



UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

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www.lwvlosalamos.org

Volume 74, Number 8
December 2021

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Calendar

- December 6 Start of the Special Legislative Session on redistricting
- December 9 Board Meeting, Zoom, noon
- December 16 Lunch with a Leader, Elizabeth Allen, Zoom, noon
- January 6 LWVLA Legislative Preview with our legislators, Zoom, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- January 13 LWVNM Virtual Legislative Preview with the LWVNM Action Committee,
Zoom, 5:30-p.m.
- January 18 2022 Regular Legislative Session Opening Day, noon

Lunch with a Leader: L.A. Municipal Judge Elizabeth Allen

Our next Lunch with a Leader will be held via Zoom on Thursday, December 16 from noon to 1 p.m. Los Alamos Municipal Judge Elizabeth Kelly Allen will be our speaker. She was born in Utah, the 10th child in her family.

Judge Allen met her husband Matthew while finishing her law degree at Pepperdine School of Law in Malibu, California. After graduation they moved to Idaho where she opened her own law firm, E.K. Allen Law. Allen has worked as a criminal prosecutor and defense attorney, handled special education law, real estate, estate

planning, business formation, child protection, and post-conviction appeals.

When her husband's job as a golf course superintendent brought them and their two children to Los Alamos County seven years ago, Allen felt that she was finally coming home. They soon added a third child to their family. Allen teaches business law at UNM-LA and runs Pueblo Canyon Inn with Matthew. She is currently serving as the board chair for PEEC and she is a member of JJAB. In the past, she has volunteered with Family Strengths Network, the Los Alamos Strategic Tourism Task Force and the Lodgers' Tax Board, and she played the string bass in the Los Alamos Symphony Orchestra. With the onset of COVID, Judge Allen has made major changes to the organization and

functioning of the Court. She will be discussing that and other improvements she has instituted since she was elected in 2018 as well as future enhancements to the Court.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

Co-president's Message: Celebrate Sustainably

Our friends at Zero Waste have made us rethink many aspects of our consumer lives. That's made me rethink my own holiday activities. How can we celebrate while escaping the claws of the big box stores, the shipping and packaging needs of Amazon, or the grist mill of Chinese factories? Here are some possibilities:

- Cook food for neighbors, friends, and family. Find a traditional family recipe to share. In our family it's my mother's spice cookies and my son-in-law's cheese fondue for a solstice party.
- Create hand-made goods—what can you make from your sewing scraps or extra yarn? Doll clothes, neckerchiefs, vests, or quilted placemats require a minimum of material.
- Make a booklet for a child to draw pictures of the holiday fun, feasts, and family. Make as many blank pages as the child is years of age—the two-year-old can scribble and you can write down what he or she says about it, with the chance for a sweet conversation as an added reward.
- Give a nature treasure hunt. Make a list of things to seek: a pine cone, a dead flower (extra points for a live one), a piece of trash that you can dispose of, a red leaf, the sound of a bird, and of course some animal poop.
- Local fun: once our kids led us on an Atlas Obscura hunt. They gave us the GPS coordinates and we found a sculpture gallery, a petroglyph park, and a series of limericks written on stepping stones. Or think of your favorite little hiding spot for a picnic.
- Support our local economy without spending time and money on a long drive. Despite losing some of our favorite retail stores, we still have small shops (did you know that there's a toy store in White Rock?). My favorite "shops" are those of the farmers market folks, who create exquisite wreaths and grow their own produce for northern New Mexicans.
- Check out our museum shops: PEEC for kids' games, nature-themed toys, and jewelry; the Historical Museum for books and shirts; and the Bradbury Science Museum for scientific kits, toys, and books.
- Find treasures at the ski swap, Earth Treasure Show, and our arts and crafts shows. Our thrift shops are the ultimate in recycling of everything from basic kitchen ware to elegant jackets. Our library book shop has fascinating books from Audubon to Zoology.
- Give a coupon entitling the bearer to a delicious meal at a local restaurant: remember that it can be a take-out meal as well as a sit-down event.

