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ALBUQUERQUE'S INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

Cover Photo by Roberto Rosales

**Advocates Renew Push for
Quarter-a-Drink Alcohol Tax Hike**



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Run-Down: Jan. 24

A recap of recent news for the week of Jan. 24



The Paper. Staff

Auction of rare folk art from private collections

A scheduled auction of rare folk art from private collections aims to help benefit the Museum of International Folk Art.

Folk art collectors and artists have donated treasures from their private collections for a public auction benefiting an endowment for Museum of International Folk Art (MOIFA) in Santa Fe. The silent auction is set to feature more than 60 rare and high-value folk and fine art from all over the world.

Guests will also be able to enjoy refreshments from around the globe, live music, and an opportunity for an after-hours viewing of the permanent exhibit, *Multiple Visions: A Common Bond*.

World of Treasures will be held March 9, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the museum. Registration will be open to the public on Jan. 25, and tickets can be found at WorldOfTreasures.eventbrite.com.

Bernalillo County approves Atrisco Acequia Madre development plan

Bernalillo County Commissioners have approved a plan to develop the headwaters of the Acequia Madre into a cultural and historic open space site for the public. The Atrisco Acequia Madre is one of the country's oldest systems of irrigation canals and has served as a vital artery for residents in the Rio Grande Valley for hundreds of years.

The newly approved plan is broken up into three phases: First, cleaning up the site and construction of initial development such as improving

parking. Second, will include a completion of the parking area along with the creation of new trail connections that will lead to the bosque. Third, adding water harvesting features to the site, finalizing landscaping, and installing signage, art, lighting and other finishing touches.

The Acequia Madre Master Plan is set to be completed by fall of 2026 and has a projected cost of \$327,000.

Calgon Carbon Corp. picks New Mexico for expansion

Calgon Carbon Corporation is making its way to the Land of Enchantment. It was recently announced by Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, along with executives from Calgon Carbon Corp. that the company will be expanding to New Mexico through an asset purchase of its new Bloomfield location.

The company's headquarters is currently located in Pennsylvania with a parent company in Tokyo. Calgon has acquired two existing businesses and will retain all current employees and plans to hire nine new employees in 2024. It will also look to hire a total of 16 people across the span of several years.

Calgon Carbon is the world's largest manufacturer of granular activated carbon, which can be processed into a highly porous material with an enormous surface area, capable of absorbing a wide range of contaminants.

The State has pledged \$150,000 from its Local Economic Development (LEDA) job creation fund to assist in the expansion. The company plans to invest \$94 million in New Mexico over the next 10 years.

Weak in Review: Jan. 24

Quick hits on this week's news bits

The city hired a herd of goats to clear out brush along the Bosque.

Do they also eat errant Christmas decorations and unfolded laundry? Asking for a friend.



The New Mexico legal community is speculating that federal investigations of some APD officers and defense attorneys involve a kickback scheme to get cases dismissed.

Has anyone checked to make sure those goats aren't chewing through old parking tickets?

The state announced it's investing more than \$1 million to help businesses with training.

We already checked....APD's not on the list.

The owner of a local, private security company was arrested after he allegedly pulled a gun on an Uber driver at Popeye's Chicken.

If we had to guess, it happened pre-meal, because those mashed potatoes can create world peace.

A Downtown Albuquerque brewery was temporarily shut down for health code violations including "scat" from a dog or cat.

No word on the culprit, but no one's heard from MC Skat Kat for more than 30 years and it's right there in his name.



Donald Trump starts to emerge as a frontrunner in the race for the Republican presidential primary.

We're currently looking for options for election season hibernation.

Sunland Park, New Mexico gets attention from *The New York Times* as a "Little Amsterdam" after Texans flock across the border for legal weed.

We're not a fan of the comparison, but only because there's a lot more to do in the Netherlands besides smoking weed on a mesa.

A local study is looking at when police body cameras are the most effective.

Seems like it's when they're turned on. That one's on us, researchers.

Albuquerque's Metro Court will resume in-person weddings on Valentine's Day.

This comes as great news for those who are looking to forget two important events at once.

Spring, a 10-year-old capybara living at the BioPark, died last week.

Goodbye, Spring. Though we never knew you at all, you had the grace to hold yourself, while those around you crawled.



No Room at the Jail

Board says proposed pre-trial detention legislation could bring the state's largest lockup to its knees



The Metropolitan Detention Center on Bernalillo County's westside. (Roberto E. Rosales/City Desk ABQ)

Carolyn Carlson, City Desk ABQ

This story was originally published by City Desk ABQ.

Advisory board members for the state's largest jail are advocating against expanded pretrial detention fearing that the huge lockup could collapse with the increase.

Breaking Point

The Bernalillo County Detention Facility Advisory Board spent a chunk of time at its Jan. 17 meeting discussing the impact of Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's proposed legislation to keep more serious and or violent offenders in jail pending trial. The gov's legislative priorities include a change to pretrial detention to create "a rebuttable presumption for persons charged with serious, largely violent offenses. Unless rebutted by clear and convincing evidence, a defendant that poses a threat to the safety of community members can be held in custody pending trial." Sen. Craig Brandt (R-Rio Rancho) has proposed a bill to this effect.

"My understanding of the governor's proposal to shift the burden to defendants on certain charges, where they would need to prove that they are not a threat to the community, which would mean a lot more people waiting in trial [in jail] for their cases," said Ken Martinez, the County Attorney.

A study done in 2022 that looked at the impact of pretrial detention in the state found that only a small percentage of defendants are charged with a second crime while awaiting trial. These results mirrored similar findings in a study done by the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee.

According to the board, this could increase the inmate population by 60 percent to 66 percent and put an almost breaking point strain on the facility. Chairman Michael Brasher and Vice-Chair Robert Lee Martinez spoke about how this would bring the facility possibly in violation of the McClendon cap of 1,950. They expressed concerns about the already strained staffing levels and near overcrowding and the struggling jail healthcare system. The board agreed to have another meeting in the next couple weeks to formulate the wording that will be sent to the governor's office.

The Detention Facility Oversight Ordinance, which created the board, also aims to resolve the issues behind *McClendon v. City of Albuquerque*, et al. The 1995 class action lawsuit alleged that conditions at the jail were unconstitutional due to extreme overcrowding. The case prevailed and there have been several court approved agreements over the nearly 30 years. MDC is still required under court order to operate within certain parameters for the health and safety of

those incarcerated. Currently, one of the settlement requirements is that MDC have a cap of 1,950 inmates at any one time.

Conflicts

On the other side of the issue, Albuquerque City Councilors unanimously approved sending a memorial to the governor supporting her efforts to increase the use of pre-trial detention.

The memorial was introduced by newly-elected Councilor Dan Champine, a retired Albuquerque Police Department officer at the Jan. 8 meeting. It says that the lax criminal justice pre-trial detention system has created "an unacceptable level of lawlessness in and throughout the Albuquerque area".

Staffing Instability

Metropolitan Detention Center has been plagued with staffing issues. The warden resigned last month after being placed on administrative leave for undisclosed reasons. The county has undertaken a national search for his replacement.

In December, a 36-year old off duty correctional officer was found dead of a suspected suicide. Just days before that, a 19-year-old correctional officer was killed in a single car crash on the road leading to MDC. Shortly before this meeting, another officer was fired for an alleged DWI arrest.

Inmate Deaths

There have been 27 inmate deaths since 2020 in the last three years. Some of those were due to people who had just been booked and were detoxing from something they had taken prior to being arrested. In July, the University of New Mexico Hospital took over medical services after a rash of problems and accusations that the former medical services contractor did not provide adequate care.

Body scanners, drug dogs and suboxone availability are some of the initiatives that are being put in place to try to catch the contraband coming into the jail. Stacey Hernandez, administrative assistant to the Warden's office, said that these additions will make a difference in being able to detect even the smallest fentanyl pill and to provide timely medical help for opioid addiction inside the jail.

Board Tasks

Bernalillo County Board of Commissioners created the nine member Detention Facility Management Oversight Advisory Board several years ago under a different name. Its main purpose is to provide a civilian review to make sure the MDC operates in accordance with the laws of the United States and the State of New Mexico in an effort to meet or exceed national jail standards. The advisory board provides an oversight function on operations, strategic planning and policy implementation for the MDC; it is not involved in management decisions by jail administrators or the county manager, according to county documents. It meets monthly at 4:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at Alvarado Square 415 Silver Ave. SW or via remote link on its agenda.

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SHORTS BY LUCA SILVER & KALLIE COOMBS
Sat Jan 27 1:00pm

Sigourney Weaver: **GALAXY QUEST (1999)**
Sat Jan 27 10:30pm

SOS: SAN ONOFRE SYNDROME
Sun Jan 28 12:00pm

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www.actorsstudio66.org

Silent Sky

Actors Studio 66 presents the Opening Night of its latest stage play, **Silent Sky**. This historical drama relates the true story of Henrietta Leavitt, a female astronomer in the early 20th Century. When she begins work at Harvard Observatory, she isn't even allowed to touch a telescope. Instead, she joins a group of women "computers," charting the stars. And in her free time she develops a technique to measure the light and distance of stars, providing the tools to map the universe. The show opens **Thursday, Jan. 25 at 7:30pm at Black Cat Cultural Center (3001 Monte Vista Blvd. NE)**. Performances run Jan. 25 through Feb. 11, Thursdays through Saturday at 7:30pm and Sundays at 2pm. Opening Night preview tickets are **\$15** general admission or **\$10** students. After Thursday, prices are \$20 general admission and \$10 students. To get tickets go to showtix4u.com/event-details/79777.

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Dance

Friday Night Square Dancing
7 - 9 PM Fridays Albuquerque
Square Dance Center 4915
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Exhibit

Colors That Speak Words/Phase II
9am -4pm Indian Pueblo
Cultural Center 2401 12th Street NW

IPCC’s 43rd Annual Native American Student Art Show:
Celebrating Our Pollinators 9am - 4pm
Indian Pueblo Cultural Center 2401 12th Street NW

Music

Dark Honey Karaoke 6-9 pm
Gold Street Pizza & Brew
3211 Coors Blvd SW Suite H1, Albuquerque

Disco at the Momo w/ DJ Clout
7-10 pm Monterey Motel 2402 Central Ave. SW

Gorod \$13 7:30-11 pm
Launchpad 618 Central Avenue Southwest

Music on the Patio: Stray Dawgs
6-9 pm Canteen Brewhouse 2381 Aztec Road Northeast

Sadness, Madness, & Mayhem: A Haunted Folk Formal with Dust City Opera \$25-\$30 6:30-9 pm
FUSION | 708 708 1st St NW

Soja \$38 7:30-10:30 pm Historic El Rey Theatre 622 Central Ave SW

Performance

Pretty Woman The Musical \$53-\$123 7:30-9:30 pm Popejoy Hall 203 Cornell Dr

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Comedy Night 7:30-9:30 pm
Brew Lab 101 Beer & Cider Co.
- NE Heights 3107 Eubank Blvd
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Opening Day Talk: Coast to Coast
to Coast 2-3 pm Albuquerque
Museum 2000 Mountain Road NW




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Family/Kids

IPCC’s Family Story Time 1-2 pm Indian Pueblo Cultural Center 2401 12th Street NW

Film

TRIPLE BILL: Forgive Us Mother, For We Have Sinned + Intertwined + What Is Sex? \$10 1 pm Guild Cinema 3405 Central Ave NE

Miscellaneous

CDL Open House 9 am-12 pm Phoenix Truck Driving School 301 Airport Dr NW

Stitch a Felt Heart Dishtowel 12-2 pm Color Wheel Toys 6855 4th St NW Ste D

Music

21st Annual Gothic Winter Ball \$10 8 pm-1 am Sister 407 Central Ave. NW

12 Step Rebels \$10 7-11 pm Launchpad 618 Central Avenue Southwest

Hondo Coyote 8-11 pm Tractor Brewing Wells Park 1800 Fourth St. NW

Los Domingueros E.P. Release Party 8-11:30 pm Echoes 313 Gold Ave SW

Restorative Gong Bath \$25 11 am-12 pm The Remedy Day Spa & Wellness Center 113 Vassar Dr SE

The Rascons 7-9 pm Enchanted Circle Brewing 6001 San Mateo Blvd NE

Violet Rising 8-11 pm Moonlight Lounge 120 Central Ave SW

Outdoors

Birding For New Birders 9-11 am Rio Grande Community Farm 1701 Montavito Rd NW

Performance

Anastasia: The Musical \$14 2-4 pm KiMo Theatre 423 Central Avenue NW

Havoc Lillies Presents: Right in the Childhood \$15-\$25 7-9 pm Voodoo Girl Pizza & Pints 1401 Second St. NW

Keshet Presents Everett Company Bliss Body 6:30 pm Keshet Dance and Center for the Arts 4121 Cutler Ave NE

Pretty Woman The Musical \$53-\$123 7:30-9:30 pm Popejoy Hall 203 Cornell Dr

Pretty Woman The Musical \$53-\$123 2-4 pm Popejoy Hall 203 Cornell Dr

Silent Sky Presented by Actors Studio 66 \$0-\$20 7:30 pm Black Cat Cultural Center 3011 Monte Vista Boulevard Northeast

The Mountaintop \$15-\$24 7:30-9:30 pm The Adobe Theater 9813 4th Street NW, 87114

Sports

3HL Ice Wolves vs. Texas RoadRunners \$10-\$15 6:30-9 pm Outpost Ice Arenas 9530 Tramway Blvd NE

BKFC Prospect Series: Sanchez vs. Cutter \$65-\$250 7-10 pm Revel Entertainment Center 4720 Alexander Blvd NE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28

Film

Keshet Presents Everett Company Parables from Prison 2 pm Keshet Dance and Center for the Arts 4121 Cutler Ave NE


Music

For All the Girls Party \$10 10 pm-1 am Launchpad 618 Central Avenue Southwest

Music on the Patio: Odd Dog 4-7 pm Canteen Brewhouse 2381 Aztec Road Northeast

School of Rock ABQ Presents: One Hit Wonders/Southern Rock/Motown \$15 12-3 pm Uptown Funk at Revel 4720 Alexander Boulevard Northeast

The Heart is Awake Presents TEMPLE OF SOUND \$20 6-7:30 pm FUSION | 708 708 1st St NW



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The Mountain Goats \$45-\$95 7-11 pm Historic El Rey Theatre 622 Central Ave SW

Music - Classical

Chatter Sunday \$5-\$17 10:30 am-12:30 pm Chatter 912 3rd St NW

NM Philharmonic: Winter Serenade \$28-\$72 3-5 pm Cathedral of St. John 318 Silver Ave. SW

Performance

Anastasia: The Musical \$14 2-4 pm KiMo Theatre 423 Central Avenue NW

Pretty Woman The Musical \$53-\$123 1-3 pm Popejoy Hall 203 Cornell Dr

Pretty Woman The Musical \$53-\$123 6:30-8:30 pm Popejoy Hall 203 Cornell Dr

Silent Sky Presented by Actors Studio 66 \$0-\$20 2 pm Black Cat Cultural Center 3011 Monte Vista Boulevard Northeast

The Mountaintop \$15-\$24 2-4 pm The Adobe Theater 9813 4th Street NW, 87114

Sports

3HL Ice Wolves vs. Texas RoadRunners \$10-\$15 2-4:30 pm Outpost Ice Arenas 9530 Tramway Blvd NE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31

Exhibit

Nikesha Breeze and Alex Ponca Stock Thursday-Saturday 11-4 Richard Levy Gallery 514 Central Ave SW

Games

Brain Gang Trivia 6-8 pm Canteen Brewhouse 2381 Aztec Road Northeast

Miscellaneous

Bike Night 6-9 pm Sunday Service Motor Company 2701 4th Street NW

Music

Acoustic Showcase and Open Mic Night 6-11:30 pm Hotel Zazz 3711 Central Ave NE

DHP Presents: Karaoke at Voodoo Girl 7-10 pm Voodoo Girl Pizza & Pints 1401 Second St. NW

Hump Day Karaoke Show 6-10 pm Kilt Check Brewing Company 4814 Hardware Dr. NE

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Advocates Renew Push for Quarter-a-Drink Alcohol Tax Hike

Lawmakers will once again push to increase the rate as a way to fund treatment options



Dr. J. Pedro Teixeira said one in eight beds in UNM Hospital's medical Intensive Care Unit at the end of 2023 was filled by someone there due to drinking. (Ted Alcorn/New Mexico In Depth)

Ted Alcorn, New Mexico in Depth

This story was originally published by New Mexico In Depth.

As 2023 came to a close, holiday celebrations slowed New Mexican workplaces to a crawl and many residents raised glasses to toast the new year. But UNM Hospital's medical intensive care unit remained busy, caring for scores of patients who barely clung to life. As usual, the primary factor landing many of them there was excess drinking.

There was a man in his 70s with liver cancer caused by alcohol who had begun bleeding internally, developed mental confusion, and was now in a coma. A 50-something woman so dependent on alcohol that when she abstained, she went into severe withdrawal and developed a case of pneumonia serious enough to put her on a ventilator. A slightly younger woman with liver cirrhosis who had taken a hard fall, breaking an arm and causing bleeding under her skull. A 30-something woman with heart failure due to chronic drinking.

