

Community Conversation Results – Thoughts and Ideas from Your Community!

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Jemez Springs Public Library recently facilitated seven community conversations throughout the Jemez Valley/Mountains to understand existing communication channels (such as websites, social media, newspapers), communication channels under development, and to gather input for alternatives and improvements in community dialogue. These conversations were funded by a grant from *Libraries Transforming Communities: Focus on Small and Rural Libraries, an initiative of the American Library Association (ALA) in collaboration with the Association for Rural & Small Libraries (ARSL)*.

As promised, conversation responses are now summarized, and are being provided to you here. The library’s intent was not to propose solutions, but rather to gather information and give the community an opportunity to widely explore the topic; **understanding often leads to change for the better.**

We hope you use this information to understand and effect change for the better.

Participation: Conversations were held August & September 2021 when indoor mask wearing was required. Attendance was affected by many factors; access was an issue for some. It was notable that young families were not represented, and unfortunately with the lockdown and zoom format the Jemez Pueblo, the region’s largest population, was not adequately represented. While the overall attendance was not large (about 1.4% of the region population), the topics of concern/interest were diverse and plentiful, and there were patterns in the responses. Hopefully you will find your own concerns represented here even if you were unable to attend. If you are reading this, you are using one of the many venues in which the conversations were advertised (or you attended and requested an email). The opportunity to hear and be heard was of value to those who attended. Thank you to all of the participants!

Location	Areas 1,2,3	Canon area	Jemez Pueblo	Jemez Springs	La Cueva	Ponderosa	San Ysidro	Total
attendees	13	10	3	14	7	3	6	56

Results: The format for each conversation was the same, involving a series of open ended and survey questions. The results follow for each topic of discussion:

Question 1: What regional issues/events and info do you want to see in local communication venues?

This was first asked as an open ended question with little or no prompting. Admittedly the responses often came from a “what is important” perspective... but these are all things people clearly care about being informed on. Most frequent responses to this question were centered on communication. A need for a **venue*** for all areas in the region to share and receive local

news & events was most frequently expressed. **Transparency** is a big issue... locals want to be informed about: progress on connectivity improvements funded recently by state and federal initiatives; SFNF plans & participation opportunities for local land acquisitions; forest road/trail closures; local government information such as updates on ordinances and meeting minutes; grant funds obtained by local government entities & how funds are being used. **Fire prevention & suppression capability** and notification of smoke dangers were deemed of high importance in addition to timely **emergency/accident/disaster/road conditions/utility outages information**. **Local food** was mentioned frequently in the light of local food sharing & sales opportunities. **Visitor/tourism management** was a frequent mention with waste management/restrooms/traffic safety/campfires all being big concerns. **Water sustainability, health information,** and **affordable housing** were mentioned frequently as well. **Infrastructure funding** to both provide for a growing population and any economic development bringing more people to the area was mentioned. All of the above topics were brought up without prompting at 3 or more community conversations. The following topics were brought up at 1-2 of the conversations: crime prevention, vacation housing regulation, local phone lists, fitness facilities, school news, senior services information, waste management information, flood/drainage control, land management/indigenous stewardship, library services, obituaries, pedestrian safety, social/community services, volunteer opportunities, and wildlife education/sustainability. For additional details about comment locations & wording please visit <https://jsplibrary.org/community-conversations/>

* see question 3 for data about use of existing venues and wrap up for ideas for improvements

After open discussions the survey prepared by the facilitation team was done either via poll, or physical or online survey completion. The results are sorted by the items most frequently chosen as important:

