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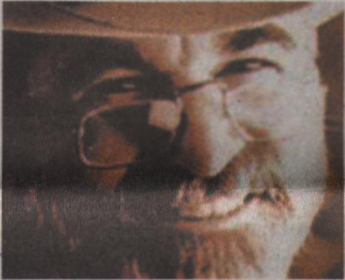
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WHAT'S HAPPENING

October 29

Gordon Snidow at the Spencer Theater



George Staerkel and his Arizona Opry cast team up for a multimedia tribute to renowned artist, Gordon Snidow, his life, his love and his passion. Spencer Theater, 7 p.m. 1-888-818-7872.

Ski Run Road Challenge

The ultimate 12 miles run/walk up Ski Run Road to benefit the Ski Apache Adaptive Skier Program. Early registration required. www.skiroadrunchallenge.com. Eagle Creek Sports Complex, 8 a.m. 575-257-9507.

Homegrown Boyz Halloween Party



Costume party with our own favorite band provides some hauntingly good tunes at Billy's Sport Bar, 8-11 p.m. No cover. 575-378-4431.

Fall Arts & Crafts Show & Festival

Jewelry, pottery, wood carvings, arts, scents, soaps, baked goods, concession, Country Store and more at First Christian Church, 1211 Hull Road, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free.

October 30

Martina McBride

Discover the country girl with "the ability to sing a song like nobody's busi-

Fort Stanton Cave project receives national award

By Eugene Heathman

Editor

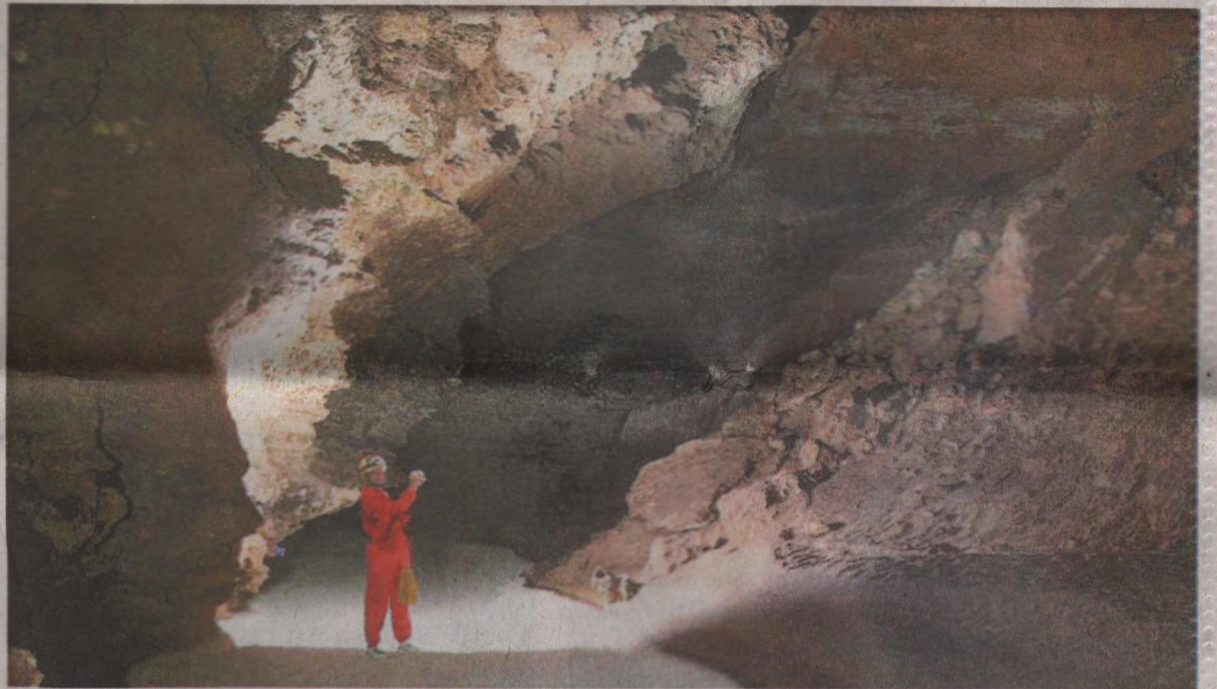
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Contributions by Meghan Kissell, Conservation Lands Foundation

The Fort Stanton Cave Study Project received the first-ever Conservation Leadership Award from the Conservation Lands Foundation. The award recognizes outstanding leadership to advance the protection of the National Conservation Lands through visionary, innovative and strategic projects. The Fort Stanton Cave Study Project, located just northeast of the historic Fort Stanton near Capitan, NM, works to enhance the understanding of the complex underground Fort Stanton Cave system by working closely with internationally recognized cave scientists in fields including biology, hydrology (water studies), geology, precision survey and cartography.