Upon reviewing the cases, Dr. J. Pedro Teixeira, who has worked on the unit for four years, calculated one of every eight beds was filled by someone there because of alcohol. "If anything, I would expect somewhat more," he wrote by email.

New Mexico's record-setting rate of alcohol deaths — higher than any other state and triple the national rate — is readily apparent on Teixeira's rounds. Of a dozen settings across the country in which he's

trained or practiced, he said, none comes close to New Mexico's level of alcohol-related disease and injury. "There's no question in my mind."

After a year in which the state's alcohol crisis showed no sign of letting up, and in which its political leaders did nothing substantial to address the problem, public health advocates say they are renewing an effort to get lawmakers to act. During the legislative session, they will introduce a bill to raise the state's alcohol taxes a quarter per drink, making it costlier to consume in excess and generating hundreds of millions of dollars for treatment and prevention programs.

Raising alcohol taxes has "substantial" potential for preventing deaths due to drinking, according to a recent report by the World Health Organization. After Alaska, Maryland, and Illinois raised their tax rates, they experienced significant reductions in injuries and illnesses related to drinking.

Sen. Shannon Pinto, a Democrat from Tohatchi and member of the Navajo Nation who is co-sponsoring the alcohol tax bill, said that passing it this session was among her top priorities, given the damage excess drinking has wrought on her constituents and loved ones. "I've buried more members of my family due to alcoholism than COVID," she said.

New Mexico hasn't raised alcohol taxes in 30 years, and the rates don't adjust for inflation. As the price of a drink has risen, the tax on that drink has not grown along with it. Alcohol taxes in 1994 ranged from 4¢ per

12-ounce beer to 7¢ per shot of liquor, and remain the same today, at their lowest real value in a generation.

A draft of the bill shared by its sponsors resembles legislation they pushed last session, which would have raised taxes on all types of alcohol to 25¢ a drink. Members of the House and Senate tax committees repeatedly pared back that amount and ultimately passed a mere penny-a-drink tax increase, which Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham then line-item vetoed. This perplexed many observers given that the governor simultaneously rejected a measure directing all alcohol tax revenues to treatment and prevention, which both public health advocates and alcohol businesses had supported.

Shelley Mann-Lev, one of the leaders of the Alcohol Harms Alleviation Coalition that promoted last year's effort, said the defeat was a mixed bag. "It was very disappointing," she said, but the fact the bill made it all the way to the governor's desk was "the most hopeful thing I've seen in years."

Whether it is constitutional for the governor to veto individual items in a tax bill is being challenged before the New Mexico Supreme Court.

One of the sponsors of the alcohol tax hike, Rep. Joanne Ferrary, D-Las Cruces, said that this autumn she met multiple times with the governor's cabinet officials and senior staff, hoping to hammer out language Lujan Grisham would endorse. At a December 29

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meeting on the fourth floor of the capitol, the governor's chief of staff and health advisor said that the governor "wasn't likely to veto" the bill, according to Ferrary.

The governor's spokesperson declined to answer whether she would support or oppose an alcohol tax increase, citing "ongoing conversations" with the bill's sponsors.

This year's proposal is more ambitious than last year's but also more detailed, which advocates believe will garner broader support. It would raise alcohol taxes by 25¢ per drink, meaning the new rates would range between 29¢ and 32¢ per drink, depending on the type of alcohol, and would be indexed to inflation. It includes language adopted during last year's debates that exempts microbrewers, small wineries, and craft distillers from the tax increase, potentially giving local companies a competitive advantage over major out-of-state brands. And on request from the Department of Taxation and Revenue, it specifies tax increases for ready-to-drink cocktails, hard seltzers, and wine coolers, which had not been included in last year's bill.

The bill's sponsors are also trying to be more prescriptive about how to use funds generated by the tax increase, which they estimate at around \$250 million annually. With input from state agencies, the sponsors developed a list of over 40 potential recipients that could use the funds to help prevent and treat alcohol's harms, including programs to support Native Americans transitioning to sober-living, to provide behavioral health treatment for uninsured people, and to prevent and care for those affected by domestic violence.

In an interview, Charles Sallee, director of the Legislative Finance Committee, agreed that New Mexico needed to spend more on alcohol treatment and prevention but said such a large infusion could be hard for agencies to absorb. "My big concern is the feasibility of government to use those resources," he said.

J.D. Bullington, an experienced lobbyist who represented the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce in opposing last year's measure, predicted that "a proposed tax increase of that magnitude is probably going to have a very difficult road."

Members of the Alcohol Harms Alleviation Coalition said that since last year's defeat they've built support around the state, obtaining endorsements from more than a dozen groups including Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the New Mexico Alliance of Health Councils, and the Doña Ana and Bernalillo county commissions.

Awarded a \$80,000 grant by the state's Behavioral Health Services division, members of the coalition also presented to over 20 state and county organizations to raise awareness about evidence-based strategies to reduce alcohol related deaths.

And for the coming session, the state chapter of the League of Women Voters hired a lobbyist, Linda Siegle, to advocate for the tax increase.

But if last year's session is any indication, they will face a phalanx of lobbyists



(Roberto Rosales/City Desk ABQ)

representing alcohol and hospitality businesses, which give tens of thousands of dollars to the campaigns of the governor and legislators each year. Dan Weaks, who represents the New Mexico Wine and Grape Growers Association and the California-based Wine Institute, said alcohol lobbyists had already been meeting together to decide "how to handle" the legislation.

At a December 5 hearing of the interim Revenue Stabilization and Tax Policy Committee, legislators who gutted last year's bill continued to express reservations.

