

Public Safety Issues Necessitate New Location for Veterans' Banner Program

City to Convene Meeting to Find Alternatives for Honoring Veterans

SANTA FE, June 7, 2022 – Today, the City of Santa Fe announces its intention to work with the entire veterans' community to design a safe and sustainable way to celebrate the community's veterans, without posing any risk to Santa Fe residents. The need for this new approach is a consequence of public safety issues that have recently emerged that prevent the Hometown Hero Banners from being posted on the light poles on Cerrillos Road. The City will convene a meeting of veterans' organization leaders later this week to look at other locations for the banner program and to consider other options for honoring Santa Fe veterans.

“Unfortunately, the manufacturer has provided data that it’s not safe to mount any banners on these particular light poles along Cerrillos Road,” said City Manager John Blair. “We will find an alternative to honor Santa Fe’s proud history of military service in a safe and lasting way.”

The Governing Body unanimously passed a resolution at its February 9, 2022 meeting to expand the banner route along Cerrillos Road from I-25 east to St. Michael’s Drive. As part of the debate on the banner resolution, multiple councilors noted that the original intent was that the City would only cover the banner costs in 2019 and that fundraising would need to be done by the American Legion to cover the costs going forward. During this debate, it was announced that the Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM) had offered to pay all costs related to the installation of the banners.

As the City coordinated with PNM last month to hang the banners, City staff reached out to the manufacturer of the light poles on Cerrillos Road, Hapco Pole Products, for a determination as to how many banners could be hung on each pole. Hapco informed City staff that their engineering analysis indicated that the thirty foot poles along Cerrillos Road are not designed to hold any banners safely. During this same time period, a PNM employee expressed safety concerns about putting banners on the poles on Cerrillos which are highway street-light poles and not designed for banners. This resulted in PNM having to stop work on banners.

After consulting with City Attorney McSherry regarding the significance and implications of the new information from the light pole manufacturer, City Manager John Blair today decided that the risk to public safety is too great to justify continuing to hang the banners along Cerrillos Road and that alternatives solutions will need to be agreed upon.

City Manager Blair and retired Army Officer Dorothy M. Seaton, who currently serves as Chair of the Veterans Advisory Board for the City of Santa Fe, will convene a

veterans roundtable later this week with representatives of numerous veterans organizations to discuss how to move forward.

“I’m confident we can find a way to honor Santa Fe’s veterans,” said Santa Fe Veterans Alliance Board Member Chris Calvert.

Representatives from the following organizations are being invited to participate in the roundtable discussion:

- American Legion
- Santa Fe Veterans Advisory Board
- Santa Fe Veterans Alliance
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Veterans Resource Center, Santa Fe Community College
- Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 996
- Women Veterans of New Mexico
- Office of U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich
- Office of U.S. Senator Ben Ray Luján
- Office of U.S. Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernandez