

# The Local Buzz

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## Domestic Drug Interdiction Classes Held in Lamar

By Russ Baldwin



Sam Candelaria, Lamar Commander Gary McCrea and Instructor Vicente Alvarado

Forty police officers, men and women from Colorado and Kansas, were in Lamar this past Wednesday through Friday, learning new techniques for the apprehension of drug dealers.

Lamar police commander Gary McCrea said this marks the first in a new series of police seminars that will be held in Lamar for 2010. A series of seminars began last year covering numerous law enforcement topics. The domestic drug interdiction classes are coordinated through the law enforcement training center with the Florida National Guard and St. Petersburg College, which initiated the Lamar classes in 2009.

Sam Candelaria, a former New Mexico police officer who develops courses in a multi-jurisdictional

counter drug task force training center, led the students through three days of instruction at the city's cultural events center. Commander McCrea said officers from Kansas and Colorado, as well as 13 officers from Lamar, three from the Prowers County Sheriff's department and several from Bent and Kiowa counties were on hand. He said additional classes for May and June are being set up. Candelaria said he usually holds these types of classes two times a month around the country, and because they are federally funded, they are offered without charge to the police departments, and will count as academic credit to the officers taking the course.

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## Las Animas Utilities Increasing

By Alex Netherton

Customers of Las Animas Municipal Utilities will see their rates increase just over 7.5% over the next two years. The Las Animas city council approved the rate increase on a split vote following a recommendation from an analyst who said he had carefully studied the utilities financial records and projections. Rate increases over two years will be necessary in order for the Utility company to stay solvent. The analyst, who works for the Nebraska Municipal Power Pool, and provides consulting services to all ARPA member communities, said after conducting a rate study and a cost of service study, two 3.8% increases would need to be implemented over the next two years. The first will occur in March with the second starting December 22nd. The average residential customer will see an increase of \$3.82 per month on their utility bill. If NMPP projections hold true, additional increases are expected in following years. Technological breakthroughs or other unknown factors could result in rates leveling off or decreasing, although officials say that is not likely. One thing that could cause rates to spike upward would be if a national carbon tax was ever implemented. That would result in an increase of as much as 25% in utility bills, authorities indicated.

The Airport Committee is considering three bids for lights to be installed along the runway and a fuel depot constructed at the facility. The cost of improvements to bring the airport into compliance with Federal Aviation Administration regulations is estimated at \$104,000. Councilman Mike Diez reported that grants have been applied for to fund the project. Diez said the committee plans to come up with the required local match for the grant through in-kind contributions.

A resolution establishing parameters and requirements for those households who wish to construct a wind turbine or a set of solar panels to supply their power was approved by council. Utilities Superintendent Darrell Childers said none of his customers has established a structure as of yet, but he wanted to have regulations in place to govern them should they be built. Childers said if any residential power generation system should generate more power than the household needs, his utility company would be willing to buy the power at a certain rate.

Police Chief Don Trujillo said as of the first of the year, city residents can sign up to receive emergency, community oriented emails or cell phone calls. Chief Trujillo said peo-

ple can sign up at no cost by logging onto [www.NIXLE.com](http://www.NIXLE.com). He said those who are interested need only answer a few simple questions and then they will be made aware of any situation that might effect the community such as a water break, a missing person, or a major traffic accident.

Concrete work is underway at the city pool and the finalized plans for the new pool house and accompanying structures are in place. The work will get underway in earnest over the next few weeks and should be completed before summer, according to public Works director Kenny Wagner.

Juanita and Tina Stanley, who want to open a medical marijuana dispensary, appeared before the council, stating their intentions to open a branch of their Pot Pic LCC Cooperation in Las Animas. The Stanleys were told by council that a 90 day moratorium was enacted last month which will be in effect through March. Councilman Diez said the council would be cautious in its decision because the issue is very new. "This is a new issue. We need to see how other communities are handling this issue and what the state is going to do," Diez explained.

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# Community News

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Candelaria led the instruction for the first and a portion of the second days training. Wednesday instruction focused on protocols to be followed to insure officers were following the letter of the law regarding drug arrests, searches, paperwork and case development. Candelaria pointed out potential legal gray areas such as when officers might handle bags which might be used to transport drugs when a search warrant is not available. He gave an example of searching a suitcase in public view, stored with several others in a train

compartment, that might be questioned in court, even when given routine handling by a policeman. He said a portion of the training over the three days would show ways in which the business community and the public can help partner with the local police departments to keep drug activities from the local criminal element at a minimum.

Candelaria added that smaller communities such as those on the eastern plains are ideal operating areas for drug transport and manufacturer because the police departments are smaller, and not able to maintain a force the size of those found

in metro areas. He said the criminals hope to be able to blend into the scenery without calling too much attention to themselves, while using the north/south and east/west secondary highway system to reach larger, metropolitan areas for their transportation routes.

Vicente Alvarado, also with the Albuquerque Police Department, described techniques of K-9 drug interdiction as a portion of his classroom work with regional officers.