

Majure Report Questionnaire
County Council Candidate Ken Milder's Response
10/4/2004

1. How long in Los Alamos?

I first visited Los Alamos during the summer of 1969 (my brother, who lives in White Rock, moved here in 1967) and spent the whole summer here in 1970 when I apprenticed at the Santa Fe Opera. I visited yearly and moved here permanently on July 1, 1974.

2. Why public service now? Or, Why re-election?

This is the long answer I provided during the Primary Election.

After completing four consecutive terms on the County Council in 1992 (they were two year terms back then), I always knew that I would eventually run again for office. This feeling was reinforced after the Cerro Grande fire.

I temporarily lived in Espanola during the first year after the fire. While I enjoyed my time living in that valley community, I did not mind the commute and shopping was certainly easier, a void always seemed present in part of my life. I eventually realized that the void was caused by missing living in Los Alamos.

Although I had maintained my official residency in Los Alamos and continued my civic participation here, I missed actually living in Los Alamos with all of its quirks, idiosyncrasies, and blessings. The realization eventually grew that I had to return. The experience, however, deepened and strengthened ties to my community and increased my desire to serve again in a public role.

I had decided to sit out the last election cycle (2002) due to personal and work obligations. I vowed to myself, however, to reevaluate my ability to serve on the County Council at the current, 2004, election cycle. I can now make the necessary commitment and I also strongly feel that my experience and historical knowledge would fulfill a role that is currently missing on the Council.

Finally, my twelve year hiatus from serving on the County Council was a learning experience by itself. In addition to providing time to rejuvenate, it provided important time to reflect on my first Council tenure. Given the opportunity, I feel I would be an even better councilor, today. I have the experience, I have the knowledge, I have the skills, and now I hopefully have gained some wisdom to apply to building solutions for the issues and challenges facing our community.

3. There is a widely held belief that, in general, the Los Alamos County Council has managed county staff time and public resources ineffectively. Some say this has been exacerbated in the last two years with this particular council. **Would you concur or not and why?**

This question is similar to one asked by Darryl Newman. I will paste the answer then elaborate on it.

There is a perception in the community, regardless of its correctness, that the County Council is very dysfunctional; that some councilors truly despise other councilors. This is an especially serious problem when Council votes are based on personalities, not on what is in the best interests of the community. Councilors must find ways to rise above personal animosities in order to address the real issues facing the community.

Although the Council has made strides in some areas, progress in other areas of critical public importance have been paralyzed by the dysfunction. Also, there must be a respect for how the County works; its organization and chain of command. Councilors must learn how to be responsive to constituents in a way that does not disrupt the smooth operation of the County or in a way that demoralizes our conscientious employees.

4. As a t-board member/citizen (chasen), u-board member, (milder) councilor (albert, rodgers, berting) did you interact with council? **Which council and on what key successful or failed issues? What worked or didn't work?**

How far back would you like me to go? As a Utilities Board member I interacted with three different councils from 1980-84. (I then served on the Council for four terms from 1985 through 1992.) I was asked to serve on various ad hoc committees from 1993 through the spring of 1997 when I was reappointed to the Utilities Board, where I am currently serving as vice chairman.

The list of what worked and what didn't is quite long but I am happy to say that there were many more successes than failures. Here are some examples from over the years of what worked:

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- Commodities Acquisition Project. This was a \$110M project to acquire electric resources and transmission, acquire the White Rock electric distribution system that, at the time, was owned by PNM, and also acquire the White Rock gas distribution system, also owned by PNM.
- Acquisition of the water production system
- Creation of the Energy Coordination Agreement with DOE
- Numerous ordinance changes clarifying operational expectations of Utilities.
- Evaluation and investigation of extending utilities service into communications. Until the current council, there was a tremendous amount of Council support for this project.

When things don't always work:

- Occasionally a naïve, usually new and inexperienced, councilor will not fully understand or appreciate the semi-autonomous nature of the Utilities Department and Board. A councilor who feels that the Council can dictate how the department is to be operated and how much money it should transfer to the General Fund suffers hard learned political lessons. They find out very quickly that the public is very cynical when the Council tries too hard to get into the business of Utilities operations. And, so it has been for 35 years.
- Every Council since 1997 recognized the need, importance, and opportunity of providing a modern communications system in Los Alamos. This Council has not shared that vision or level of leadership.