Rep. Micaela Lara Cadena, a progressive Democrat in her third term representing Mesilla, told advocates she was "committed to considering what you've brought before us" but suggested the effort was fundamentally misplaced. "Alcohol is not the harm; it's the self-medication," she said, arguing that a tax increase would not address what she said were the root causes of excess drinking: the state's legacy of colonization and genocide of Native peoples.

She did not answer emailed questions about what policies she would prioritize to address the state's soaring alcohol death rate in the context of that history, nor whether directing alcohol tax revenues to disadvantaged groups including tribes and pueblos would be a positive step.

The committee's vice chairman, Rep. Derrick Lente, D-Sandia, warned that debates over the bill would become "emotional" and said he'd prefer that industry and activists negotiate an agreement. "If I can be a dealmaker, I would love that opportunity," he said.

Mann-Lev told him she welcomed dialogue with industry but was skeptical it would be productive. Tobacco businesses have never supported increases in cigarette taxes, she pointed out, yet the state has repeatedly raised rates over their objections.

In an interview, Ebbie Edmonston, head of the New Mexico Brewers Guild, said her trade organization was open to discussion but the guild's top priority in the coming legislative session was keeping alcohol taxes at "a manageable rate." Calling last year's quarter-a-drink hike "absurd," she declined to specify what size increase would be acceptable.

Upon learning that this year's proposal exempted microbrewers producing fewer than 200,000 barrels from the tax increase, a threshold no member of her guild exceeds, she said: "If they're taking us out of the bill, then we don't really need to be in the argument."

Weaks said there was a chance an alcohol increase would pass. "I don't think it will be 25 cents and it will not be as low as what was sent to the governor last year," he said.

Dr. Teixeira hopes lawmakers do more to reduce the number of patients with alcohol-related diseases he and his colleagues have to treat. "I'm just dealing with the disastrous end results, but I've never heard anyone say there's too many substance-related resources in the state of New Mexico," he said.

As for a larger alcohol tax, he offered his full-throated support. "It makes obvious sense to me and I'd happily pay it." *Trip Jennings contributed reporting for this story.*



Shhhh.....The New Public Art Vault is Password Protected

Exhibit at City Hall features fictional paranormal department

Password-protected Gallery One. (Courtesy Albuquerque Public Art Program)

Rodd Cayton, City Desk ABQ

This story was originally published by City Desk ABQ.

Abducted by aliens? Seen a chupacabra? The city's "newest department" is there to field your calls.

The Department of Unexplained Phenomena is part of the exhibit "A Day in the Life II" which opened earlier this month at Gallery One at City Hall. The exhibit features photographs by local artists of city employees at work, but for his piece artist Adrian Pijoan created a fictional department to explore the paranormal.

"I've had people ask, 'is that a real city department,'" he said. "To me, that's really cool because you're playing with that boundary between truth and fiction."

The piece includes an old treasury vault and photographs, one showing the department's fictional director Dr. Aurora Aura

fielding a phone call (perhaps from someone reporting a close encounter?) and another showing a hand entering a code on the vault door.

Visitors can call a number to be directed to a phone directory with several different options. For example, pressing three will yield a list of services the department provides, including alien-abduction experience analysis, Bigfoot behavioral studies, extraterrestrial telepathy tutoring, crop circle decoding, cyberwicca and haunted house parties.

At the end of the narrative, the caller receives a code to open the vault to see a sculpture inside.

Pijoan said he wanted Aura to sound open-minded and have an ability to listen to peoples' stories without judgment or preconceived notions.

"I wanted her to feel like a city employee," he said. "She's not a secret agent or something ... she's a normal person. This is her day job."

'Day in and day out'

The larger "A Day in the Life II" exhibit connected artist photographers with city employees "to tell the story of what it is like day in and day out to help provide services for Albuquerque residents, pets and our environment," said Sherri Brueggemann, the manager of the city's Public Art Urban Enhancement Division.

She said that about 250 people attended the Jan. 5 grand opening and the show drew 20 to 30 people per day during its first week.

The photographers are Max Woltman, Sean Wright, Angel Gil Lopez, Jessica Lozoya, Adrian Martin, Jessica Roybal and Pico del Hierro-Villa.

The photos, taken between July and September show city employees and volunteers mowing a golf course, planting trees, cleaning up graffiti, preparing meals for seniors and more.

Brueggemann said other photos are intended to

capture the visual story of the city, including a picture of a residential fence at 10 different times of day to emphasize how the light changes in New Mexico.

For future gallery shows, Brueggemann said, the Art Vault can be tied into a specific exhibition or it can be programmed separately. She said Pijoan's work was intended to be separate, "but it just serendipitously tied in unexpectedly to the Day in the Life Show with the idea of an imagined government department."

"(Visitors) are wowed and very surprised by what they find inside," she said, "and almost everyone says something like, 'Oh ... now I get it! That was a great story!'"

If you go: *The Art Vault is in Gallery One, on the first floor of City Hall. "A Day in the Life II" runs through March 8. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. More information about the gallery is available at cabq.gov/artsculture/public-art/gallery-one.*

Native Weed Entrepreneur in Hot Water

Navajo Nation files new charges against Benally



Dineh Benally leaves district court in Estancia (Glen Rosales)

By Josh Lee, The Paper.

The New Mexico Cannabis Control Division (CCD) just revoked the license of a cannabis company started by Navajo businessman Dineh Benally and opened in Estancia, New Mexico. Meanwhile, the Navajo Nation recently filed charges against Benally and another man for growing illicit marijuana on tribal lands.

The man who ran twice for Navajo Nation president seems to be having a rough go of it as a weed entrepreneur.

And these are just the latest chapters in a story that involves alleged fake permits, accusations of judicial interference, allegations of forced labor and a slew of other touchy claims that swarm around an illegal growing operation that Benally allegedly ran on tribal lands near Shiprock in 2020.

