



UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

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Calendar

- August 12 Sen. Daniel Ivey-Soto talks about the logistics for voting in the general election,
Zoom, 6:30 p.m.
August 18 Lunch with a Leader, Public Banks, Zoom, 11:45 a.m.
August 25 Board Meeting, Zoom, noon
August 26 Women's Equality Day

Lunch with a Leader: A Public Bank for New Mexico?

There will be three speakers for the program on public banks on August 18.

Angela Merkert, Executive Director of the Alliance for Local Economic Prosperity (AFLEP), is a former professor of education who has held executive director roles in several nonprofit organizations. She says, "Throughout my career, my passion has focused on enacting change that strengthens our democracy through social and economic justice; affirming dignity and respect for every person; and increasing access to and engagement with quality education for children, especially early childhood programs."

Melissa Pickett, the AFLEP Outreach Coordinator, is a former banker, organizational development consultant, health and wellness advocate. As a native New Mexican, she has a long view of the challenges we face and sees the potential for our state.

Elaine Sullivan, Chair, AFLEP Board of Directors, whose career was in organizational consulting, came to public banking as a volunteer advocate for social and economic justice.

A public bank for New Mexico would support infrastructure, agricultural, social and economic initiatives. Taxes and fees, if deposited in a public bank, could be invested by professional bankers to support local priorities. Learn more by visiting the website for the Alliance for Local Economic Prosperity at www.aflep.org.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

Co-President's Message: Voting During the Pandemic

We all feel some trepidation about the coming election. Do we dare go to the polls? Can we entrust our ballot to the post office? Will our votes be counted? It is ironic that while celebrating the centennial of women's suffrage in America, we must struggle to ensure that all voters who wish to participate in the presidential election will be able to do so safely and without concern that their votes will be counted.

The League is continuing to follow the preparations for the election. We recently spoke with County Clerk Naomi Maestas about the significance of the Temporary Elections Act (SB 4) that was passed during the special session. She said that as of the middle of July only about half of the county clerks were planning to send absentee ballot applications to the voters in their jurisdictions. (She is making plans for the mailing.) Maestas was not certain when voters would be able to request an absentee ballot online. Maggie Toulouse Oliver later said she hoped to make the request available the first week in August. Absentee ballots will be mailed out to those who have requested them starting October 6. For now, Maestas advises all voters to go online to check that their registration information is correct.

On August 12 from 6:30-7:30 p.m. Senator Daniel Ivey-Soto, who is Executive Director for the County Clerks, the champion of New Mexico election law and the sponsor of SB 4, will speak with the League about the bill and his expectations for the election. Look out for the link in a Constant Contact message soon.

Barbara Calef

Observer Corps Reports

(All of the meetings are now being conducted virtually.)

County Council

June 30

Representative Christine Chandler provided an overview of the 2020 legislative special session for the County Council. Chandler felt the session went well, given the short period of time legislators had to complete their work. The highlights of the special session included the passage of an amended budget; an economic relief package; tax relief; the creation of a civil rights commission; body camera requirements for law enforcement; and passage of an elections bill. Chandler was disappointed in the elections bill but indicated that some provisions will help county clerks. The legislature also allocated money from the CARES Act, which was vetoed by the Governor because she believes it is within her authority to allocate those funds. Chandler anticipates a difficult budget session when the legislature reconvenes in 2021.

After the presentation, the Council passed the consent agenda and individual councilors reported on the activities of the boards and commissions they are assigned to as liaisons. Most boards and commissions have been unable to meet because of the pandemic, but work is resuming using Zoom. Councilor Martin reported that Parks and Recreation projects including the BMX course, trails, and tennis courts updates are progressing.

County Manager Harry Burgess provided updates on COVID-19 and County business. Because the Governor has paused the second phase of reopening, Burgess also paused the county's plan to reopen more facilities and services. The

County Fair and Rodeo was cancelled. To date Los Alamos County has 8 COVID cases. The county has worked with Family Strengths Network to extend their services on a month-by-month basis pending the finalization of the Gap Analysis. More contaminated material (enriched uranium) was found on DP Road. The area where this material was discovered was sampled in the past but not cleaned, unlike the adjacent area, because the historic records did not indicate it was used for waste storage. The excavation should be completed by July 6, at which time the installation of the new lift station and sewer infrastructure needed for the Bluff and Canyon Walk complexes can begin.