What regional issues/events and info do you want to see in local communication venues?	Areas 1, 2, 3, and Surrounding Areas	Canon, Gilman, Vista Hermosa & surrounding area	La Cueva, Seven Springs, Sierra Los Pinos, Thompson Ridge & surrounding area	Village of Jemez Springs	San Ysidro	Ponderosa	Jemez Pueblo	Total votes	Percent of total participants voting for this
Local Interest [Local events (farmer's market, libraries, arts, music, local businesses)]	9	10	6	15	5	3	1	49	91%
Sustainability [Water (quality/sustainability)]	9	10	4	14	6	3	2	48	89%
Safety [Connectivity - Internet access & phone service]	6	10	8	15	4	3	1	47	87%
Safety [Fire prevention]	10	9	7	12	5	3	0	46	85%
Wellbeing [Health Care]	9	8	7	11	5	3	2	45	83%
Economy [Trail & forest openings/closures]	8	9	7	14	3	3	1	45	83%
Local Interest [Public meeting notifications]	7	10	7	12	5	3	0	44	81%
Sustainability [Pollution/Waste management/recycling]	8	10	4	15	2	2	2	43	80%
Safety [Utility outages]	7	9	8	10	4	3	1	42	78%
Local Interest [Stories by locals (local history, travels, nature, book reviews, fiction, poetry, etc...)]	9	9	4	10	4	3	1	40	74%
Safety [Transportation/road conditions]	7	7	7	11	1	3	1	37	69%
Wellbeing [Senior care]	6	4	6	10	6	3	1	36	67%
Wellbeing [Updates from local non-profits]	9	5	6	11	0	3	0	34	63%
Economy [Dark skies]	10	8	1	9	3	2	1	34	63%
Economy [Economic development initiatives/opportunities]	5	7	4	9	4	2	2	33	61%
Local Interest [Local hobby/interest groups such as quilting, gardening etc...]	5	4	6	10	3	3	0	31	57%
Sustainability [Food security]	3	8	5	9	3	2	1	31	57%
Sustainability [Schools/education]	5	2	3	11	6	2	2	31	57%
Local Interest [Local services/businesses/real estate]	4	2	5	11	4	3	1	30	56%
Local Interest [Local classified ads]	6	2	3	11	5	3	0	30	56%
Economy [Local Employment]	3	4	4	12	4	3	0	30	56%
Local Interest [Obituaries & Birth announcements]	6	5	3	6	4	3	1	28	52%
Sustainability [Energy sustainability]	5	2	3	11	4	2	1	28	52%
Economy [Tourism]	2	7	4	8	4	2	1	28	52%
Wellbeing [Social Justice (definition: everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities)]	7	6	1	7	2	2	2	27	50%
Wellbeing [Access to legal help/social services]	6	1	4	8	1	2	1	23	43%
Economy [Statewide/National Media coverage of Jemez Valley/Mountains]	5	4	3	3	0	2	1	18	33%
Safety [Weather resource]	5	2	4	2	0	3	0	16	30%
Wellbeing [Religious/spiritual services]	3	0	5	5	0	1	0	14	26%
Local Interest [Editorials & letters to editor]	3	2	1	4	1	3	0	14	26%
Other [Games/Puzzles/Comics]	3	1	3	1	0	3	1	12	22%
Other [Recipes]	0	1	3	0	0	1	1	6	11%
Total Respondents	10	10	8	15	6	3	2	54	

Question 2: Do you feel well informed about local/regional topics?

This question received a resounding no from most participants. The answers in the previous question reveal what it would mean to be well informed about local/regional topics.

Question 2: Do you feel well informed	Areas 1,2,3	Canon area	Jemez Pueblo	Jemez Springs	La Cueva	Ponderosa	San Ysidro	Totals
total yes answers	0	3	0	2	1.5	0	0	6.5
total attendees	13	10	3	14	7	3	6	56
								11.61%

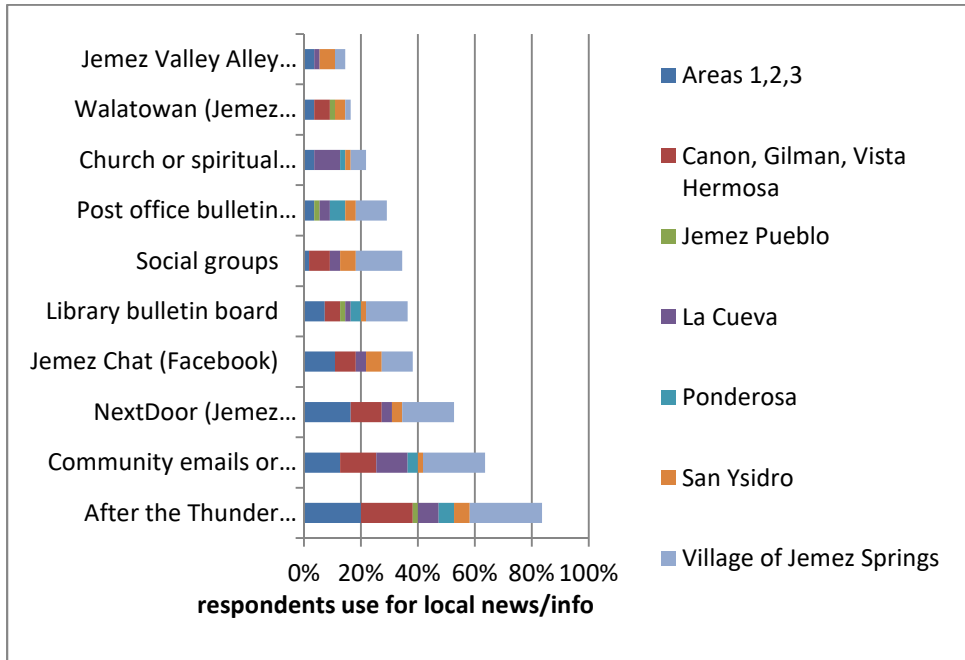
Question 3: How do you get your news...

Do you have internet access in your home? (via online or in-person poll)

The first part of this section was to ask whether participants had internet access within their homes. While the majority did, there was also a consistent comment about the lack of quality and consistency of service available. Unplanned communication outages exist in all areas, with increased outage frequency in areas further away from the highway and hubs. In some areas working from home or schooling via the internet are not viable options due to poor service.