A final thought comes from my mother. She told us of the old days when she was a child on a farm in Ohio in the early 1900s: they hung their Christmas stockings and the reward in the toe was a single orange—the only one they would have all year. Are we any happier with our overabundance of Stuff? And is our Stuff good for us, our environment, or our society?

Becky Shankland

Welcome, New Members!

We're delighted to have **Bettie Bedell, Melissa Boswell, Galen and Susan Gisler, Andrea Determan, Don Morris, and Madhavi Garimella** as new members. We'll hope to get short write-ups from them later on, and perhaps Galen, Susan, Andrea, and Madhavi will expand on my brief comments.

Madhavi Garimella is a physician at Medical Associates of Northern New Mexico whose daughter was one of our high school helpers at our candidate forums. Madhavi's interests are affordable housing, education, health care, and the environment plus a willingness to help the League on voter registration and our website and social media.

Galen and Susan Gisler: Their interests are money in politics, sustainability, the environment, public transportation, living wage. Galen is a well-known astronomer who gives lots of great talks for PEEC. Susan is a nurse.

Andrea Determan: Andrea is a long-time teacher in the Los Alamos Public Schools, now retired, a Friend of the League who is now a full-fledged member.

Mickey (Allison) Wright writes:

My nickname is Mickey, which I much prefer. First through high school in Los Alamos. Taught English, some German, and ESL for thirty-seven years in Anaheim, CA. Returned to the Jemez after retiring in 2000. My sister and I raise alpacas on Thompson Ridge. Aspen Ridge Alpacas.

My interests are:

Politics: I'm concerned about the state of our democracy. I'm guided politically by my underlying concern for those who are less

fortunate. Since I taught ESL for so many years, the situation at the border and with immigrants is a top priority. I have many "top" priorities, though. To state a few...

- Education, particularly public education.
- Climate change
- Voting Rights

My friend in Albuquerque belongs to The League of Women Voters.

I admire the work of Dede Feldman, former NM Senator.

Jessie Emerson writes:

I am a retired nurse who has worked for 56 years; my last position was teaching at Northern New Mexico College, a Certified Nurses Aide class. I recently moved to Los Alamos from Alcalde. I started a seed library at the Embudo Valley Community Library in Dixon, NM. I am a certified clinical herbalist and environmental activist, member of Sierra Club.

[NB: She has joined the Zero Waste group and was recently appointed to the Environmental Sustainability Board.]



New member Jessie Emerson. Courtesy photo.



The Glass family. Courtesy photo.

Nicholas and Kiyana (Allen) Glass:

Kiyana grew up in Los Alamos (Bandelier, to be exact) and attended Los Alamos Public Schools K-12. Nick grew up between Philadelphia, London, and Shanghai. They met at American University in Washington, DC, where they both earned their BAs in international relations. Nick also holds an MBA and Kiyana an MPA from the University of Washington. Nick works at SAP America as a software consultant and Kiyana serves as the grants director for chapters of the national Sierra Club. They moved back to Los Alamos in the summer of 2020 and feel lucky to be able to work remotely while raising their two young children in Kiyana's hometown.

Compiled by Becky Shankland

Redistricting Update

The Citizen Redistricting Committee (CRC) has submitted to the NM Legislature three concept maps for each office being redistricted: Congress, NM Senate, NM House, and Public Education Commission. The Special Legislative Session on Redistricting will begin on December 6. According to Fair Districts New Mexico

(FDNM), "The district maps are treated like any other piece of legislation. The Congressional, NM Senate, NM House and the Public Education Commission (PEC) maps are heard in committees and then go to the floor of each chamber. They all have to pass both chambers and be signed by the Governor."

FDNM anticipates that "the NM House and PEC maps will start in the House and will go to the State Government, Elections and Indian Affairs Committee and the Judiciary Committee, in that order. The NM Senate maps will go to Senate Rules Committee and the Judiciary Committee, in that order. You will see that they go to the Senate Committee on Committees first, but that is just procedural." The Legislature may amend the maps submitted by the CRC or create new maps, but if they do, they should provide a detailed explanation of why they did so.

