



Commissioners wage quiet power struggle

► While Javier Gonzales is out campaigning, some say other commissioners are seeking more control by trying to force out department heads

By **BARBARA FERRY**
 The New Mexican

The winds may be shifting at the Santa Fe County Administration Building, with three county commissioners — Joe Grifé, Paul Duran and Richard Anaya — asserting more control while erstwhile commission leader Javier Gonzales is preoccupied with his re-election campaign, several people within county government say.

One county employee said the three commissioners have taken advantage of Gonzales' absence from the County Administration Building to further their own agendas.

"It's like the cat's away and now some of

the mice are trying to grab some power for themselves," said the county employee, who did not want to be identified.

Though few publicly acknowledge the power shift, rumors have spread through county offices that the three commissioners are behind a move to force out department heads who are associated with Gonzales.

County attorney Steve Kopelman resigned last week. Kopelman, who served

as county attorney for 3½ years, said the decision to leave his \$69,500 a year position was his own. He declined to comment on whether he had been pressured to leave by Grifé, Duran and Anaya.

"As Debbie Jaramillo said, 'es tiempo,'" Kopelman quipped, a reference to a campaign slogan once used by the former mayor. On Friday, the Santa Fe city manager announced Kopelman had been hired as an assistant city attorney.

At least two county commissioners said last week that they expect County Manager Domingo Sánchez to be gone before his contract expires at the end of the year.

Sánchez, who has also been associated with Gonzales, declined to comment on

whether he expects to remain in the county's top administrative post.

Anaya denied that some of the commissioners are seeking to force Sánchez out of the county manager's job. But he told a reporter "I heard (Sánchez) is feeling burnt out," and said he thought there was "a good likelihood" that Sánchez would leave the county soon.

Commissioner Duran said that Sánchez told him he would not seek to renew his contract. "I think Domingo has done an excellent job, but I'm not sure he can take us to where we want to go," Duran said, adding that since Sánchez decided to not

Please see **POWER**, Page B-4



Heather Stoker exercises Teddy in the Horse Park and Polo Club's indoor arena.

Julie Graber/The New Mexican

Polo, anyone?

The new owners of the Santa Fe Horse Park and Polo Club hope polo becomes a favorite local pastime

By **BOB QUICK**
 The New Mexican

Santa Fe's reputation as a polo center has gained a major boost with a Silicon Valley venture capitalist's formation of the Santa Fe Horse Park and Polo Club, featuring a nationally known polo club manager and instructor.

Charles Kokesh and his wife, Marla, bought the 35-acre Santa Fe Polo Grounds from Jim and Pat Warren, who moved to Arizona. Charles Kokesh is owner of Technology Funding, a venture capital firm that moved to Santa Fe from San Mateo, Calif., in 1997.

The Kokeshes have scheduled a dozen polo tournaments and other equestrian activities for the 1998 season. Marla Kokesh is president of the Santa Fe Horse Park.

The Santa Fe Polo Grounds, off Airport Road in Santa Fe County, was started about 25 years ago. It includes a 27-acre playing field that uses effluent from the city of Santa Fe's sewage plant for irrigation and also serves as a soccer field and a venue for other events.

Charles Kokesh estimated there are 20 to 25 polo players in an area around Santa Fe ranging from Belen to Anton Chico. In the summer, polo teams from Texas, Oklahoma and Mexico typically come to town to play because their home fields are too hot.

By encouraging all the polo matches, the Kokeshs hope to revive a polo facility they said was active 15 years ago but then slipped into "a quiet period."

"Our thinking is, 'Let's see if we can't return things to a more active level,'" Charles Kokesh said.

Caroline Stephenson, owner of Invicta Farms, has operated her hunter/jumper, equitation and Western horse training



Glory waits patiently while groomer Mark Oteri of Santa Fe washes her off at the end of the day.

Kate Joyce/For The New Mexican

business in a barn at the Santa Fe Horse Park for several years. She is happy about the change of ownership.

"My impression is that it's great that some horse people have taken over the Santa Fe Polo Grounds who not only will support traditional polo but will also give the community a diverse kind of equine center," she said.

