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it's more mental than physical."

From Cimarron, the next town was Raton; they walked the 42 miles non-stop, taking a motel room at 10 p.m. Enjoying actual beds – they often sleep on the ground – they stayed over for a day, then walked 37 miles to Folsom. When they met Mayor Vernier across the state line in Branson, they'd just walked 16 miles; it was 11 a.m.

Their high school football coach used his connections to get three athletic stores to each donate two pairs of shoes. The last of those were discarded this week, worn to

## Cross-country walkers stroll through area

tatters, the soles destroyed by walking hundreds of miles on hot black asphalt.

There wasn't time to court and land corporate sponsors, but friends and neighbors helped. Nutley's mayor, Joanne Cocchiola, wrote to the mayor of every town on the route in hopes the men wouldn't walk through unnoticed. Greco and Bonora chose small charities to benefit; they've been asking people to pledge for each mile they walk, using the website Coast to Coast for a Cure at coastto-coastforacure.com, where they also post their route and blog. They're financing the walk themselves, so all contributions go directly to the charities.

The biggest help has come from strangers along the way. There was the state

patrolman in Arizona who drove a one-hour round trip to refill the walkers' water jugs. Motels and families have offered beds for a night. Pummeled by a stinging hailstorm in central New Mexico, Greco and Bonora joined a pair of dogs under the eaves of a shed; the owner saw them and invited them to wait out the storm over fresh coffee.

Walking off the roadway for the first week, Greco recalls, "We had disgusting blisters and our knees were going. We switched shoes but it turned out to be the back-packs, not the shoes." Bonora jettisoned his pack for a high-end jogging stroller at the Kmart in Brawley, Calif. It worked so well that Greco took the next opportunity – the Wal-Mart in Payson, Ariz. – to get his

own. Since then they've pushed their strollers along on the pavement, even on interstate highways. "We thought we'd get in trouble walking on the interstate," Greco says, "but no one's bothered us. The police have been great everywhere."

In Branson, they weighed themselves for the first time. As he expected, Greco had lost 11 pounds, but Bonora seemed embarrassed to have lost only two pounds. "My mom and aunts flew out and rented a car. They followed our route for a week, from Albuquerque to Taos, and they put all my weight back on me!" Not for long.

Greco wakes naturally at dawn every morning. If they're sleeping on the ground or in their cheap pup tent, they hit the road by 6 a.m.; when they're giving up

a bed, they'll leave an hour later. They carry iPods and spend their days listening to music while maintaining a brisk 3? mph walking pace. The strollers carry their gear, including a 2?-gallon flexible water jug that they refill every chance they get.

The men snack as they walk and plan to take a rest stop every 10 miles, though they sometimes skip that. For meals, it's catch as catch can. They try to end each day in a town that has food – which can be a stretch on foot in the West.

In Branson last Friday afternoon, Greco and Bonora rested up in Brad & Jody Doherty's guesthouse, then feasted with a roomful of well-wishers. At 10:30 that night, having covered only 16 miles earlier in the day, they were restless and set out in the dark to knock off a few of the 42 miles to Kim. Brad Doherty went out late to bring them back to Branson

for some sleep, then dropped them the next morning where they'd left off.

As they walked step by step eastward across Las Animas County Saturday morning, they fell back into their rhythm, iPods accompanying the relentless strides as they stepped toward Kim, Wichita, St. Louis, and on home to New Jersey, half of the broad country still ahead of them. For these guys, the walk to Kim is not a long one. Heck, they can do it in a single day. They concocted this challenge in part to forestall their entry into the post-graduate world of work, but it'd be hard to accuse them of being lazy.

As the occasional motorists craned their necks to gawk, Greco and Bonora gradually put Mesa de Maya behind them Saturday; it was too hot for smiling, but they were still a long way away from work.

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## County votes to let voters decide medical marijuana issue

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products and the permitting of medical marijuana dispensing centers subject to licensing procedures as required by the State of Colorado.

"The moratorium will stay in place until the voters decide," Chairman Jim Montoya said. "We have seen a lot of other counties across the state let the voters decide on this hot issue. We need to let the voters decide whether legalization is a good thing or a bad thing for our community. Some might argue that it will generate a tax base. There are a lot of pros and cons. I believe the voters of Las Animas County should decide."

The board, according to documents, will come to a final decision on the referred ballot issue prior to the deadline for submission of referred ballot measures, according to Colorado Election Codes.

"We have not made a formal decision yet," Commissioner Gary Hill said. "This is an issue the voters need to decide. I do not know how the people of Las Animas County are going to vote but I do believe it is their choice. If they vote yes on this issue, I hope they will then agree to tax it to benefit the county."

The federal government has left the legalization up to Colorado State Legislators, and cities and

counties all over the state have been left with an Amendment that has a lot of holes and is left open for arguments on both sides.

Amendment 20 was passed by Colorado voters to legalize the use of medical marijuana. During the last legislative session, lawmakers battled and put forth several amendments to bills trying to interpret Amendment 20.