For further information about the redistricting process, go to <https://fairdistrictsnm.org/>

Barbara Calef

Observer Corps Reports

County Council

October 29, 2021

The Los Alamos County Council held a special session in response to the October 18, 2021, "Declaration of Unsafe Conditions and Notice of Fire Code Violations" issued to the owners of the Hilltop House by Los Alamos Fire Marshal Wendy Servey. The owners include New Mexico Innovation Triangle and its agents, as well as Enterprise Bank and Trust. This hotel structure has been vacant for an extended period of time and was inspected on September 29, 2021, pursuant to an order by the First District Court of New Mexico. Fire Marshal Servey found that the

property violates numerous sections of the International Fire Code.

The report raised many concerns about the unsafe condition of the building. Among these are the degraded windows and doors, allowing access by curious or misguided people. It has an enormous amount of combustible material—but lacks working fire alerts or fire suppression. A large shaft running from ground to roof makes a natural chimney for a fire. The walls and floors are a patchwork of holes, creating almost a “Swiss Cheese effect” throughout the structure.

A fire in this hotel would rapidly engulf the entire structure, resulting in a catastrophic event with possible destruction of adjacent buildings, a wildland fire event, respiratory damage to people nearby, or even the death of anyone inside. Firefighters would not enter this structure during a fire even to save a human life because of the threat posed to the life of the firefighters by the high potential for structural collapse.

Based upon the Fire Marshal's inspection, the owners of Hilltop House were ordered to immediately erect and maintain a secure fence around the perimeter of the property and to board up all first-floor doors. They were given until March 30, 2022, to either make all necessary repairs or to complete a total demolition of the structure.

The County Council voted unanimously to adopt “A Resolution Declaring the Hotel Structure, Commonly Referred to as 'The Hilltop House' ... a Menace to the Public Comfort, Health, Peace, and Safety, and Ordering Removal of the Hilltop House and Associated Ruins, Rubbish, Wreckage, and Debris from Los Alamos County.” The owners were given ten days to appeal or commence removal of the building. Otherwise, the County Council would have the building

demolished and removed from the site and a lien placed on the property.

An attorney representing the owners told the County Council that they intend to address the matter as quickly as possible. Their subsequent appeal of the decision by the County Council stays enforcement of the resolution, and they have wrapped caution tape around the perimeter of the property. The erection of the required perimeter fence is expected soon. The County Council has scheduled the appeal hearing for December 3, 2021, at 1:00 p.m. If the property owners are not satisfied with the County Council's decision on that date, they can file an objection with the District Court.

Rebecca Chaiken

(Further information based the on the December 4 report in the *Los Alamos Reporter*) Following a long hearing and a closed session for deliberation, Los Alamos County Councilors voted 6-0 Friday, December 4 to uphold their “Clean and Lien” Resolution that requires the demolition and removal of the Hilltop House property by Mar. 30, 2022. Councilor Sara Scott was not present.

Councilor Sean Williams noted, “There are in fact two orders that are going on more or less simultaneously. There’s the Fire Marshal’s Order and there’s the Clean and Lien Resolution and this hearing is only about the Clean and Lien Resolution and the only thing specified really, within this, is the demolition of the Hilltop House by Mar. 20, 2022, so relief on the matter of the fence or the security guard or the removal of combustible material is not germane to the resolution. That’s outside the scope of what’s even being discussed here,” he said.

Fire Marshal Servey’s order, issued on October 18, requires NMIT to immediately erect and

maintain a secure perimeter fence around all structures on the property that is at least eight feet in height and placed not less than 10 feet away from any existing structures there. She ordered all doors including frames must be boarded up for at least the first floor or the owner must have security guard present 24 hours a day until she determines that the property no longer presents a clear and inimical threat to human life and safety. The order requires NMIT to bring the underground storage tanks on the property into compliance with all applicable laws, rules and regulations. To date, the owners have not provided any permits for the work needed.

November 9, 2021

Los Alamos County Councilors met virtually on November 9 at 6 p.m. The Council approved an ordinance which authorizes the Utilities Manager to request the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) to increase the Department of Public Utilities loan from \$17 million up to a maximum of \$30 million for the construction of the water resource recovery facility (WRRF). This facility is proposed to replace the aging White Rock wastewater treatment plant. The new loan will come back to Council for approval as well as the request to award a construction contract.

