represented the smallest overall change.

According to documents presented at the meeting, Plan D has District 1 adding Precinct 19 (Church Rock, population 1,857) and Precinct 23 (Pinedale, population 1,580) from District 2.

With the new plan, District 2 adds Precinct 2 (Navajo Estates Fire Station, population 618) and Precinct 20 (Rock Springs, population 1,667) from District 1. It will also include Precinct 36 (White Cliffs Fire Station, population 491) from District 3.

District 3 will take Precinct 58 (McKinley West Fires Station, population 1,203) from District 2.

In an interview with the *Sun*, McKinley County Attorney Doug Decker said Plan D had the least

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amount of change.

“Plan D basically keeps the shapes of the districts the way they are,” Decker explained.

Commissioner Billy Moore, Dist. 1, called Plan D “continuous” in an interview with the *Sun*.

After a special meeting on Nov. 29 where they discussed their options for districting, the commissioners voted to approve Plan D during the Nov. 30 regular meeting.

Another issue on the agenda concerned the wireless tower ordinance and its related resolutions. The commissioners were supposed to review and adopt the ordinance and resolutions on Nov. 16, but they wanted more information.

Commissioner Robert Baca, Dist. 3, told Decker he wanted to see the previous fee numbers before deciding on the ordinance and resolution.

Decker said that a modification to a wireless tower cost \$10,500 in 2003. Two-thousand-dollars of that went to the county, and \$8,500 was put into escrow. In 2018 that amount was decreased to \$6,500, but it is now up to \$9,000. The \$9,000 is divided into two parts: \$3,600 goes to the county, and \$5,400 goes into escrow.

Decker noted that a new tower cost \$13,500 in 2003, and now the price is \$17,500.

The commissioners approved the wireless tower ordinance.

During an executive session at the beginning of the meeting, the commissioners talked about what they could do about the Rehoboth McKinley Christian Hospital’s lease.

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Although it was a closed session, Decker later explained that the commissioners could ultimately decide to amend or even terminate the county's lease with the hospital. He stated that the commissioners would continue to discuss the issue and that all the discussions would be held in executive sessions until they are ready to vote on it.

The next commissioner's meeting will be on Dec. 14.

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