

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COMMISSIONER QUEZADA URGES PROTECTION OF SOUTH VALLEY STILL SUPPORTS SANTOLINA DEVELOPMENT

ALBUQUERQUE – Bernalillo County Commissioner Steven Michael Quezada and Albuquerque City Councilor Klarissa Peña, in their capacity as members of the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA), spoke out strongly in support of preserving the agricultural and rural character of the South Valley.

The comments came at an ABCWUA Board meeting on December 4, 2018 during which John Stomp, ABCWUA Chief Operating Officer, gave an updated presentation on the Santolina development water and sewer infrastructure needs and ABCWUA's already-overburdened water and sewer systems. The presentation explained the basis for ABCWUA Executive Director Mark Sanchez' October 1st "Water and Sanitary Sewer Serviceability Letter", which is the ABCWUA's proposal for how water and sewer requirements could be met.

Roberto Roibal, President of the Pajarito Village Neighborhood Association and Vice-President of the South Valley Coalition of Neighborhood Associations, explained why his and other South Valley organizations oppose the Santolina development. "All of the organizations and individuals opposing Santolina share a common concern for preserving the special character of the South Valley. We don't need thousands of new residential units. We need infill development and revitalization of retail and commercial services and amenities in the South Valley that would bring jobs where our residents live."

Commissioner Quezada spoke for more than two minutes about his constant fight to preserve farmlands in the South Valley. He said that he sees "on a weekly basis in the County that [developers] are going after that agricultural land and they want to build apartments and they want to build, you know, four houses an acre and that's not what the South Valley is for."

The reason land is being sold, Commissioner Quezada explained, is that there are "people who own land in the South Valley that come from families that historically were farmers and growing and they're selling it and moving to the Northeast Heights where they have amenities."

He added that he would “like to keep that [land] for the future of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County because that’s what makes us unique.” “[O]nce the CPC [County Planning Commission] approves development on that agricultural land, it’s lost forever.”

Commissioner Quezada has consistently supported Santolina while on the Bernalillo Board of County Commissioners. Early in his campaign for the Commission, he said he had some concerns about the development and would look at it with an open mind. His campaign later benefitted from \$25,000 put into a political action committee funded by a half dozen people at firms connected to the Santolina development.

Councilor Peña also spoke at the Board meeting about the South Valley’s heritage. She has recused herself from City Council matters pertaining to Santolina because she used to work for Youth Development Inc. (YDI), a co-applicant on Santolina with Western Albuquerque Land Holdings (WAHL). She expressed her “fears” that the Santolina development would “densify” the Valley and destroy “the ruralness of it and how unique it is to the City of Albuquerque.” John Stomp replied that if the Santolina development happens, “it’s going to affect what the South Valley looks like.”

Virginia Necochea, Executive Director of the Center for Social Sustainability Systems, said, “Commissioner Quezada and Councilor Peña need to understand that the Santolina development on the West Mesa would inevitably change the South Valley’s rural agricultural character. It is absolutely contradictory for them to speak out about preserving the South Valley, but continue to support Santolina. They need to listen to the experts and community voices saying that building Santolina will not save the South Valley. We invite Commissioner Quezada and Councilor Peña to sit down with us to find solutions that will improve the lives of South Valley residents and revitalize the Valley for the benefit of the City and the County.”

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The video for the meeting is available at:

http://abcwua.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=114

- Commissioner Quezada’s comments are at 47:25 – 49:50
- Councilor Peña’s comments are at 43:10 – 44:12; John Stomp’s response is at 44:12 – 44:32

See the Albuquerque Journal for the information on Commissioner Quezada’s campaign.

<https://www.abqjournal.com/771790/contributors-with-ties-to-santolina-donate-to-shape-county-commission.html>

Related to this, the Journal also reported on Santolina-related funds going into attack ads against Tim Keller during the mayoral race.

<https://www.abqjournal.com/1067655/santolina-developer-helped-fund-keller-attack-ads.html>