Councilors also approved the transfer of two parcels of land along Trinity Drive, or New

Mexico 502, to the New Mexico Department of Transportation. NMDOT will undertake to improve road conditions, including the addition of a bus bay for transit bus service extending beyond the NM 502 right-of-way into the two parcels.

Lastly, an inspection of the county jails found that the facilities were clean and orderly, and that prisoners were well cared for. No violations were observed. Council approved forwarding the findings to the District Court.

Julie Williams-Hill

November 16, 2021

New Board Members: Jessie Emerson, a new LWVLA member, was unanimously appointed as the new member of the Environmental Sustainability Board. She will also liaise with the Zero Waste Team. In addition, David Hanson and Anna Solomon were appointed to fill two vacant positions on the Community Development Advisory Board.

Leisure Lagoon Art: The Council discussed whether to approve of the Art in Public Places Board choice for the new public art for the Leisure Lagoon. In December 2019, Art in Public Places Board Chair Theophan Mackey suggested Las Cruces artist Amanda Jaffee. Her submission is five, large ceramic panels depicting varieties of



The contentious Leisure Lagoon art. Screenshot by Jody Benson.

water, and designed to fit under the five Lagoon windows. The result of the very long discussion was no-decision. The design was sent back to the APP Board with very little direction on how to proceed on the recommendation with only Councilor Robinson supporting both the APP Board's process and decision, and the design.

Cannabis: NMSA § 26-2C-12 *prohibits* a municipality or county from completely prohibiting the operation of licensed adult-use cannabis operations. The public hearing to discuss the code ordinance for adding new regulations for adapting rules for cannabis will be Dec. 21.

Rules Change: Councilor Izraelevitz made a motion for a very simple rules change for the Council Procedural Rules to delete the wording of "no action taken." The change would be "I move that Council approve the following statement for inclusion in the minutes: The matters discussed in the closed session held on (MONTH)(DAY)(YEAR) that began at (TIME) were limited only to those topics specified in the (NOTICE)(MOTION) of the closed session." After another lengthy discussion in which Councilor Izraelevitz stated that this change was so minor it didn't actually require a Rules Committee review, but only a vote, declared he didn't want to waste any more time on this subject and withdrew his motion.

The \$11 Million GRT Settlement: After the contentious discussion about the APP Board Lagoon-art decision, the Council took the opposite course in discussing what to do with the \$11,470,257.70 the Council received from a multi-county mediation settlement from the state regarding disputed administrative handling of some prior-year GRT adjustments. Rather than the Council choosing which of the six priorities that had been previously recommended for funding, the Council instead opted to open to

community "brainstorming," and calls for proposals from community to "create a robust public engagement process" in the decision on how to spend the money. The caveat: It would be a one-time expenditure without accruing further costs.

Housing: Councilor Reagor reported on housing in Los Alamos. Only one bidder responded to the N. Mesa housing RFP, and therefore without enough competition, the County and Schools will extend a new RFP that will be more limited in scope than the previous proposal. It is critical to determine whether it's feasible for the development to provide ongoing revenue for schools. Other unresolved issues: 1) what to do with the old WAC building that the County now owns; and 2) the problem of out-of-town speculators buying homes to turn into unlicensed, un-inspected temporary housing like Air B&B, BRBO versus home rentals.

Jody Benson

Board of Public Utilities

November 5, 2021

A special meeting for the Board of Public Utilities was held virtually on November 5, 2021, at 11 a.m. The Department of Public Utilities (DPU) and its consultant are beginning to develop a new Integrated Resource Plan (IRP). An IRP serves as a roadmap to guide the County in decision-making for the acquisition of future power generation resources. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss with the BPU the parameters and portfolios to be considered in the IRP, while taking into consideration that the county will exit from the San Juan Generating Station in June 2022 and that the DPU is also working to realize reduced carbon emission goals while continuing to meet the electrical power demands of the community and LANL. Discussions included when to replace fossil fuel

generation, what mix of renewables, nuclear, storage and demand side resources will be needed to meet demand, how will electric vehicle adoption and electrification of the community come into play, what are the transmission limits and grid stability issues. No actions were taken. The IRP is anticipated to be completed in the second quarter of 2022. The agenda and supporting documents are on the [Los Alamos Legistar](#) website.