Linda Sanchez is the public liaison and a board member of FSCSP. "This recognition for the FSCSP is special for me because I have seen how much the cavers, many of whom are scientists and retired educators, have given of themselves over more than four decades. This "brain trust" shows what a devoted group of men and women can accomplish and I am honored to be part of that organization. Their work is exciting and significant. They also contribute over 10 thousand hours to this project annually," said Sanchez.

On Aug. 16, Lincoln County



Kat Rix of the Fort Stanton Cave Study Project provides a human scale to the immense geological wonders of the Fort Stanton Snowy River Cave during a rare exploratory expedition through the cave.

Photo courtesy of John Ganter

commissioners proclaimed Sept. 1, 2011 the tenth anniversary and discovery recognition day of the Snowy River Passage throughout the county. The Snowy River discovery occurred in September, 2001, by a team doing work under project lead John Corcoran in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management. The team leader was John McLean and members Lloyd Swartz, Andrew Grieco and Don Becker, discovered what would become the world's longest underground river of calcite.

The work of the Fort Stanton Cave Study Project has led to fascinating discoveries about the

historic usage of the cave. The project has documented historic signatures cave walls demonstrating that the soldiers were exploring the front part of the cave back in the mid-19th century. The group have also found evidence of Native Americans (Jornada Mogollon and Apache) exploring the cave before the soldiers. "The work of the members and volunteers of the Fort Stanton Cave Study Project continues to reveal new scientific discoveries," said Scott Jones, Southwest Program Director of the Conservation Lands Foundation. "Their work reminds us how much we

still have to learn and why it is so important to protect critical areas like the Snowy River Cave and Fort Stanton in the National Conservation Lands."

The Fort Stanton - Snowy River Cave National Conservation Area (NCA) was established in 2009 to protect, conserve, and enhance the unique and nationally important historic, cultural, scientific, archaeological, natural, and educational subterranean cave resources of the Fort Stanton - Snowy River cave system. The NCA includes approximately 25,080 acres. The National Conservation Lands Foundation. "See AWARD, pg. 5

Taylor named to replace Stewart as County Manager

By Patrick Rodriguez

Reporter

patrick@ruidosofreepress.com

Nita Taylor has reached an agreement with Lincoln County commissioners to become the county's new manager.

Commissioners released partial details of the negotiations Tuesday evening following an executive session meeting earlier in the day.

The agreement calls for Taylor to begin on Nov. 7 with an annual salary of \$80,000. Assuming a satisfactory performance after six months, the yearly pay will increase to \$85,000. She will also receive 15 days of va-

the standard county holiday schedule. Other perks include a cell phone and a vehicle.

Taylor was chosen for the manager position after commissioners reviewed 19 applications. She currently works as an association specialist for the New Mexico Association of Counties in Albuquerque. She's been with the NMAC since July 2010, following a 36-year employment with Qwest Corporation.



coln County and graduated from Capitan High School. She has an MBA from the Anderson School of Management at the University of New Mexico and a bachelor's degree from New Mexico State University.

County Manager Tom Stewart announced in July that he would step down before the end of the year, after spending 13 years as the county's chief administrator. He said that he would remain as county manager for a suitable transition pe-

Fairground improvements may exceed \$6.7 million

By Patrick Rodriguez

Reporter
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Total costs for improvements to the Lincoln County Fairgrounds could exceed \$6.7 million, according to estimates by Charles Smith, a design consultant with the architectural firm Populous.

On Tuesday, Smith presented a master plan on upgrading the existing fairgrounds to county commissioners, who then voted to approve the plan contingent on a review done by the County Fair Board.

Smith said the bulk of the price tag was

associated with the construction of a new arena, likely to cost \$4.2 million. The arena would have 3,000 seats, along with parking for disabled, concessions and restrooms. He said that 800 more seats could be added to the arena later for additional \$600,000.

