

Valley Improvement Association

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Welcome New President and CEO

In September 2010 the Board of Directors of Valley Improvement Association named former Board Member, Paul A. Baca, as President and CEO to fill the vacancy of Robert J. Davey. Mr. Davey tendered his resignation to the Board in an effort to better commit his time and energies to the development of a new Hospital in Valencia County as well as property over site and management. Bob will serve as the Executive Director of the Manzano Conservation Foundation. Mr. Davey has been with VIA for over 37 years, the board is thankful for the time of service Bob has dedicated and his remarkable efforts to continue to foster the orderly development of our communities. Through his efforts our community has benefited from many positive things. Mr. Baca has been employed with the Association since April of 2010, where he served as Vice-President of Finance and Administration. Paul and his wife are local business owners and have 4 children who attend Belen Public Schools.

Finances

Though 2010 was an extremely difficult time for our community, VIA and its subsidiary operations have taken major steps to bring our budget under control. Through attrition and efficiency we have been able to consolidate some job functions and our budget and operating plan for 2011 calls for a reduction and should operate at levels around 70% of the 2010 budget. We have identified areas that we are able to make some major expenditure reductions. We are running a more efficient operation. In some instances we have outsourced services which we feel will better serve our members at a reduced cost. Our goal is to continue to run with these efficiencies to ensure stability in the future.

UNM-Valencia Campus Offers Dual Enrollment to Belen and Los Lunas High School Students

Students attending Belen and Los Lunas High Schools have the opportunity to jump start their college education by enrolling in a program called dual enrollment. Dual enrollment enables high school students to take courses, which are college level courses, during high school. The courses count toward high school graduation requirements, at the same time accumulating college credit. The program and tuition are free to students. Students who participate are exposed to college level courses, working toward their college education and expanding their exposure to a higher level of learning.

Hospital Going to Next Level

In spite of yet another attempt to derail the hospital project, the Valencia Health Commons is taking development activity to the next level.

The Board of the Health Commons received a 20-month extension of its contract with the Valencia County Commission to build a facility in return for operational support through a mill levy approved by 78.6% of the voters in 2006.

- Over the summer, the Health Commons' Board solicited and reviewed proposals from health care providers to partner on the hospital's development. In September, the Board announced that Ameris Management Systems, LLC, a Nashville-TN, based organization with extensive experience in hospital development and management, had been chosen as partner/provider.
- After a review of alternative construction sites with help from Ameris, the Valencia Health Commons' Board reaffirmed the site VIA has pledged to donate. The more than 62-acre site, with utilities in place, is immediately across the river east of Belen. Of the alternative sites offered, the VIA site was the only one completely donated. The acquisition costs of the other sites ranged from \$1 million to more than \$2 million.
- Ameris and the Health Commons executed an agreement to develop and manage an up to 60 bed facility in mid-January. The Commons' Board has a memorandum of understanding with Stern Brothers of Chicago, an investment banking firm that specializes in hospital finance.
- Ameris and the Commons' Board are now moving into formal reviews of architects and engineers; more in-depth updating of prior studies on community health needs and the best ways of meeting them.
- The Commons opened discussions with State and other agencies in the Fall. Topics range from State assistance with physician and nursing recruiting to the development of agreements with the four-County Workforce Board on helping to recruit and train the more than 250 staff members that will be needed to open the facility.
- Discussions have also started with Albuquerque-based hospitals and medical groups, and with some of the committed provider/partners to the Health Commons who announced their participation in the hospital's development and operation back in 2007. These discussions are free-ranging, and cover possible partnerships, joint efforts at delivering health care and formal relationships to provide specialty care.

All of this planning work must be tackled with an eye on the continuing litigation launched to stop the project, however. While the County and Health Commons are confident of prevailing in court, there is no set timetable for reaching an end to the latest legal challenge. The first wave of litigation was launched in June of 2007, after the County Commission had approved the strategic plan for a health commons that had been prepared by Covenant Health Systems and the County-appointed Hospital Planning Board. That litigation, filed by the law partner of the County Commission Chair who opposed the project, was initially aimed at stopping the County from financing hospital development with the approved mill levy. When the Commission moved to carry out hospital development through an independent 501-C-3 Health Commons' Board, the plaintiffs amended the suit to challenge the contract between the County and the Health Commons. A District Court ruling approving the contract was taken to the Court of Appeals by the plaintiffs, and it took until Spring of 2010 to receive the Court of Appeals' ruling affirming that of the District Court. A request to have the issue decided by the State Supreme Court was denied.