Chair Sara Scott provided an update about the activities in which she participates as chair, including: discussing options for the upcoming school year with the school board; participation in the North Central New Mexico Economic Development District; meetings with LANL and the New Mexico Department of Health regarding COVID testing; participation in the Mayor's Council; and the formation of a new Council subcommittee focused on policy changes on behalf of residents who may fear injustice, violence, and the unconscious bias against people of color.

Rebecca Chaiken

July 7

Downtown Development Plan

The County was presented with a development plan for both the White Rock Business District and the Los Alamos Townsite area from 4th Street to Oppenheimer Dr. The focus of the plan is development in Los Alamos rather than White Rock. The design incorporates mixed use, business, condos, and single-family homes using available land, both brown and green space, along with the expectation that the Council will

be able to develop a policy to deal with the non-utilized spaces in the area. A download of the presentation is available at <https://losalamos.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4585544&GUID=0FC959BB-F400-4261-861C-02B1E187E44C&Options=&Search=>.

The Council's discussion included such concerns as:

1. the need for rent control;
2. encouraging building owners to make affordable space for retail rather than LANL/LANL-contract offices;
3. understanding that "affordable" means something quite different for employees who do not work for LANL;
4. including broadband in the new development;
5. deciding whether single-family homes or condos will satisfy the market demand;
6. redeveloping and redesigning old buildings to be more "green";
7. "boutique and incentive" zoning for different areas (no parking, walking only, narrow streets); and
8. ensuring public input in the planning.

The Council agrees this redevelopment is the opportunity to build a sustainable small-business plan with "incentive zoning" to include affordable properties, green space, and utilities redevelopment. The final plan is expected to be completed by December. Obtaining public input in the time of COVID-19 is an issue. The County will advertise online and in all the media.

The LWVLA has a position on ensuring green development, and will be commenting on the necessity to create an enforceable building code that mandates the highest level of energy-efficiency as well as green space and a walkable

community. Read the positions at <https://my.lwv.org/new-mexico/los-alamos/positions>.

Plastics Proclamation

The second action item on the agenda was to approve the Plastics Reduction Proclamation. The Council was responding to petitions presented by the LAHS EcoClub and Ann LePage to limit the distribution of single-use plastics (bags, straws, Styrofoam containers, etc.) in Los Alamos. However, the proclamation as presented did not give any mandate or even incentive for businesses to change their practices, although it mentioned that the County supports businesses that choose to use compostable products. The focus of the proclamation was county-wide composting! After a contentious debate, the Council decided to postpone a decision.

The LWVLA has been advocating elimination of the single-use plastic shopping bags for five years, and collaborated with the LAHS EcoClub on their plastics reduction efforts.

Jody Benson

July 14

During the July 14 meeting the County Council's main task was to choose a replacement for Kathy Taylor on the Board of Public Utilities (BPU). Taylor is a much missed and recently deceased member of the LWVLA Board. There were five well-qualified candidates: Robert Gibson, Galen Gisler, Jeff Johnson, Susan Lime, and Cornell Wright. After introductory statements by the candidates and questioning by the Council, on the second round of voting they chose Cornell Wright.

County Manager Harry Burgess reported that NNSA provided personnel to complete the

excavation along DP Road after hazardous material was found. As of Monday, July 13, the site was turned over to the county's contractors, and the hole is ready for infrastructure for the two housing complexes being built on both sides of DP Road.

Lynn Jones

July 28

Aaron Walker, Chair of the Community Development Advisory Board (CDAB), presented the accomplishments and challenges of the board for the past year. They included filling Board positions, an inability to convene due to the lack of a quorum, COVID-19 issues, and high staff turnover at the Community Development Department (CDD). Nevertheless, the CDAB was able to accomplish an updated work plan for fiscal year 2021; they commented on the draft request for proposals to update Chapter 18 of the county code and discussed outreach and communication efforts. CDD Director Paul Andrus confirmed that the number of violation notices for weeds, trash and debris has come down by half when compared to the previous year.

As a separate agenda item, Council approved the scope to be included in a request for proposal for the update of Chapter 18 of the county code. Chapter 18 focuses on nuisances and the minimum conditions and responsibilities regarding maintenance of structures (residential and nonresidential) including the premises and exterior of the property. The scope requests the consultant to conduct community outreach, develop an evaluation of Chapter 18, and draft an update to the chapter based upon input from the community, the CDAB, and the Council. Council further added that the successful consultant should coordinate CDAB and CDD staff input and review neighborhood differences.

Included in the consent agenda and discussed by Harry Burgess during his update is an application currently being prepared by county staff to compete for funding through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, administered through the state. The application will focus on grants for small businesses, childcare, and housing and rental assistance in the Los Alamos community.

