



# UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos  
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**League of Women Voters of Los Alamos**  
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## Calendar

May 10	Early voting begins in Council Chambers
May 19	Lunch with a Leader, Representative Christine Chandler
May 23	Early voting begins at White Rock Town Hall and continues in Council Chambers
May 26	Board Meeting, Zoom, noon
June 7	Primary Election Day

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### ***Lunch with a Leader:*** **Representative Christine Chandler**

The next Lunch with a Leader will be on Thursday, May 19 from noon to 1:00 via Zoom. Our speaker will be NM State Representative for District 43, Christine Chandler. She grew up in New England and graduated from Smith College and Boston College Law School. She is completing her second term. With the newly drawn district lines, District 43 includes all of Los Alamos, La Cienega in Santa Fe County, and the Jemez Valley area in Sandoval County. Prior to her service in the House, Rep. Chandler was a Los Alamos County Councilor, Council Chair and Probate Judge. She has also volunteered on numerous local boards & commissions and is particularly proud of her long-term membership of the Los Alamos League of Women Voters.

Rep. Chandler is Chair of the House Taxation & Revenue Committee and serves on the House Judiciary Committee. During her tenure in the House, Rep. Chandler has successfully sponsored and co-sponsored a number of important pieces of legislation including the Healthy Workplaces Act (earned sick leave), the Working Families Tax Credit, the Child Income Tax Credit, and a more progressive Low-Income Comprehensive Tax Credit. Rep. Chandler's policy focus has centered on issues of tax equity and income, as well as worker protection and support. She also has a strong environmental voting record, and is considered a champion of unions.

The zoom address will be sent to League members and friends in an email about a week before the event.

*Karyl Ann Armbruster*

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## ***Co-President's Message:*** Changing of the Guard

Our April Annual Meeting is the time to honor the old and the new – and of course to salute all the League members who support our work to make society more just and equitable for all.

### **The Old Guard**

- Barbara Calef continues as our honored and knowledgeable co-president, who keeps track of all the issues for both Los Alamos and New Mexico.
- Becky Shankland as co-president tries to support Barbara in all her overwhelming tasks plus helps with membership and editing.
- Ellen Mills as 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President has charge of fund-raising with businesses and Friends of the League and persuading the best people to accept nominations to the board.
- Rosmarie Frederickson manages the bank deposits from Ellen's fund-raising plus memberships of all different levels, and faithfully pays the bills.
- Rebecca Chaiken is the most diligent and accurate secretary we could ask for. Is she perfect? No, but we'll go for 99.9 percent perfect.
- Karyl Ann Armbruster manages the complicated logistics of getting our *Lunch with a Leader* speakers, then advertises them and runs the Zoom meetings with aplomb.
- Jody Benson writes our publicity to keep our public meetings well-attended – in her non-existent spare time she serves on the boards of Aspen Ridge, the Sierra Club, and the County Zero Waste group.
- Lynn Jones is our Voter Guide guru. She and her tireless crew of letter-writers, formatters, and editors have had to produce more voter guides than ever. We don't know whether to commiserate because of the extra work or congratulate them for supporting our central mission of educating voters. If success is measured by demand so high that the County Clerk's office ran out of Voter Guides, then they've succeeded.
- Akkana Peck and Addie Jacobson are faithful At Large Board Members. One is a lawyer and retired elementary school teacher and the other has written a book about Linux, does metal sculptures, and is a bird watcher. Which is which? For the League they are equally talented.

### **The New Guard**

- Felicia Orth has stepped up to fill our long-empty slot as First Vice-President and next year's President; as a "retired" lawyer we rely not only on her legal expertise but her additional knowledge of all things Los Alamos. She knows all things New Mexico too because of her work on environmental hearings for the NM Environment Department.
- Bob Williams is our remarkable new Newsletter Editor (JoAnn: we never dreamed that we'd find a replacement for you). He has cleaned up lots of mundane issues like our membership forms, written a lively letter to the editor about our controversy over civility, and you should see the wickedly funny letters that we don't let him send.
- Jean Dewart (with her administrative assistant Dotty Reilly) has taken on the membership position – she has designed a spreadsheet to keep the board informed about member interests and willingness to volunteer as well as dates, amounts of money, expired memberships, and revived memberships.
- Helena Whyte and Madhavi Garimella took on our website and Facebook needs – maybe we'll manage to beef up both of those entities that constitute our image to the world.

