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State Committee Hears About Hazardous Materials Issues at PD Mines *The mining giant continues to lobby for leniency despite windfall profits*

By Allyson Siwik, GRIP Executive Director

On July 11, Western New Mexico University (WNMU) in Silver City was host to a state governmental committee meeting which has important health and safety ramifications for all Southwest New Mexicans. The Interim Legislative Committee on Radioactive and Hazardous Materials was established in 1979 to deal with issues related to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), but its mission has expanded to include air and water quality, solid waste, mining, and pipeline safety issues.

As the name implies, interim

committees work on legislative issues between annual sessions at the Roundhouse in Santa Fe. These meetings are important forums for our elected officials to receive testimony related to development of state legislation. Representative Manny Herrera (District 39- Grant and Hidalgo Counties) serves on this committee, and was in attendance at this July 11 meeting.

At the Silver City meeting, the committee heard presentations on a variety of environmental issues, including the NM Environment

Department's environmental justice program, sewage and treatment disposal systems, and an update on disposal of hazardous waste at the Camino Real landfill in Sunland Park, NM. Executives at Phelps Dodge (PD), the Phoenix-based mining giant whose vast open pit mines cover large parts of Grant County, also discussed hazardous materials activities at their New Mexico mines. These included PD violations of Clean Water Act (CWA) and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), hazardous materials

see Hazardous Materials, p4

Silver City Contemplates Water Main Extension Policy

Proposed ordinance would guide area's future growth and development

By Allyson Siwik, GRIP Executive Director

"The town should create water efficiency guidelines for new residential, recreational and commercial water users that must be met in order to receive town water."



Water is the lifeblood of every organism on this planet. Throughout history, effective water planning has also determined which communities have thrived, and which have withered from lack of water. Recognizing that the municipality lacked a clear policy for reviewing requests for water main extensions, the Silver City town council in March approved a moratorium on approval of new water main extension applications until an ordinance could be put in place. The town hired Santa Fe-based law firm Stein and Brockmann to identify and review water policies from around the state and provide legal advice on appropriate ordinances. The third working session, held on July 14, was open to public comment.

The current proposed ordinance would require developers to pay a water rights fee based upon the amount of water anticipated to be necessary to meet demands of the project. Alternatively, the developer could

transfer water rights to the town sufficient for all or part of the water demand for the project. The developer would be responsible for infrastructure and utility expansion expenses, and meter and service fees. The draft ordinance requires that a 10% reserve of the town's water rights be maintained to deal with peak demand and any unforeseen circumstances.

This is just a sketch of the ordinance's main provisions. Among many other components, developers may also apply for fee reductions when building affordable housing or higher density

see Water Main Extension, p5

ACTION ALERT:
Silver City town council will propose a water main extension policy at its council meeting:

August 8th, 7pm
Grant County Administration Center
1400 Highway 180 East