Tip of The Iceberg

The CCD in December revoked the license of Native American Agricultural Development Company (NAADC), a cannabis production company located south of Estancia after allegedly finding a number of serious violations.

The division started investigating the facility after Searchlight New Mexico asked in September why Benally—who was being investigated by federal authorities for his involvement in an illegal pot growing operation—would be issued a marijuana license by the state.

According to the news organization, the CCD said it was unaware of those investigations. Soon, a compliance officer was sent to the location, where he said he found eight troubling violations, according to state records.

What did the CCD likely learn when

it looked into Benally's history? Well, it probably wasn't your run-of-the-mill cannabis success story.

A History of Bad Decisions

It all started in 2019, when Benally allegedly began growing unlicensed hemp and unlawfully issuing fake land-use permits to foreign entities to grow hemp on Navajo Nation land. The businessman allegedly claimed to have a license to grow hemp, but that was later revealed to be false.

An investigation into the hemp farms led to allegations that Benally was using underage workers (some reportedly as young as 10) and Chinese immigrants brought in from California and New York. Workers told reporters that the farms were producing black market weed alongside hemp.

The Nation filed for a temporary restraining order the next year to halt all of Benally's hemp operations.

But Benally allegedly continued operations at the illegal farms. He went into hiding just before federal, state and tribal law enforcement raided the farms in November 2020.

The farms were partially funded by Irving Lin, a Chinese businessman who blamed Benally for the debacle and then set up shop in Oklahoma, where many of the displaced workers reportedly landed. Those farms were also shut down by law enforcement.

In 2021, Benally popped up in South Dakota, where he was trying to open up a cannabis farm on the Pine Ridge Reservation, but members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe kicked him out and banned him from coming back.

Last year, the businessman re-entered the news cycle when Chinese immigrant workers filed a lawsuit against both Benally and Lin

for allegedly luring them to New Mexico in 2020 under false pretenses of working at a farm before being forced to process illegal marijuana in a motel in Farmington. Growing marijuana is legal in New Mexico with certain stipulations, but is still illegal on Navajo Nation.

The workers claimed that they were separated from family members and forced to work 14-hour days with insufficient housing and food. They said they were monitored by armed guards.

While somehow managing to avoid being arrested for any of these allegations, Benally got his licenses to produce cannabis in New Mexico from the CCD in 2022 and began working on the NAADC facility.

A Number of Violations

The CCD compliance officer who investigated the facility said NAADC was not using the state's product tracking software and that there were no chain-of-custody procedures in place. Most worrisome: The company was only licensed to produce 1,000 plants but was secretly producing 40,000. This not only exceeded NAADC's license limit, it exceeded the maximum 20,000 plant limit allowed to any operation.

According to CCD records, Benally said the chain-of-custody and tracking problems were due to the facility having a lack of internet access. He admitted that he had internet access at his home, though.

As for the excessive plant count, he claimed to have made a verbal request to increase the number of plants grown at the facility but was told that he would have to pay the required fee of \$5 for each additional plant. Benally told the CCD that he couldn't afford the fees.

"Mr. Benally did not explain why he apparently went ahead without the additional permits and planted approximately four (4) times more plants than were allowed under Respondent's license," noted the CCD in its final decision.

Navajo Nation Charges

As for these most recent developments, Navajo Nation prosecutors have charged Benally and a farmer named Farley BlueEyes for their alleged roles in the Shiprock operation. David Jordan, an attorney who has represented Benally in the past, is expected to represent him in this case as well, but the attorney told *The Paper* that he has not been retained by Benally so far. Authorities say no one has entered a formal appearance on behalf of BlueEyes, and it's unclear who the individual is.

Meanwhile, Benally still has to make it through the Chinese immigrants' lawsuit and won't likely be issued another cannabis license from New Mexico anytime soon. The doors have also been permanently closed at the Pine Ridge Reservation. It seems like Benally has been shut out of the industry for now, and his dreams of becoming a marijuana magnate may be finished.

But is this the end? Have we really heard the last from Benally? If he's truly guilty of the brazen crimes he's been accused of, we may not have heard the last of him.



Blunts.

cannabis news shorts



Every week, we round up our favorite cannabis-related news stories in bite sized edible pieces. Here's some of our favorites!

Cannabis Caucus Founder “Angry”

By Josh Lee, The Paper.

During a charged speech on the House floor last week, Congressional Cannabis Caucus founder Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) criticized the federal government’s “unfair” and “insane” prohibition of marijuana.

Blumenauer has said he will be retiring at the end of this Congress. If he goes, there won’t be many outspoken cannabis advocates left on Capitol Hill, which might explain his frustration with how the War on Some Drugs has turned out.

“I am sad, and I am angry,” Blumenauer told the House. “I’ve been working for 50 years leading the effort to end the failed, unfair, cynical, dangerous War on Drugs that targeted Black people, that discouraged the legal use of a therapeutic good—something that could have enriched our economy—but instead criminalized behavior.”

He said the federal government continues to fail the American people today.

“It’s time that the federal government get its act together and stop making things worse,” he said.

Documents Confirm Rescheduling Recommendation

The federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has released a trove of documents that confirm the agency has recommended marijuana be rescheduled

to Schedule III on the list of controlled substances. The documents also confirm that the recommendation was based on the merits of the evidence that cannabis is a therapeutic drug.

The document dump is the result of a FOIA request made by star cannabis attorney Matt Zorn, who published it on his blog, On Drugs.

According to the documents, the HHS found that the most compelling evidence supporting weed’s medical efficacy was related to its use as a pain reliever. A Food and Drug Administration (FDA) review did not find support for the claim that cannabis can treat anxiety or epilepsy. The agency also said that the likelihood of experiencing adverse effects on weed outweighed its efficacy at treating PTSD.

The FDA said there was evidence that cannabis can help treat symptoms of pain and nausea.