- Eduardo Santiago bravely offered to edit our videos so that we could post them more promptly.
- Wendy Swanson is waiting patiently for her opportunity to organize refreshments for in-person meetings. The tablecloths and cups await, tucked safely in the big bins.

### **The Retiring Guard**

- Julie Williams-Hill has been in charge of our website and Facebook and our excellent liaison with the County Department of Public Utilities. Now she is even busier as the County's Communications and Public Information Officer, but we hope she'll remember us.
- JoAnn Lysne took on the newsletter when Sandra West moved to Albuquerque. She was more than a quick study—she immediately created the right format and made three versions of each newsletter (one for email, one for snail mail, and one for the Web). She took our clutter of articles and photos and made them professional.
- Amy Birnbaum has been our arrangements organizer for many years, even though recently we did most of it by Zoom. She continued through the pandemic as a great board member, with quick and witty remarks to keep us on track.

### **The Beyond-the-Call-of-Duty Guard: Special Salutes to Those Not in the Above Lists**

- JJ Mortensen and Hedy Dunn became the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibit directors who probably worked as hard as some of the suffragist leaders. It was the crowning glory of countless hours of work by many of us, but brilliantly edited and designed by these two.
- June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin have become our star reporters for the observer corps. If you want to know about County meetings, their work summarizes all that's on the League's radar. And they watch and write from all over the USA – their latest post came from the Ozarks.
- Maire O'Neill is the public's investigative reporter, covering the really hot issues, or even the cool ones. Running the one-woman *LA Reporter*, we are so happy that she is also a League member.

All these hard-working League members form a guard for democracy – not a military guard, but a guard of passionate, thoughtful voices.

*Becky Shankland*

## ***Welcome, New Member!***

Linn Collins has joined the League; her info follows. We hope to introduce Stephanie Nakhleh and Graham Mark in our next newsletter.

**Linn Collins writes:** I am joining the League of Women Voters for three reasons:

First, I believe in the work you do. The national website identifies the following four priorities and, to me, they all seem critical to strengthening our democracy: "Protect the freedom to vote, improve elections, reduce money's political influence, and fight for fair redistricting" (<https://www.lwv.org/>).

Second, my husband and I have been supporting the work of the Los Alamos League of the LWV for many years through tax-deductible donations. I retired from the Los Alamos National Laboratory in September 2021 and would now like to contribute some of my time and energy, as well.

Third, working to improve democracy through a nonpartisan organization instead of a specific political party is consistent with my generally centrist views.

When I retired from LANL in September I was a scientist in the Information Sciences Group, working on an agile space / space situational awareness project. Prior to that I was Group Leader of the Applied Computer Science Group from 2014 to 2020.

In addition to politics, my main interests are traveling, seeing the natural wonders of the world, and learning about other cultures. I was an exchange student to Rio de Janeiro in 1967, when I was 17, and have visited every continent except Antarctica. In June and July I plan to travel to London, Iceland, and Greenland, and in October I plan to travel to Greece.

## ***Primary Election Information***

Informing voters about candidates is the purpose of the League of Women Voters *Voter Guide*. To these ends the LWV sends a questionnaire to all candidates and publishes their responses in the Vote411 *Voter Guide* (<https://www.lwv.org/>). Here in Los Alamos, our League contacts every candidate running for local office. The responses returned on time to the LWV-LA are reported in the print edition of the *Los Alamos Daily Post*, which was delivered in the mail on Thursday, May 5. All of the responses received are reported in the online Vote411.

Decline-to-state (DTS) voters in New Mexico are registered voters who have chosen not to affiliate with a major political party. Currently, the only major parties in New Mexico are the Democratic, Republican, and Libertarian (D, R, L) Parties. This year, for the first time, NM voters registered as DTS or with a minor party, can change their registration to D, R, or L at the polls or the County Clerk's office and then vote on the same day during the primary voting period. This is called Same Day Registration or SDR. Voters who then wish to revert back to being DTS or registered with a minor party can update their registration online at NMVOTE.ORG after they've voted in the Primary Election.

Major party voters may update name, address, or other contact info during SDR. However, they may not use Same Day Registration to switch parties during the Primary Election.

Residents who are not registered but are qualified to vote may register and vote during the election period.

For election details for Los Alamos, please go to:  
[https://www.losalamosnm.us/government/elected\\_officials/county\\_clerk/election\\_information](https://www.losalamosnm.us/government/elected_officials/county_clerk/election_information).