Stephenson said that Eric Oppenheimer, a local rancher, has been running the polo operation and has done "a great job. ... But with the Kokeshes, (polo) is going to be expanded and renewed."

All of the events at the Santa Fe Horse Park will result in thousands of dollars flowing into the Santa Fe economy,

Charles Kokesh said. These include not only a series of polo competitions but a team roping event that brings up to 400 teams to town for a weekend.

"It should have a major economic impact," he said. "It will have a huge positive impact on the county."

The Kokeshes are avid horse people and both play polo. They also are expert roping and penning competitors. When they moved to Santa Fe last year, they needed a place to stable their steeds, both polo ponies and quarterhorses.

"All we wanted was a place to put our horses," Charles Kokesh said. "There was literally not a barn in Santa Fe that

Please see **POLO**, Page B-5

Residents worry relief route will increase traffic

By **BEN NEARY**
 The New Mexican

The city of Santa Fe has called a public meeting for early next month to hear Casa Solana residents' concerns that construction of interchanges on the northern end of the Santa Fe Relief Route will overrun their neighborhood with traffic.

Beverly Garcia, a former city planning director, lives in Casa Solana. She says residents have already seen a sharp increase in traffic in recent years as new developments such as Las Campanas and La Tierra have sprung up northwest of the city.

When completed, the Relief Route will run around the west side of the city, carrying traffic between Interstate 25 on the south and U.S. 84/285 on the north, as well as providing an alternate route for local traffic now congesting streets such as Cerrillos Road and Agua Fria Street.

The Relief Route is scheduled to open this summer, although in some places it will only be a two-lane dirt road at first. When finished in a few years, it will be a four-lane highway, complete with a frontage road for much of its length. The speed limit on the route will be 65 mph.

Plans call for three intersec-

tions, or access points, on the relief route in the three-mile span between the interchange with U.S. 84/285, near the junction with Old Taos Highway, and a major interchange planned for construction at Buckman Road.

Those three intersections, and their potential for increased traffic, have Garcia and other area residents particularly concerned.

"They're using one of the interior Casa Solana streets like it was a major thoroughfare," Garcia said. "One of the major concerns is that with all these major interchanges, 44,000 cars would potentially have access to this neighborhood. That's a major problem for people on Camino de las Crucitas and on Alamo Drive as well."

Camino de las Crucitas leads out of Casa Solana northwest toward the site of the old landfill. The proposed intersections with the relief route would lead traffic onto Camino de las Crucitas, notably from Camino los Montoyas.

The New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department has estimated that the Relief Route will carry 44,000 cars a day within 10 years of opening, Garcia said. However, she said others estimate that

Please see **ROUTE**, Page B-6

Restoration means Lamy church will see the light of new day

By **RICHARD CHANG**
 The New Mexican

LAMY — A 72-year-old church that once was on the verge of being sold to a New Age institute is now being restored to serve residents of this quiet town 17 miles south of Santa Fe.

On Saturday, Lamy residents brought hammers, shovels and picks to strip old concrete plaster from the Our Lady of Light church. Though the church has not been in continuous operation for about 27 years, it still is considered a focal point by many community members.

"I was baptized here, and had my first communion here," said John Sanchez, 46, a lifetime Lamy resident. "My brother got married here, and my cousin married here. This church was built by the people, and some of my ancestors worked on it."

Sanchez and several family members hammered away at the old plaster Saturday afternoon, exposing solid adobe bricks for the first time since the church's completion in 1926. The church's doors — which had been locked for years — were open, allowing light to fall upon colorful stained-glass windows that are boarded on the outside, a delicately carved tin ceiling and old pews lined against the walls.

The restoration is a joint project between the Lamy Community Association and Cornerstones Community Partnerships,



Abel Uribe/The New Mexican

Gilbert Sanchez, left, and Tom Botosan of Lamy pull a section of old plaster away from the former Our Lady of Light Church Saturday.

which acquired the church last year. Based in Santa Fe, Cornerstones is a nonprofit organization that works with communities to restore churches and other historic buildings.

"This community has done an amazing job of coming together and cooperating," said Mac Watson, restoration coordinator for Northern New Mexico. "It's been a great success, and a potentially

Please see **CHURCH**, Page B-2