5. How would you contribute to more effective, productive, results-oriented leadership of the community through the county council body?

I have knowledge of how government works; I have extensive knowledge of the history of our community and how we got to where we are today; I have extensive experience in getting things done within a political environment; and, I have the patience to build coalitions and workable solutions. I have a proven record of being open and inclusive. I am always open to ideas and treat people fairly. In fact, I have received many compliments for how I served during my last Council tenure.

One of the nicest compliments came from a neighborhood association that appealed a zoning question before the Council. I did not agree with the position the neighborhood was taking but I supported a compromise developed by another councilor. After the public hearing, several association officers came up to me and said that, although they wished I would have sided with them, they had no complaints about how I treated them and helped them prepare for the hearing. (I was Council Chairman at the time.) They said they truly appreciated my fair and honest dealings with them.

In regards to results-oriented leadership, it is very important to understand how I see community leadership. For me, leadership is gathering and analyzing openly acquired information, using that information to develop a vision, articulating that vision in order to gain support for it, then successfully implementing the vision. How well have our leaders done this? Has this approach been applied to the Downtown Plan or Comprehensive Plan for instance? I have a vision for these plans that I have been articulating throughout the campaign. The response has been positive.

6. The Fruth Report on Los Alamos County posits that at least 1,500 acres of land will be needed, mostly for housing, to increase population, retail activity, and commercial activity enough to earn comparable gross receipts tax revenue in 2020 as are earned now. The report assumes a continuance of current conditions and a return of construction activity to more normal levels.

The Town Hall consensus ignored this quantitative advice, and noted some of the report's research flaws, as we assessed usage for Los Alamos' roughly 2,000 acres of land transfer parcels. In essence, the advice to develop ~1,000 acres (for housing, retail, and commercial) out of ~2,000 land transfer acres available, was set aside as Rendija (900 acres) and Pueblo (600 acres) were set aside, and developmental usages for the remaining 500 acres were approached. Even if these 500 acres were developed, the economy would not grow enough to return to current GRT levels by 2020. **Are we putting our head in the sand? What kind of leadership is needed **now,** for Los Alamos and its citizens to face the fiscal facts of the coming nosedive in public revenues?** (nosedive to be caused by \$2.5 million grt lost from LANL temp conversion program and construction activity and GRT returning to historical norm of 1/10th current activity.)

Wow, Allison, there appears to be some editorializing, here. 😊 Nonetheless, your points are well taken.

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I have never read a consultant's report that was flawless, including Fruth's. But, I feel Fruth did the best job of capturing and quantifying our current situation and challenges. The weakness of his report is that, apparently not knowing the history of what we have tried in the past, he suggests repeating history; a history with less than satisfactory results.

I agree with most of Fruth's analyses yet he makes other statements that beg for further quantitative support. For example, Fruth spends a lot of ink on revenue analysis and nothing on expense analysis. The chart, General Fund-Gross Receipts and Property Tax Revenue, on page 15 of his report would be much more meaningful if he also included estimated expense curves, both discretionary and non-discretionary. Yes, we all know we need more revenue but how much and for what?

Finally, Fruth's report mirrors previous studies in that it is long on suggesting goals and direction but short on specific implementation strategy. The Town Hall Meeting Consensus Report is the same. Don't get me wrong, I agree with most of the goals. They are worthy, even though they attempt to be all things to all people.

Looking back over the years, the problem we have had is that reports like Fruth's never have a step by step implementation strategy. Why? It's because that's where the real controversies arise; it's the tough part. Where it's relatively easy to get consensus on Everyman's goals, getting consensus on the strategy for achieving those goals is much more challenging. Nonetheless, addressing that challenge has been the cornerstone of my campaign. That is, I listen to residents and merchants; I am using their input to develop an *implementation vision*; and, during the campaign I am articulating that vision in order to gain support. This vision was expressed in my response to Los Alamos Monitor Questions which were published September 12 & 14. I have attached my answers

I am not anti-growth. In fact, if my approach to implementing economic development is successful, growth must occur. The difference is that my suggested approach is not growth for growth's sake; growth as the panacea. It is growth that not only results in higher GRT revenue through increased retail activity, but also growth that results in diversification without deteriorating our quality of life. It is growth that meets the needs of our citizens and LANL.