You can find the list of candidates for all New Mexico counties at:  
<https://candidateportal.servis.sos.state.nm.us/CandidateList.aspx?eid=2827&cty=32>.

## **ESSENTIAL DATES**

### **Tuesday, May 10:**

Early Voting begins 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Municipal Building in Los Alamos, and continues Monday through Friday until May 20.

May 10 is the last day to change your party affiliation if you are a Democrat, Republican, or Libertarian.

### **Monday, May 23:**

Early Voting begins 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday at the White Rock Town Hall (as well as the Municipal Building), and continues until June 4 (closed Sunday and Labor Day).

### **June 7, Tuesday is Election Day:**

Eligible voters may vote at any Vote Center: Los Alamos County Municipal Building, White Rock Town Hall, UNMLA, Betty Ehart Senior Center, or the Los Alamos County Golf Course 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

For additional information on anything related to registration and voting in the 2022 Primary Election in Los Alamos County, call the Clerk's Office at (505) 662-8010. Check for voting updates at  
<http://www.losalamosnm.us/clerk/>.

For local and nationwide candidate information, go to <https://www.vote411.org/>.

## ***April Lunch with a Leader: Liz Martineau, Los Alamos Historical Society Executive Director***

Martineau spoke to League members on her final day at the Historical Society, beginning by presenting her successor, Todd



Nickols. The topic of her talk was lessons in leadership.

The focus of her lessons in leadership was the experience of General Leslie Groves and J. Robert Oppenheimer (JRO), who jointly led the Manhattan Project. Martineau's information came mostly from two books, *The General and the Genius* by James Kunetka and *American Prometheus* by Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin.

Both men had lived through World War I, both were blue-eyed and similar in height, but that is where the similarities ended. Groves weighed 250 pounds, but JRO weighed only 125. The family of General Groves had to be careful with money, whereas Oppenheimer's was wealthy.

In August of 1942 General Groves, who had overseen the construction of the Pentagon on time and on budget, was assigned to manage the Manhattan Project. Groves realized that he needed a collaborator who could understand the science and explain it to him as well as communicating with the scientists upon whom the success of the project depended.

Oppenheimer had some serious deficits. He had no administrative experience; although he was a theoretical physicist, his knowledge of applied physics and engineering was weak; he had Communist connections. However, he was intelligent and articulate.



Liz Martineau toasts the photo of Dorothy McKibbin (gatekeeper to the Los Alamos personnel arriving in Santa Fe), J. Robert Oppenheimer, and physicist Victor Weisskopf.

Lesson 1: Understand your strengths and weaknesses and use the information to create a diverse team. Groves was a good manager but authoritarian and abrasive. In February

1943 he chose Oppenheimer, who was diplomatic, informal, and indecisive, to lead the project. But both men were ambitious and shared a common goal.

Lesson 2: Demonstrate the capacity to learn, grow, and change. Martineau said that Oppenheimer learned to be a better listener and became more decisive. He expected to lead a team of a couple hundred people, but eventually led 6,000. He learned to accept advice and delegate responsibility.

Lesson 3: Communicate effectively. General Groves was responsible for the whole project, which included activities at Hanford and Oak Ridge as well as Los Alamos. He spoke over the phone to people all over the country. He liked to meet with Oppenheimer in person, but also spoke on the phone to him several times a day. They did not argue, but spoke respectfully.

Lesson 4: Support your colleagues. Oppenheimer defended General Groves when he was criticized by members of the community who resented his leadership style. Groves calmed Oppenheimer when he was tense, especially before the Trinity test.

Martineau concluded that the two men complemented each other and that it is important for us all to recognize our strengths and weaknesses.

In response to a question about the Oppenheimer House, which was occupied by the family from 1943-1945 and is now owned by the Historical Society (LAHS), Martineau said restoration is underway. Currently, it is open only for occasional tours, but LAHS hopes it will be fully open when the Oppenheimer movie comes out in the summer of 2023. Asked about the film, she said the script was a well-kept secret, but writer and director Christopher Nolan had done lots of research and the costumes and set at least were very accurate.

*Barbara Calef*

## **Observer Corps Reports – County Council, 4/5/22**

The session was conducted in hybrid format, both in-person and via zoom, and was attended by Council Chair Ryti and Councilors Derkacs, Hand, Izraelevitz, Reagor, and Scott. After his appointment (see following), new Councilor Lepsch also participated in the session.