Council expressed frustration with a letter received from the Dept. of Energy and Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) which indicated that a recent land request by the county was denied. Councilors pointed out that they were urged by LANL to request the transfer for economic development and also to increase housing which would assist LANL in recruiting employees.

Joint BPU and Council Meeting (July 28, 2020)

A joint Board of Public Utilities (BPU) and Council meeting immediately followed the Council meeting. DPU staff, representatives from the Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems (UAMPS), Fluor, and NuScale Power answered questions from the BPU members and councilors on the Carbon Free Power Project. This is the project to construct a 720-megawatt nuclear electric generating plant at Idaho National Laboratory using small modular reactor technology, of which Los Alamos County would subscribe to 11.186 megawatts. After subtracting the cost shares from the Department of Energy and NuScale, the estimated total cost of the project to UAMPS is estimated at \$4.8 billion.

A decision by the BPU on August 19 and by the Council on August 25 will determine if the county continues on to the next phase or exits the project. The County may exit the project unilaterally at a designated off-ramp, but must

pay the funds committed within 12 months. As of today, the County's and LANL's costs total \$258,000. If the county continues on to the next phase, it will require a commitment from Los Alamos of \$1,046,849 for the preparation of the combined license application (COLA). The next off-ramp, in 2023, is to finalize and submit the COLA to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and would require a commitment from Los Alamos estimated at \$10 million. The last off-ramp prior to construction would be in 2025. The facility is anticipated to be operational by 2030. If the project is completed, Los Alamos would meet its financial obligations through an estimated \$55/megawatt hour for 40 years. After 40 years the cost of power from the facility would be reduced.

The DPU has set up a webpage <https://ladpu.com/CFPP> with information on the project, videos from a July 21st town hall, July 28th Joint BPU/Council meeting, and an August 3rd community town hall. Los Alamos citizens are also encouraged to provide public comment to the BPU and Council.

Julie Williams-Hill

Board of Public Utilities

At the July 15 Board of Public Utilities (BPU) meeting two new members were welcomed: Cornell Wright and Eric Stromberg. An election to fulfill the duties of chair and vice chair for the remainder of the 2020 calendar year was held. Carrie Walker is the new Chair and Steve McLin is the new Vice Chair. Los Alamos Department of Public Utilities staff gave a presentation to BPU members on the condition and status of the electric production division.

Staff reported that while Los Alamos County is exiting the San Juan Generating Station in 2022, the City of Farmington is continuing to work

with Enchant Energy to keep the plant operating post-2022 using carbon-capture technology. Los Alamos is seeking a clean break from San Juan Generating Station liability and obligations. Los Alamos County's second coal-fired energy resource, the Laramie River Station, is slated to be closed and decommissioned by 2040-2042.

Plans by the Bureau of Reclamation to repair the El Vado Dam will impact power generation from the El Vado hydroelectric facility. Staff will take advantage of this down time to raise the penstock (the gate that regulates the flow of water to the turbines) to above sediment levels. Also, an inverter failed at the one-megawatt solar array on the Los Alamos landfill, taking 400 kilowatts offline. Staff is working to replace this inverter.

Investigations by staff to decommission the sodium sulfur and lead acid batteries are underway. Lastly, a citizen committee presented to the BPU conservation initiatives to be incorporated into the DPU's energy and water conservation plan, which is scheduled to be updated later this year. BPU members elected to determine which of the recommendations they would direct DPU staff to include in the energy and water conservation plan at a strategic planning meeting scheduled for September.

Julie Williams-Hill

July Lunch with a Leader: State Historian Robert Martinez

Rob Martinez introduced himself as a native New Mexican with deep Spanish and Native American roots. He has an M.A. in history from UNM and learned paleography as a research assistant. He has taught history at Rio Rancho High School, worked as a research historian, and also performs New Mexico folk music.



State Historian Rob Martinez at the July LWL.

His presentation, *Nuestras Madrecitas*, or Our Mothers, was an illustrated list of his favorite women in history. It began with Michelangelo's depiction of Eve on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and concluded with a photograph of Governor Lujan Grisham, who was born in Los Alamos. The list contained a mixture of mythical and historical figures. They included Queen Isabella of Castile, who unified Spain in 1469 and established the Inquisition in 1479. In 1492 she was presented with the *Gramática de la lengua castellana*, which she valued as a tool for teaching the language to conquered people (anticipating the voyages of Columbus?).