Valencia County agreed to extend the contract with the Health Commons for 20 months, giving the independent Health Commons until April of 2013 to substantially complete construction of a hospital. A different set of plaintiffs, represented by the same attorney, filed suit to overturn the extension.

In the Fall of 2010, the District Court ruled that the plaintiffs had no standing to challenge the contract extension. That ruling was taken to the Court of Appeals in December of 2010. The County and the Health Commons' Board are waiting for the Court of Appeals to assign the case to a docket. The hope is that the Court of Appeals will expedite their ruling.

In the meantime, the Health Commons' investment bankers at Stern Brothers are laying the groundwork for the acquisition of construction financing. They remain confident in the bond market, and are reviewing alternative financing options.

The expectation is that construction will start later in 2011, and the new hospital will open early in 2013.

Pulse on Housing Development

Though the economy is slow in coming we are beginning to see some signs of life with inquiries about property in some of our developed and undeveloped areas. And, with those inquiries come hope that we will see some new interest in our areas. With the announcement of the Hospital site selection in Southern Rio Communities there has been new activity and interest in Southern Rio Communities. We are anticipating that once ground is broken on the selected Hospital site we will see an acceleration of interest in our areas including Rio Del Oro and Canyon Del Rio.

Researching Land Value and Sale

As the wheels of our economy continue to spin agonizingly and effortlessly out of an economic hole, people seek methods and alternatives to extend and supplement their income. This has led to several phone calls from concerned members, questioning the value and worth of their property. The recurring questions are, "What is the value of my land" and/or "How can I sell it". Unfortunately, we cannot appraise an owner's property, and it's difficult to ball-park a figure to its value. There are, nevertheless, ideas that we sometimes share.

The best and sure way to determine the value of ones property is to hire a professional real estate appraiser. Unfortunately, for many people the cost is prohibitive. An alternative is to do research on your own. By going online, one can search for land/property sales within the area where their property is located. There are many real estate websites that can be considered. Do a search for real estate sales in Valencia County, Rio Del Oro, Canyon Del Rio, etc., depending where your property is located. You can also find land sales from your area on www.ebay.com and www.craigslist.org.

Furthermore, keep in mind that you must be very cautious when you do any business online. Make sure that you do some research on the company or entity you decide to work with in order to determine whether or not they are reputable.

Another option that property owners can consider, as they seek alternatives to sell their property, is contacting other land owners. The value of your property can be worth more to the owner of the property adjacent to yours than it would to someone else. The purchase of your property by an adjacent owner will increase the acreage of their land, and therefore, may be worth more to that owner.

You can find out who owns any lots adjacent to yours by visiting the Valencia County website at: www.co.valencia.nm.us. Click on the *GIS Mapping* link, and then click on the *Parcel Data Viewer* link on the right hand side. This link will take you to an interactive map of the entire county. You have the option of searching parcels based on the owner last name, parcel UPC, owner number, or address. If you select the *Name* button, enter your last name. You will then see a list of owners with the same last name as yours. Find your name on the list and right-click on it. On the right-click menu select *Zoom to*. This will zoom the view to your parcel and highlight your parcel in blue. You can now use the identify button (*i*) to select any parcel. After selecting a parcel with the identify button, a table with the owner's and parcels information will display. This can help you determine who owns lots around your property and how to contact them. The table that comes up with the identify tool has several fields. Among these fields, there are "*FullVal*" and "*LandVal*". The "*FullVal*" field gives a figure that pertains to the land's value plus improvements. The "*LandVal*" field simply gives the assessed value that the assessor's office has attributed to your land. Those figures do not necessarily represent the value of your property. They are simply used as a baseline. Nevertheless, they may be some figures that you should consider as you seek a value to your property.