### **Appointment of Councilor to fill vacant councilor seat.**

Council interviewed three candidates for the seat vacated by Councilor Williams on March 7, 2022: Jim Hall (Independent), Keith Lepsch (Democrat), and Aaron Walker (Democrat). A fourth applicant, Gene Nixon (Republican), withdrew his application prior to the meeting. To be seated, an applicant must receive at least four votes by roll call vote, and this process continues after eliminating the candidate with the least votes until a final selection is made. After two rounds of roll call voting, Keith Lepsch was selected to fill the vacancy and serve the remainder of the term, ending December 31, 2024.

### **2022 Legislation Affecting Municipalities.**

The Executive Director of the New Mexico Municipal League, A.J. Forte, provided an informational overview of State legislation affecting municipalities. Los Alamos is among 106 cities in New Mexico that are members of the League, which seeks to uphold municipal interests in legislative changes. Forte's presentation focused on legislation on which the Municipal League has worked over the last four years, highlighting items dealing with public safety and tax policies. The League's success in arguing for modifications of these two bills in particular will put municipalities in a better position to compete with the state in attracting and retaining local law enforcement officers, which is particularly important given that State police officers will receive an 18% pay increase effective July 1.

A couple bills of local interest are summarized below. Details on these and many other bills affecting local government are

included in the County Council's agenda packet.

- *Criminal justice & public safety.* HB 68, Criminal Code Changes, provides funding for law enforcement agencies and programs. This bill creates a program to distribute funds to local law enforcement agencies for recruitment and retention stipends for officers. HB 68 also revises the curriculum for law enforcement officer training and certification, requiring that training for officers and dispatchers include crisis management and intervention, dealing with individuals who are experiencing mental health issues, methods of de-escalation, peer-to-peer intervention, stress management, racial sensitivity, reality-based situational training, and use of force that eliminates choke holds.
- *Environment.* HB 37 creates a Community Energy Efficiency Development (CEED) Block Grant program, helping to make utilities more affordable for low-income residents and to reduce energy consumption. Local jurisdictions can apply for CEED grants to make targeted energy-efficiency improvements in underserved communities.
- *Special Session Funding for Outdoor Recreation.* HB 2, the General Appropriations Act, included funding for the Economic Development Department for outdoor recreation grants (for development of trails, signage, river access, and other outdoor infrastructure) and outdoor equity grants (for youth outdoor experiences that foster stewardship, education, and respect for New Mexico's public land).

### **Overview of County Owned Lands Available for Development and Discussion of Disposition Policy.**

County Manager Steve Lynne provided a high-level summary of this agenda item, which had been requested by Chair Ryti with the objective of getting such information out to the public and having Council provide feedback on the County's disposition process.

Two County-owned properties zoned for development are currently under contract: Pet Pangaea on Trinity Drive, and a hotel/conference center on 20th Street. Lynne described five additional properties available for development, emphasizing that each property has unique features that present a challenge for development.

- *Entrada Business Park*, 110 Entrada Dr., 6.3 acres zoned Mixed Use — This narrow wedge of property between the end of the airport runway and East Road had been under a LEDA deal and an IRB (industrial revenue bonds) with Pebble Labs, but that project was recently terminated, and the land has been returned back to the County.
- *1000 Sombrillo Ct.*, 1.37 acres zoned Residential — This parcel behind the Los Alamos County Animal Shelter is essentially land-locked.
- *125 DP Road*, parcel A-8-A, 20 acres zoned Residential — Topography limits the developable portion of this long, narrow property sandwiched between DP Road and the edge of Los Alamos Canyon. Two solicited proposals fell through.
- *Middle DP Road*, parcel A-16-A, 30 acres zoned Limited Use because of contamination found on this DOE transfer property — The County awaits the final report of the cleanup before it can proceed with disposition of the property. Prior to this incident, the County had been entertaining unsolicited expressions of interest from small business owners.
- *2400 Diamond Dr.* — This 0.21-acre property at the corner of Diamond Drive and 38th Street is zoned for single-family residential use.

As a general rule, the County agrees that competitive bidding is a good thing, and that approach is always its first choice. However, because of its home-rule status, the County is not required to follow the New Mexico Procurement Code and legally does not need to seek competitive bids when it disposes of property. Lynne proceeded to characterize the County's options for land disposition and its mixed success with each approach,

emphasizing that almost every possible land transaction is unique such that the selection of the most appropriate process must be made case by case.

