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Chairman Ely Will Be Missed

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When it became clear Sandoval County Commission Chairman Daymon Ely would not run for reelection, County Manager Debbie Hays spoke for many when she expressed disappointment at his decision.

That disappointment was mixed with gratitude at Ely's last commission meeting Dec. 16, when county employees and the audience gave Ely a standing ovation for his service over the past four years.

During those years, the last of which he served as chairman, Ely did much to further the vision of Sandoval County. And although he was a full-time attorney, the husband and father of two was generous in the time he gave to the position.

Ely helped negotiate a \$16 billion industrial revenue bond for Intel, and served on a task force to assess the public health impacts of the county's largest employer. A number of projects and capital purchases were made possible by the \$80 million pledge Intel made to the county in lieu of taxes on that deal. Among them is the \$6 million Ely convinced his colleagues to approve for a train engine and two rail cars for the landmark commuter rail system that will stop at a station in Bernalillo.

Under Ely's watch, the county created a permanent fund for water projects, purchased a 20 percent ownership share in Rio Rancho's proposed arena and set up the county's first fire department.

In helping Santa Ana Pueblo get better financing on its non-gaming operations, he and the commission solidified the county's partnership with that neighboring nation. He supported the county's composting project and animal rescue, and helped his hometown district of Corrales with money for school technology upgrades, a skate park and Casa San Ysidro. He often explained commission actions to constituents through newspaper columns and letters to the editor.

At his last meeting, Ely also showed his magnanimity when he suggested that the rotunda at the new county courthouse be named after his predecessor, Edmund "Joe" Lang. Ely said he plans to raise private money to commission a bust of Lang for the rotunda, saying, "I will not be back for public funds."

Ely will be missed.