

Bernalillo County

From fentanyl to housing: What's on the table at Wednesday's BernCo meeting

Commissioners will consider a fentanyl emergency declaration, tax breaks for three housing developments and plans to transition health care at the county jail

by **Jesse Jones**

2 hours ago



Bernalillo County @ Alvarado Square, Downtown Albuquerque. (Jesse Jones, The Paper.)

by *Jesse Jones, The Paper*. — With Bernalillo County averaging six opioid-related deaths a week in 2025, commissioners will consider declaring a state of emergency over the fentanyl crisis Wednesday. They'll also consider tax breaks for housing developments that would add hundreds of apartments in Albuquerque and discuss plans to transition health care services at the Metropolitan Detention Center.

The proposed fentanyl emergency resolution, sponsored by Chair Adriann Barboa and Commissioner Barbara Baca, would declare Bernalillo County to be in a state of emergency and give County Manager Cindy Chavez emergency powers to mobilize county resources. It would also request a statewide emergency proclamation under New Mexico's All-Hazard Emergency Management Act. According to county documents, drug overdose deaths in New Mexico rose between 23% and 28% from 2023 to 2025, even as national rates fell. Bernalillo County recorded more overdose deaths than any other county in the state during that period. The county's Metropolitan Detention Center also handles detoxification services for 150 to 227 people each day.



A Bernalillo County commissioner speaks during a previous meeting at the Ken Sanchez Commission Chambers. Commissioners will consider a proposed fentanyl emergency declaration, housing tax breaks and other county business Wednesday, Oct. 14.

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Commissioners will hold public hearings on property tax breaks for three proposed housing developments in northwest Albuquerque that would add 459 apartments for households at different income levels.

- **West Mesa Ridge B:** A planned 144-unit complex at 6301 Fortuna Rd. NW for households earning 30% to 70% of the area median income. The proposal includes up to \$25 million in project revenue bonds and a 43-year property tax exemption.
- **West Village:** A planned 144-unit workforce housing community at 4820 Westside Blvd. NW for households earning 60% to 120% of the area median income, with a proposed 30-year property tax exemption.
- **Cibola Loop:** Developers plan to build the 171-unit complex on 5.2 acres near Cibola High School, with units reserved for households earning 74% to 91% of the area median income. The proposal includes a 40-year property tax exemption.

Commissioners will also vote on accepting two federal grants totaling about \$1.54 million for the Sheriff's Office. One \$500,000 grant would support software maintenance and expand the office's Drone as First Responder program. Another grant of \$1.04 million would help buy and outfit replacement patrol vehicles. About 60 vehicles qualify for replacement, but new patrol vehicles cost more than \$80,000 each. The Sheriff's Office has \$1.05 million in its fiscal year 2027 fleet budget, enough to purchase about 13 vehicles.

The commission will discuss plans to transition health care services at the Metropolitan Detention Center before its contract with the University of New Mexico Hospital ends June 30, 2027. County staff recommend a hybrid model that would combine county-run core services with outside specialists for care such as pharmacy and addiction medicine. Commissioners will vote on the proposal Oct. 27, including a request for state approval to use \$30 million in county reserves to cover initial transition costs.

The meeting begins at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 14, in the Ken Sanchez Commission Chambers at Alvarado Square, 415 Silver Ave. SW. Residents can attend in person or watch on [GOVTV](#) or the county's [YouTube channel](#). They can also [submit written comments or sign up](#) to speak in person or remotely. Look for The Paper.'s City Desk for coverage of the county's fentanyl emergency declaration proposal following Wednesday's news conference and commission meeting.

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