- Competitive open solicitation
- Proactive/targeted marketing for specific projects
- Consideration of unsolicited expressions of intent
- Other tools: Local Economic Development Assistance (LEDA), and Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA)

An obvious question is, why would the County choose not to compete the sale of a property? Lynne cited the Mirador subdivision as one example. This property along NM 4, west of the Visitor Center in White Rock, was placed on the market twice, and was under contract twice, but neither development was able to proceed. The third time it was put on the market for competitive solicitation yielded no response. So, when the County received an unsolicited expression of interest, it felt it was the right way to proceed for disposition of this property.

Similarly, the County's 20th Street property was also put on the market to solicit competitive bids. Several proposals were received, none of which proceeded. Once again, the County received an unsolicited expression of interest that ultimately evolved into a LEDA project.

LEDA is one of the exceptions to the state anti-donation rule and allows the county to participate in a project. Another exception is a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA), a state designation that the County is seeking in White Rock that would allow for potential public-private partnerships in the targeted area. A third one is affordable housing; prime examples of that approach are the Canyon Walk Apartments on DP Road and the senior-housing apartment complex under construction across the street.

Councilor Izraelevitz noted that limited availability of developable land is one fact of nature about life on the mesa; redevelopment of existing land is the only other option. He



expressed appreciation to County staff for thinking creatively about public-private relationships and how to deal with properties that are small or oddly shaped.

### **Chapter 18 Nuisance Code Update.**

Dekker Perich Sabatini Consultants Will Gleason and Jessica Lawlis presented draft findings of their study of the County's Nuisance Code and suggested several areas for improvement. No action was taken. The public can track the progress and major milestones of the Los Alamos Chapter 18 Nuisance Code at the Chapter 18 Nuisance Code Update site (<https://www.lacchp18update.org/>).

Key observations for improvement (informed by community survey results and CDAB input):

- Add a purpose statement to establish whether enforcement procedures will focus solely on threats to public health, safety, and welfare or if enforcement should include aesthetic concerns that may impact property values.
- Align code enforcement procedures with county priorities for a balanced hybrid compliance / complaint-based system involving regular patrols along with enforcement based on community complaints.
- Prioritize and classify nuisances based on urgency and threat to public health and safety, and threat to the environment.
  - Priority 1: Imminent health and safety hazards
  - Priority 2: Unsanitary conditions
  - Priority 3: Other code violations, including inappropriate outdoor storage, inoperable vehicles.
- Set timeframes for compliance that are tied to priorities, such that priority 1 hazards require quicker remediation than priority levels 2 or 3.
- Add new code content to address hazardous trees and limbs and forest fire hazard

- Add specific nuisance criteria where applicable and move away from subjective language.
- Clarify regulations for vegetation that establish landscape overgrowth standards and allow for natural landscapes. Since most survey respondents agreed that the definition of a weed is different for each individual, a subjective definition of the word “weed” should be avoided.

Draft recommendations are anticipated to be released to the public on May 2, 2022, with presentation to CDAB on May 16, 2022, and to Council in June 2022.

Considerable Council discussion followed on how to, or whether to, regulate weeds. Councilor Derkacs noted that weeds are included in more than 30 codes of municipalities across the state, so Los Alamos County is not unique for including weeds in its Nuisance Code. Some councilors advocated for a list of noxious or banned weeds, such as the one developed by the state. Staff said it was looking for simplicity, because ecological variability (vegetation, rainfall) across the county makes it difficult to have a specific list, and the criteria also need to be simple enough for a code inspector to determine in the field and for homeowners to know whether vegetation on their property is in compliance with the code.

### **Security clearance of Dr. Oppenheimer.**

Council unanimously passed a motion to adopt a resolution requesting the Department of Energy (DOE) to vacate the 1954 decision of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) to not reinstate the security clearance of J. Robert Oppenheimer. In presenting this resolution, Councilor Izraelevitz noted that the County of Los Alamos recently became aware that there is a renewed effort in the US Senate for the DOE to recognize the gross injustice of the AEC in stripping Oppenheimer of his clearance after its 1954 hearing on the subject 68 years ago. Vacating the AEC's 1954 decision would not reinstate Oppenheimer's security clearance, but it would repudiate the flawed security review hearing and remove it as a historical precedent. The resolution adopted



by Council serves as a formal endorsement of efforts in the Senate to accomplish this action.

### **Los Alamos County Assessor Valuation and Maintenance Plan.**

Council unanimously approved this written plan, which highlights the Assessor's activities during the past year and includes a review of any changes to the county's total valuation and statistical analysis of key parameters regarding parcels. The presentation by the County Assessor, Ken Milder, was intended to inform the Council on funding on the upcoming budget hearings. Councilors praised the plan, with Scott commenting that not a single deficiency was found by the New Mexico Taxation & Revenue Department's Property Tax Division.