Which Community Conversation are you attending	Areas 1,2,3	Canon, Gilman, Vista Hermosa	Jemez Pueblo	La Cueva	Ponderosa	San Ysidro	Village of Jemez Springs	Totals	% of total
number of attendees responding	13	10	2	7	3	6	14	55	100%
Do you have internet access in your home?	13	8	2	7	3	5	15	53	96%

Which of these local venues do you use to get news/info (via online or in-person poll):



What other ways do you receive local/regional news? (via online poll or in-person discussion)

Word of mouth was the most common additional way to receive local information, being mentioned at four Community Conversations. Unfortunately the lack of gathering opportunities during the pandemic has isolated many people from that usual way of hearing what is going on, which was also expressed. The following were mentioned at two of the conversations: Albuquerque newspaper, Home Owners Association or neighborhood groups, local realtor, neighborhood gatherings, and the recycling center. These were mentioned at one conversation: Amanda’s Jemez Mountain Country Store, CWW Feed Store bulletin board, Facebook I Drive Highway 4, Farmer’s Market, Forest Service emails, Ham radio, Highway 4 Café, Jemezcentral.com (hiking and fishing info), Jemez Springs Public Library website, Jemez Valley Credit Union bulletin board, national newspapers (articles about local region), Ponderosa Community Center bulletin board, radio (NPR sometimes has local announcements), SF National Forest website, Stage Stop bulletin board (when it was open).

Listing of local communications venues

A handout (now available online at <https://jsplibrary.org/community-conversations/>) was provided to conversation participants, with particular mention of a new online community directory being built at www.Jemezsprings.net. The intent is to create a one-stop directory which will lead residents to the local resources we need. This idea was well received at the conversations. The site under development so is missing much of the information at this time. Please take a look and use the “contact us” function to add missing pieces of information so we can build a complete directory. If you are a service provider of any type please take advantage

of this free listing by sending your information. All businesses and non-profits, government entities, firehouses, etc, please check and provide any updates for your business or organization. Thank you! This is a free service to the region.

Wrap up – thoughts & ideas to share

Whether mentioned in the wrap-up or elsewhere in the discussions it was unanimous amongst all the communities that **viable internet and phone service for all** is a communication priority. People want to know what is happening on local, state, and federal levels to solve this.

The second most popular idea, mentioned at six gatherings, was the idea of either a local **radio station** (possibly modeled on Taos' solar or Placitas radio stations) or some air time on a larger station which would host our local news for an hour a day (KOB and NPR were mentioned as occasionally airing local events).

Funding ideas were mentioned in several different ways:

-) More leverage for funding if we address problems regionally.
-) Use funding for highest priorities of area residents
-) County taxes should be put toward helping with area waste management due to high visitor/tourist traffic, especially during pandemic.
-) Suggested funding sources: National Corporation for service to aid in funding for rural areas. Also NCNMEDD.

Local food was brought up in several ways:

-) a cooperative for supplying food services with grant funds was suggested, based on existing successful models in other communities
-) Local mutual aid projects were suggested (from Wikipedia – “Mutual aid participants work together to figure out strategies and resources to meet each other's needs, such as food, housing, medical care, and disaster relief, while organizing themselves against the system that created the shortage in the first place.”)

Other ideas/thoughts shared included:

- Can we develop a communications team that can help gather important information from entities that have important info that needs to be communicated (and how?) and then put it out in as many ways as possible?
- Code Red – all should register for this (<https://www.sandovalcountynm.gov/codered/>)
- Community gathering places are important - La Cueva area missing the restaurant as a place to meet up with neighbors; San Ysidro is working on a community center
- Ham radio is a possible local communication path
- Information phone line manned by a person would be helpful (note - the libraries will help find information which is publically available, which is clearly not everything people want to know)

- Jemez Aging in Place was brought up at several meetings as the group is conducting a survey of those over 50 to ascertain the best direction for efforts in improving access to senior services. The topic of needing a way to connect seniors with people who can provide them with assistance in everything from house cleaning to medical care came up at several conversations.
- Local delivery of Albuquerque Journal is no longer available; select articles can be read for free at elportalnm.org, click on newbank, then select the newspaper and date.
- Periodic region-wide meetings with an opportunity to interact with presenters such as forest service, mayors, sheriff, utility providers, etc, were suggested. (Hybrid meetings were also suggested so that people could attend from home if homebound or during pandemic times.)
- A single place to share information was a need brought several times: information from local businesses and event holders, medical information, senior services, service providers etc (note – the listing of existing local news and communications venues was shared; jemezsprings.net is intended to serve the purpose of a community directory which will also have links to other local websites so will hopefully become a single source for that sort of information for residents)
- Text message service for important information
- Website for posting informal news

As mentioned at the beginning, the library's intent was not to propose solutions, but rather to gather information and give the community an opportunity to widely explore the topic; **understanding often leads to change for the better.**

We hope you use this information to understand and effect change for the better.

Thank you to the facilitation team of Anita Punla, Barbara Stone, and Suzanne Swetnam!
Thanks to Ember (Gabe) Reyes for technical assistance. And thanks again to all the participants; it was an honor to hear your thoughts about regional communications and related issues.

For information about the free facilitation e-course offered by ALA and for additional detail on the information obtained at the community conversations please visit <https://jsplibrary.org/community-conversations/>