Smith said that there were many assumptions taken into account when he estimated the costs. For example, he said the seating in the arena with high-quality aluminum seating, similar to the type of seats found at high school stadiums and race-tracks.

Smith said that improvements and ex-

pansion to existing structures would cost about \$520,000, and to cover two box culverts to cross a nearby creek to relieve traffic flow would be another \$120,000. He estimated that site work and other expenses could cost \$1.1 million.

Smith suggested that commissioners take on the project in increments. In terms of phasing, he said, "It's recommended to start with the existing structures and upgrade them, in particular the swine addition to the blue barn."

The second phase of the project, said Smith, would involve the construction of the new arena, along with the development of roads and infrastructure.

Smith said he would give the county a copy of the estimated costs and a write-up

with a copy of a Power Point presentation.

He said he normally adds 5 percent to 8 percent for contingencies and "soft costs," such as the survey and architectural and engineering fees.

Commissioner Kathryn Minter said she would like to see a breakdown of costs in terms of what would change and what wasn't changed. She also said the proposal might sit on the shelf for quite some time.

Smith cautioned commissioners not to let the proposal sit too long, saying the cost could be higher by the time the county was ready to move forward on the project.

"A flood plain runs across the property of the fairgrounds, as drawn the arena doesn't fall within the line, but it needs to be tested by an engineer," said Smith.

PERMITS from pg. 1

to perform the same services, noting that each municipality has its own power to enact its own laws. "So they can continue to contract with Ruidoso, they can provide the service themselves; they can contract with the county, or not provide the service at all."

"We don't have any jurisdiction within (Capitan)," Morel added, "just outside the municipality on ability to affect a response."

However, Morel said Capitan would be able to extend its planning and platting agreement with Ruidoso three miles outside the village's limits because the village has fewer than 25,000 residents. But he did say the issuance of building permits is not beholden to the three-mile radius rule and the county could perform those duties.

Curt Temple, the county's planning director, informed commissioners on Tuesday that he has been in contact with a company to issue building permits for the county. He said SAFEbuilt, based out of Loveland, Colo., is "very interested" in performing the service, noting that the company would provide its own inspectors, accept liability and give the county back 20 percent of the fees collected. "And we don't have to do a thing. This is privatization of building permits."

Temple said SAFEbuilt performs similar permitting services in municipalities and counties in Colorado, Michigan and Georgia, and are looking to begin services in New Mexico. "They have actually gone into some areas and started up from scratch," he said, adding in some cases the company was much cheaper

to use than establishing a government building division.

Temple said the company is interested in putting together a contract proposal for the county. He also said the company has offered to write an ordinance for the county that would need to be adopted at a public hearing.

SAFEbuilt would come in with its own permitting software, permitting clerk and inspectors, according to Temple. He said that the company would charge between 1 percent and 1.5 percent, compared with the village of Ruidoso, which charges 10 percent in the county.

"I don't see any downside (to using SAFEbuilt)," said Temple.

County Manager Tom Stewart recommended that the county put together a request for proposal (RFP) and solicit presentations from companies in addition to SAFEbuilt. Morel agreed.

Shawn Fort, a building official with the village of Ruidoso, told county commissioners that private industries are not allowed to come into municipalities and perform inspections due to state law, stating that bringing in inspectors from other states is prohibited. He also said Ruidoso charges 1 percent in fees for its permitting services, which would be cheaper than using SAFEbuilt.

Temple responded by saying SAFEbuilt isn't bringing in inspectors from Colorado and they would hire inspectors who are already in New Mexico, certified by the state.

Stewart said different entities, including the village of Ruidoso, could make a presentation proposal for services.

AWARD from pg. 1

servation Lands, which includes the Fort Stanton-Snowy River Cave National Conservation Area, are the nation's newest, permanently protected collection of public lands - 27 million acres of nationally significant landscapes set aside for current and future generations because of their outstanding cultural, ecological and scientific importance.

While access to most of the new Snowy River discovery is limited to research and exploration teams, the Fort Stanton Cave Study Project established a website to provide the public with information about new discoveries. In addition, a Fort Stanton Museum exhibit was formally opened to the public in August 2010.



Photo courtesy Mike Bilbo, BLM

Fort Stanton Cave Study Project member Garrett Jorgensen, the youngest caver on the team, with Steve Peerman, the cave study project director, utilize ground-penetrating radar in search of underground geological formations that might indicate additional passages during a project near the Fort Stanton Cave.

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