Another woman Martinez admires is Our Lady of Guadalupe, who appeared and spoke in Nahuatl, the Aztec language, to Juan Diego in 1531. The apparition provided a unifying symbol for Mexicans and legitimized the Mestizos, who had been disparaged by the Spanish. Martinez also mentioned Concha Ortiz y Pino, who was elected to the NM House of Representatives at the age of 26 and became the first female majority whip in New Mexico in 1941.

In response to a request, Martinez sang one of the many stanzas of the *Corrido de la Votacion* (The Ballad of the Vote), a history of women's suffrage in New Mexico.

Barbara Calef

Message from the Kansas City League

Last month we received a request from the Kansas City LWV asking how we conduct our virtual candidate forums. JoAnn Lysne, who is our tech guru, makes sure our forums run smoothly with no interruptions. She and Barbara Calef both sent responses. We just received the following email from Anitra Steele, the LWVKC vice president.

Thank you for the help planning our forums. We ended up with 4 forums for 6 districts and an audience of over 800 to date which for us for July primaries is huge. We were able to go into districts that we usually don't for lack of contacts and have ended up encouraged by the quality of candidates putting themselves out there. Your assistance and encouragement helped make that happen.

Sincerely, Anitra

LWVLA Board of Directors 2020-2021

Officers:

- Co-president: Barbara Calef
- Co-president: Rebecca Shankland
- 1st Vice-President: *Unfilled*
- 2nd Vice-President: Ellen Mills
- Secretary: Rebecca Chaiken
- Treasurer: Rosmarie Frederickson

Directors:

- Reservations: Amy Birnbaum
- Lunch with a Leader: Karyl Ann Armbruster
- Voter Services: Lynn Jones
- BPU Observer: Julie Williams-Hill
- Publicity: Jody Benson and Leslie Wallstrom
- Director at Large: Akkana Peck
- Fundraising: Rosmarie Frederickson

Women's Equality Day, August 26, 2020

The 19th Amendment, having been ratified by 36 states, went into effect on August 26, 1920.

“THE RIGHT OF CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES TO VOTE SHALL NOT BE DENIED OR ABRIDGED BY THE UNITED STATES OR BY ANY STATE ON ACCOUNT OF SEX.”

The Summer *La Palabra* will be out soon with a list of centennial celebrations planned for Santa Fe and Albuquerque.

Be sure to watch PBS's American Experience: The Vote (a two-part documentary that aired nationally in July), <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/vote/>

Off-board Directors:

- Arrangements: Wendy Swanson
- Membership: Rebecca Shankland
- Webmaster: Julie Williams-Hill
- Special Projects: Addie Jacobson
- Newsletter Editor: JoAnn Lysne
- County Council Observers: LWVLA Board
- Nominations: Ellen Mills, Leslie Wallstrom, and JoAnn Lysne

If you would like to join the League, fill out and submit the membership form on page 8.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LOS ALAMOS

MEMBERSHIP FORM



Mail to: LWV Los Alamos
P.O. Box 158
Los Alamos, NM 87544

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Phone(s): _____ E-mail _____

____ Check here to receive our local newsletter Update as an electronic file, saving us postage.

____ OR Check here if you prefer the newsletter mailed in hard copy.

____ Check here to receive occasional friendly reminders of upcoming events by e-mail.

Membership Categories: all checks for memberships and contributions should be payable to LWV-Los Alamos and all are now tax-deductible. Let us know if you'd like a tax-deductible statement.

____ Single membership: \$45

____ Household membership (two+ people at the same address): \$70

____ Single Sustaining membership: \$75

____ Household Sustaining membership (two+ people at the same address): \$95

____ Student membership: \$0 (must be 16 or over)

____ Contribution to support League work: \$_____

Interests and Ways to Help the League (check as many as apply)

Topics of Interest

- ____ Affordable Housing
- ____ Local Government
- ____ Education
- ____ Elections, Voting Rights
- ____ Water Issues
- ____ Land Use
- ____ Health Care
- ____ Money in Politics
- ____ Sustainability
- ____ Living Wage
- ____ Public Transportation
- ____ Environment
- ____ Other topics (please suggest):

Ways to Help with League Activities

- ____ Set up Refreshments at Forums
- ____ Observer Corps (County Council, BPU, etc.)
- ____ Nominating Committee
- ____ Voter Guides Committee
- ____ Voter Registration
- ____ Publicity
- ____ Website, Social Media
- ____ Newsletter
- ____ Membership
- ____ Fund-raising
- ____ Budget Committee for LWV
- ____ Lunch with a Leader (assistance)
- ____ Fund-raising Committee for LWV
- ____ Participate in board meetings or join board

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy

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