County Administrator Bill Cordova added, "This is a requirement in the elections calendar that all elected bodies that are contemplating any ballot issue has to give official notice to the county clerk and recorder's office, and that is what this board did. The deadline

to propose a ballot question is at the end of next month."

The county, which is currently under a moratorium in the licensing and permitting process, has yet to approve or give any permits or licenses for growing, selling, or dispensing of medical marijuana in Las Animas County.

The Colorado State Law adds, "If you were not lawfully operating a business pursuant to the Code as of July 1, 2010, then you cannot operate such a business until you receive both a local license and a state license. No State licenses will be issued before July 1, 2011."

## Trinidad utility customers won't see electric rate hike until 2011

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agreements. "If we don't invoke this ECA, I believe we are in violation of our agreement in our energy purchases from ARPA. In our agreement with ARPA it says we will collect enough (from utility bills) to cover all of our expenses," Brunelli said.

City Attorney Jerod Beatty concurred with Brunelli that legally, the city was obligated under its long-standing ARPA ECA ordinance provision to pay for any electrical power supply rate increases. He said the city is also legally bound to vote next year on the ARPA agreement's fuel adjustment

But as Mayor Pro Tem Liz Aragon asked, "Are we forced to make the customers pay the higher rates in addition to the \$631,000 we loaned ARPA to pay for our future energy costs?"

Brunelli again explained that it was a matter of the city having sufficient funds to cover its energy supply expenses regardless of how those funds are collected as outlined in its ARPA agreement.

So, by taking the money out of its reserve funds and waiting until at least next January to formally approve the ECA and before deciding whether to pass the

increased electric power costs down to Trinidad utility customers, council will at least have the opportunity to see if the Trinidad area economy and local retail sales tax collections start to show significant improvements. By then, council will also have a clearer picture of whether ARPA itself will be able to survive its current serious fiscal budget shortfalls without going into bankruptcy.

Councilman John Rino said he agreed with Aragon that the \$127,000 should be taken out of the city's reserve funds rather than pass higher costs down to economically challenged residents. "Then in January we can come back and look at it and see if our economy has picked up." Rino then moved to table taking any action on the ECA resolution until then. "I don't think our residents can stand another increase at this particular time."

In that respect, city clerk Audra Fatur reported Tuesday that city retail sales tax revenues were down only 5.5 percent from May 2009, the second straight month of only single digit decreases. The May figures translated to a revenue loss of \$10,580 from a year ago and a year-to-

date decrease of 8.4 percent or \$169,120.

However, Las Animas County unemployment figures released Tuesday by the state Department of Labor showed the county's rate rising from 7.9 percent in May to 8.9 percent in June, following a statewide summer employment trend.

Council members decided they had delayed long enough on whether to approve an extraterritorial water tap request by Fred Baros so he could build a water transfer station near Weston to better supply his customers who live mostly in the canyon areas west of there. Baros had been buying the water from the city-owned Valdez station and transferring it by truck to his Water Works Plus customers. The Weston station will allow most of those customers to get their water directly from the new site.

After council's unanimous tap approval, Baros said he will begin construction work right away on the station, thus culminating a three-year planning process.

City Utilities Superintendent Jim Fernandez cautioned council before they approved Baros' tap application that New Elk

Mine executives had just approached him this week to discuss their proposed coal mining operation's future water needs. Fernandez said they were talking in the neighborhood of needing 650,000 gallons of city water a day although they weren't specific in explaining how and what they were going to need that much water for.

Fernandez said that 650,000 gallons a day would take up 41 percent of the total flow through the city's current pipeline that serves the western part of the county. "This request could have a very serious impact on our water transmission line," he said. "We would need a minimum 6-inch diameter pipeline. Otherwise, we may not have the capacity to serve both water taps."

Councilman Al Pando noted that in the case of Baros' new tap, he would merely be transferring city water he was already purchasing from the Valdez station to his new location. He explained that council shouldn't wait on granting Baros his request based on a future applicant's possible needs when he has already met all the city's tap fee regulations and requirements.

Baros said he is seeking only 10,000 gallons of city water a month and expects to deliver an average of only 30,000 gallons every quarter.

Council also agreed to grant the state parks department a water tap for a Trinidad Lake campgrounds area where usage will likely be less than 1,000 gallons during summer months and none during a shut-down winter.

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**Split The Vote**  
As I am told, political analysts at the local coffee club gatherings are forecasting that three Democratic candidates will "split the vote."  
If this was a race for homecoming queen or president of the 8th grade class I suppose that could be true.  
Voters are more discerning than some people think. I believe they know the gravity of the issues facing our county government and, based on merit and reputation, they will objectively choose the candidate best equipped to lead the county into the future.  
I have unquestioned faith that voters are smart enough not to be swayed by political rhetoric or a flood of yard signs. Instead, I think voters will base their choice on the credentials, abilities, and track records of the candidates.  
*Anthony Mattie*  
**Be a smart voter and choose ANTHONY MATTIE ~ the best choice for County Commissioner for District #3**  
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