Julie Williams-Hill

November 17, 2021

Members from the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) met virtually on November 17th for their regularly scheduled monthly meeting. Dr. Luis Reyes from NuScale gave a presentation to the BPU about the small modular reactor technology that is to be used in the Carbon Free Power Project (a proposed project to build a nuclear generation facility in Idaho using NuScale's SMRs.) A presentation on the Los Alamos Resiliency Energy & Sustainability Task Force (LARES) and its interim report was presented by Katie Leonard. She discussed the recommendations to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions for the county. Specific to the DPU, she touched on the recommendations, challenges, and strategies for electricity supply and demand, and natural gas replacement.

DPU staff also led a discussion on its investigations and presented options to meet its energy obligations for the remainder of the current LANL-DOE Electric Coordination Agreement after the County exits the San Juan Generating Station scheduled for June 2022. (The ECA expires in 2025). A power purchase agreement for 15 megawatts with Uniper (receiving firm power from wind and solar projects in New Mexico beginning January 2022) will partially replace the 36 megawatts of power

the county will lose when it leaves the San Juan Station. DPU shared a short-term option to enter into a power purchase agreement with Uniper for another 25 megawatts. The agenda and supporting documents are available on the [Los Alamos Legistar](#) website.

Julie Williams-Hill

November Lunch with a Leader: Katie Leonard

Katie Leonard is the chair of the Los Alamos Resiliency, Energy and Sustainability Task Force (pronounced La Res), which was created by the County Council in February 2021 in response to a citizen petition. The Task Force has been charged with recommending to the County Council "ways for the County as a whole, including government, businesses, and residents, to achieve net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and advance other sustainable practices in the face of climate change." The ten members are assisted by four County staff members. They have formed five subcommittees to investigate the many factors involved: Community Planning and Zoning; Electricity Supply and Demand; Natural Gas Reduction; Transportation and Mobility; and Waste, Consumption, and Natural Resources.

In August the Task Force submitted their interim report to the County Council. Leonard noted that "big pieces" have not yet been addressed. The report is available as a download at: https://p1cdn4static.civicle.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6435726/File/Government/Departments/Public%20Works/Environmental%20Services%20Division/A%20-%20LARES%20Interim%20Report.pdf

The general recommendations are exclusive of LANL. They are:

1. Establish “Net Zero” GHG emissions as a long-term goal for the County and the community.
2. Perform a baseline GHG emissions study.
3. Create a Climate Change Action Plan, to be updated every 5 years or as needed.
4. Produce an annual Climate Change Action report.
5. Create an on-going citizen advisory body tasked to advise Council on reducing GHG emissions.
6. Integrate the goal of net GHG emissions, practices to achieve net zero, and other sustainability practices into all County government operations. Appropriate staffing additions or redirection may be necessary.

The Task Force reports that transportation and housing are the major sources of GHG emissions for Los Alamos households. Their recommendations include making public transportation more convenient, improving bicycle and walking infrastructure, creating gathering places in every neighborhood to cut down on trips to downtown, and encouraging the purchase of electric vehicles by residents.

Reducing natural gas emissions from existing residences is a difficult problem. For new construction, compact architecture and solar access should be required. For existing construction, adding insulation is recommended. The Task Force also advises installing electric heat pumps in both new and existing housing.

Leonard moved swiftly through the detailed observations and recommendations provided by each of the subcommittees. There is a lot of information to absorb. She said that the Task Force would love feedback and participation and gave their email: lares.taskforce@lacnm.us. They meet by Zoom on alternate Fridays from

3-5 p.m. She also suggested that comments be sent to the County Council and our legislators. The final report is due in February 2022.

Barbara Calef

LWF

LWVLA Board of Directors 2021-2022

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- Co-president: Barbara Calef
- Co-president: Rebecca Shankland
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- 2nd Vice-President: Ellen Mills
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If you would like to join the League visit www.lwvlosalamos.org.

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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