Federal Researcher Questions Hemp Limits

A researcher for the Department of Justice (DOJ) says the federal THC limit for hemp is hurting legitimate hemp farmers and is not based on science.

On a recent episode of the *Justice Today* podcast, Frances Scott a physical scientist at the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Office of Investigative and Forensic Sciences said the 0.3 percent THC limit that was placed on hemp was based on

“one mention hypothetically in an article from the 1950s,” rather than up-to-date marijuana science.

Scott said the rule hurts hemp farmers who accidentally go over the limit by small amounts. “Quite frankly, you’d have to smoke a joint the size of a telephone pole to get much off

of that 0.35 percent,” he said.

The researcher also said the dry-weight limit makes it difficult to produce topical lotions and other hemp products.

Some lawmakers are looking to amend the law to allow hemp farmers to produce plants with up to one percent THC.

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FREE WILL ASTROLOGY Week of January 24

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ARIES (March 21-April 19): Aries author Dani Shapiro has published six novels, three bestselling memoirs, and a host of articles in major magazines. She co-founded a writer's conference, teaches at top universities, and does a regular podcast. We can conclude she is successful. Here's her secret: She feels that summoning courage is more important than being confident. Taking bold action to accomplish what you want is more crucial than cultivating self-assurance. I propose that in the coming weeks, you apply her principles to your own ambitions.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Throughout history, there has never been a culture without religious, mythical, and supernatural beliefs. The vast majority of the world's people have believed in magic and divinity. Does that mean it's all true and real? Of course not. But nor does it mean that none of it is true and real. Ultra-rationalists who dismiss the spiritual life are possessed by hubris. Everything I've said here is prelude to my oracle for you: Some of the events in the next three weeks will be the result of magic and divinity. Your homework is to discern which are and which aren't.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Several wise people have assured me that the pursuit of wealth, power, popularity, and happiness isn't as important as the quest for meaningfulness. If you feel your life story is interesting, rich, and full of purpose, you are successful. This will be a featured theme for you in the coming months, Gemini. If you have ever fantasized about your destiny resembling an ancient myth, a revered fairy tale, a thousand-page novel, or an epic film, you will get your wish.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): "Life as we live it is unaccompanied by signposts," wrote author Holly Hickler. I disagree with her assessment, especially in regard to your upcoming future. Although you may not encounter literal markers bearing information to guide you, you will encounter metaphorical signals that are clear and strong. Be alert for them, Cancerian. They might not match your expectations about what signposts should be, though. So expand your concepts of how they might appear.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): I wrote a book called *Pronoia Is the Antidote for Paranoia: How the Whole World Is Conspiring to Shower You with Blessings*. Among its main messages: There's high value in cultivating an attitude that actively looks for the best in life and regards problems as potential opportunities. When I was working on the book, no one needed to hear this advice more than me! Even now, I still have a long way to go before mastering the outlook I call "crafty optimism." I am still subject to dark thoughts and worried feelings—even though I know the majority of them are irrational or not based on the truth of what's happening. In other words, I am earnestly trying to learn the very themes I have been called to teach. What's the equivalent in your life, Leo? Now is an excellent time to upgrade your skill at expressing abilities and understandings you wish everyone had.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): In 1951, filmmaker Akira Kurosawa made a movie adapted from *The Idiot*, a novel by his favorite author Fyodor Dostoevsky. Kurosawa was not yet as famous and influential as we would later become. That's why he agreed to his studio's demand to cut 99 minutes from his original 265-minute version. But this turned out to be a bad idea. Viewers of the film had a hard time understanding the chopped-up story. Most of the critics' reviews were negative. I bring this to your attention, Virgo, with two intentions: 1. I encourage you to do minor editing on your labor of love. 2 But don't agree to anything like the extensive revisions that Kurosawa did.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): I have selected a poem for you to tape on your refrigerator door for the next eight weeks. It's by 13th-century Zen poet Wu-Men. He wrote: "Ten thousand flowers in spring,

the moon in autumn, / a cool breeze in summer, snow in winter. / If your mind isn't clouded by unnecessary things, this is the best season of your life." My wish for you, Libra—which is also my prediction for you—is that you will have extra power to empty your mind of unnecessary things. More than ever, you will be acutely content to focus on the few essentials that appeal to your wild heart and tender soul.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Psychologist Carl Jung wrote, "Motherlove is one of the most moving and unforgettable memories of our lives, the mysterious root of all growth and change; the love that means homecoming, shelter, and the long silence from which everything begins and in which everything ends." To place yourself in rapt alignment with current cosmic rhythms, Scorpio, you will do whatever's necessary to get a strong dose of the blessing Jung described. If your own mother isn't available or is insufficient for this profound immersion, find other maternal sources. Borrow a wise woman elder or immerse yourself in Goddess worship. Be intensely intent on basking in a nurturing glow that welcomes you and loves you exactly as you are—and makes you feel deeply at home in the world.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): In a set of famous experiments, physiologist Ivan Pavlov taught dogs to have an automatic response to a particular stimulus. He rang a bell while providing the dogs with food they loved. After a while, the dogs began salivating with hunger simply when they heard the bell, even though no food was offered. Ever since, "Pavlov's dogs" has been a phrase that refers to the ease with which animals' instinctual natures can be conditioned. I can't help but wonder what would have happened if Pavlov had used cats instead of dogs for his research. Would felines have submitted to such scientific shenanigans? I doubt it. These ruminations are my way of urging you to be more like a cat than a dog in the coming weeks. Resist efforts to train you, tame you, or manipulate you into compliance.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Before poet Louise Glück published her first book, *Firstborn*, it was rejected by 28 publishers. When it finally emerged, she suffered from writer's block. Her next book didn't appear until eight years after the first one. Her third book arrived five years later, and her fourth required another five years. Slow going! But here's the happy ending: By the time she died at age 80, she had published 21 books and won the Pulitzer Prize and the Nobel Prize for Literature. By my astrological reckoning, you are now at a phase, in your own development, comparable to the time after Glück's fourth book: well-primed, fully geared up, and ready to make robust progress.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): "All good writing is swimming under water and holding your breath," wrote author F. Scott Fitzgerald. I'd like to expand that metaphor and apply it to you, Aquarius. I propose that your best thinking and decision-making in the coming weeks will be like swimming under water while holding your breath. What I mean is that you'll get the best results by doing what feels unnatural. You will get yourself in the right mood if you bravely go down below the surface and into the depths and feel your way around.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): In honor of this pivotal time in your life story, I offer four pronouncements. 1. You can now be released from a history that has repeated itself too often. To expedite this happy shift, indulge in a big cry and laugh about how boring that repeated history has become. 2. You can finish paying off your karmic debt to someone you hurt. How? Change yourself to ensure you won't ever act that way again. 3. You can better forgive those who wounded you if you forgive yourself for being vulnerable to them. 4. Every time you divest yourself of an illusion, you will clearly see how others' illusions have been affecting you.

