

Indivisible SOS Santa Fe
Meeting minutes
June 24, 2024

Announcements/General

1. A reminder that our summer social is on Sunday, 7/28, 3-5 pm at Marti's. No one has yet stepped up to coordinate this pot luck.
2. Gay Pride parade is this Saturday, 6/29, starting from the Lamy Building parking lot across from the Roundhouse. The parade begins at 10:30 so plan to arrive before. Wear your T-shirt. We've been invited to participate on Teresa Leger-Fernandez's float.
3. Two legislators want to stay at member homes during the July special session. Rachel said our offer of hospitality is much appreciated.
4. Rachel reported on the effort by the Santa Fe Indigenous Center to stop the Fiesta Council from making presentations in public schools. SOS sent a letter, along with twelve other allies and 24 indigenous families to the ACLU asking them to take action and staff lawyers there have responded. Rachel has attended meetings with ACLU and the Indigenous Center, where families have shared their stories of fear and humiliation because of the celebration of the conquest of Native Americans in Santa Fe. The ACLU has written a long letter to public school superintendent detailing many reasons why this type of presentation is illegal. Negotiations may be underway but Rachel said the Fiesta Council will probably sue.
5. Deb W reported on postcard- and letter-writing options for the upcoming election. See agenda for details. She asked if SOS wants to formally take on one or more of these campaigns. Dottie said that we have about 1,000 first class postage stamps to use if we choose to write letters, i.e. with Vote Forward.

Speaker: Nick Boukas, Director of NM Behavior Services

Nick was appointed by the governor and has been in this position for a year. He was a paramedic in NYC, then a chief paramedic in Colorado, before focusing on public health.

His mission in NM is to ensure that all residents can find appropriate healthcare services. He said that physical health and mental health go hand-in-hand and noted that this is a very complex issue with many parts to address.

Pam Rogers said there are not enough providers in the state to handle the need and she is grateful for the Medicaid reimbursement rates here but providers are being pressured to take on a client load that is unsustainable. She also said that the payment rate for families on Medicaid is too low. Nick made a note of this.

Nick responded that one of his strategic goals is to increase the workforce in NM. He said that the bureaucracy of the Regulation and Licensing Department is a major obstacle. Despite this, there has been some success in this area, i.e. more licensed alcohol/drug counselors and trauma counselors. There is a great need for residential treatment centers, especially in rural areas.

Rachel talked about her work to promote the interface between law enforcement and mental health providers. She said that there is little or no enthusiasm from legislators or law enforcement for this effort.

Nick said that there needs to be regular communication between municipalities, law enforcement, and others to recognize behavior health issues, with options to go a crisis triage center, certified behavioral clinic or the like. In Dona Ana County, the process is working because of an integrated approach from judges, law enforcement, providers and others.

There was a lengthy discussion of the 988 mental health line and the potential of better coordination between 988 and 911. One problem is that 988 is state-operated, while 911 is operated by counties. In the past 13 months, 988 has received an average of 3,000 calls per month and most issued have been resolved in 15 minutes with no police or ambulance involvement. One of the challenges is to make more New Mexicans aware of 988 and another is to train law enforcement on this option. Presentations are being made to public school students.

Highlands and UNM both have strong social work programs. The challenge is how to get graduates of these programs to stay in NM. Nick's department is also working on speeding up licensure and certifying peer counselors. Nick said another challenge is creating a system for transportation that can be provided to people when they leave treatment or jail to get them home.

Ricann asked about the department's major needs and Nick responded:

1. A system rather than separate components (a road map). Ongoing communication between stakeholders
2. More providers in rural communities throughout the state
3. Short and long-term goals and time to make things work over the long term
4. More resources to execute