The Weekly Crossword by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

1 Heron or flamingo

6 Vaulted recess

10 "Arf!" equivalent

14 Positive pole

15 Palindromic time

16 Skin soother

17 Pub offering

18 Treat, as meat

20 For each person

22 Pumps or clogs

23 Have a bug

24 Evaluate

26 Glasgow's home

31 Pressured, with "on"

35 Crafted on a loom

36 Bird in a holiday song

38 Ginger ____

39 Pitching style

40 Fly catcher

41 Albania's north-ern neighbor

43 Force

44 As originally placed

45 Ones who have class

47 Shoe style

49 Nothing

50 Like new dollar bills

53 Without consideration

59 Tipping point

61 Dance around, as an issue

62 Lascivious look

63 Qatar's continent

64 Twilled fabric

65 Jury member

66 Lean (on)

67 Took a shot at

DOWN

1 Big stinger

2 Neat anagram

3 Way out

4 What teachers do

5 Consumers' price

6 Nay sayer

7 Yeats or Keats

8 Whale finder

9 Call off

10 ICBM part

11 Varied mixture

12 Move like molasses

13 Bank charges

19 Respect

21 Record sales status

25 Versatile

26 Mystic

27 List introducer

28 Hot spots

29 Artist's subject

30 Bottom of the barrel

32 Bad kind of situation

33 Calendar entry

34 Unpaid bills

37 Like some apples

39 Frame jobs

42 Bettor's adviser

43 Keep one's promises

46 Dump, as stocks

48 Prize money

50 Hoofbeat sound

51 See red

52 Vacation destination

54 Picture holder

55 Traveling

56 Madras dress

57 Periphery

58 Monopoly card

60 La Brea goo

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Solution to Crossword:



"I'M SO GRATEFUL I NEVER STOPPED SEARCHING!"

Bernalillo resident Maria R had been experiencing the debilitating side effects of Peripheral Neuropathy.

"I was beginning to have other health issues due to the lack of sleep. I needed help just standing up and when I was standing I was afraid I would fall because I had no feeling in my feet. My life felt like a nightmare."

Then she met Albuquerque's very own Dr. Andrea Brogdon

"I was so desperate to the point of giving up" exclaimed Maria R. from Bernalillo. "I was in so much discomfort due to the numbness, tingling, and burning on the back of both legs and in my feet."

Maria R had been diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy and had seen a neurologist with no relief. To complicate things further, Maria had been diagnosed with two fractured discs in her back that were causing her severe pain. "I was no longer able to do surgery and all other treatments didn't work. I was starting to feel hopeless."

Maria is one of 3 million people in the United States suffering from peripheral neuropathy, a degenerative disease of the peripheral nervous system. "Those with peripheral neuropathy experience numbness, tingling, burning and even severe cramping due to the dying off of the peripheral nerves," explains Dr. Andrea Brogdon of Albuquerque Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine. "These nerves continue to die off until they have completely expired leaving sufferers with numbness and debilitating balance issues. Patients come to see me after having seen many other doctors with no relief. They have been told that there is nothing they can do or that they just have to live with it."

"I was beginning to have other health issues due to the lack of sleep. I needed help just standing up and when I was standing I was afraid I would fall because I had no feeling in my feet. My life felt like a nightmare," says Maria.

"I learned about Dr. Andrea Brogdon from an article I read and learned that she helped others like me, experiencing the same symptoms.

I made an appointment hoping she was going to be able to help me. It was my last resort."

Dr. Andrea Brogdon has helped thousands of patients get their life back after being diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy and living with the debilitating effects of the disease. How does she get such amazing results? "Acupuncture has been used for centuries to improve circulation but the real magic happens when I integrate ATP Resonance BioTherapy™." By using modern technological advancements alongside the time tested science of acupuncture, Dr. Brogdon is able to reverse the effects of this degenerative disease, regardless of its origin.

"Early detection is key when it comes to improving your chances of a full recovery," explains Dr. Brogdon. Which is why she starts every patient with an initial consultation during which a sensory exam is performed. "This helps to determine just how much nerve damage has occurred," tells the doctor. "This is important because if the patient has suffered more than 95% sensory loss there is very little I can do at that point."

"After several treatments, I experienced tremendous relief. Life is good! I have seen a huge improvement in my walking, I sleep better, even my mood is better! I am so grateful I never stopped searching!"
exclaims Maria.

If you or a loved one are living a life of suffering due to peripheral neuropathy and your pain has prevented you from doing the things you love with the people you love, it's time to call Dr. Brogdon and the staff at AAIM.

Call (505) 355-1984 today to schedule an initial consultation or visit AAIM-ABQ.com to read more incredible success stories.



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