### **Additional tennis courts.**

Council unanimously passed a motion to eliminate Mesa Meadows and Urban Park from consideration as sites for additional tennis courts. This outcome was requested through two citizen petitions and nine public comments. North Mesa and Overlook Park remain under consideration.

### **Hilltop House.**

Council unanimously passed a motion to direct the County Manager to proceed with actions necessary to remove the Hilltop House (400 Trinity Drive), and lien the parcel of land for the costs incurred by the County. The County Fire Marshall issued an order on October 18, 2021, declaring the Hilltop House to be a clear and inimical threat to human health and safety, and the Council passed a resolution that ordered the owner, New Mexico Innovation Triangle LLC (NMIT), to begin removal within 10 days and complete it by March 30, 2022. However, as of April 1, 2022, no progress had been made on the part of NMIT.

John Rizzo (NMIT) submitted an explanation to be included in the public record. He stated that the original plan was to design, finance, demolish, and then build on the site. Financing for the envisioned innovative housing project was expected to be in the 10's of millions of dollars. When county officials deemed that NMIT demolish the property first,

prior to financing of the project, the company was taken by surprise by the County's change in approach and has been scrambling to adjust. "Having the County take the ball from here is the best course forward.

*June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin*

## **Observer Corps Reports – County Council, 4/18, 19 & 5/22 – FY23 Budget Hearings**

The FY23 budget hearings were conducted in hybrid format on April 18, 19 and 25, 2022. The hearings were attended by Council Chair Ryti and Councilors Derkacs, Hand, Izraelevitz, Lepsch, Reagor, and Scott.

During its final budget hearing on April 25, Council approved 6-1, with Councilor Reagor opposed, the \$280,368,039 FY23 budget.

### **General process for FY23 budget hearings.**

[Note: The following overview of the budget process is based on the description of the FY23 budget scope and process provided by Council Chair Randall Ryti and published by The Daily Post on April 7, 2022. (See <https://ladailypost.com/ryti-budget-hearings-and-development-code-update/>)]

The budget planning process begins with the FY22 adopted budget for each department, less one-time items, and incorporating projected average increases for salaries, medical premiums, and non-labor expenditures. The Council then reviews these adjusted base budgets for each of the elected officials and County departments along with any budget options submitted by those departments for one-time or recurring expenses. Following each presentation, a motion is made to tentatively approve the budget and associated budget options. Unresolved items are moved to parking lot for further discussion and resolution prior to adoption of the budget. At the end of the hearings, there is a final motion to approve the total budget and associated fund transfers.

County Manager Steven Lynne, Chief Financial Officer Helen Perraglio, and Budget

and Performance Manager Monther Jubran participated throughout the hearing process to present, provide explanations or context, and continuously update the financial impacts of tentative budget approvals to guide the Council.

### **Elected Officials.**

Council unanimously voted to tentatively approve all proposed FY23 budgets for elected officials.

**County Manager's Office** (presented by County Manager Steve Lynne)

Council unanimously voted to tentatively approve the County Manager's proposed budget of \$16,630,944, including the associated budget options:

- independent job market study (\$150,000), as required by LAC Personnel Rules to ensure that the County maintains a market competitive compensation plan.
- 1 FTE for Human Resource Technician (\$110,000), converting a limited-term position to a regular FTE
- 1 FTE for Social Media Coordinator (\$100,000), to assist the Communication Plan with outreach, particularly to reach the younger population. "We're far behind where we need to be in terms of our social media communication," said County Manager Lynne. "This is a relatively high priority for us." Public Information Officer, Julie Williams-Hill, provided more detailed rationale for the new position: "The advantage of the social media is that it is immediate. For crisis communication, we can be reaching people more quickly and more efficiently. In our last survey that we conducted, about 67% of our population is on social media. The other thing that I can add is that we have lost several communication channels that we have used in the past to communicate with our public: KRSN closed down, the Reel Deal movie theater, Los Alamos Monitor. So, I see that the County is going to have to step up to fill this vacuum to be able to effectively communicate with our folks, and

social media seems to be the most efficient and effective way to do that."

**County Attorney's Office** (presented by County Attorney Alvin Leaphart).

Council unanimously voted to tentatively approve the proposed budget of \$1,146,521.

**Administrative Services Department (ASD)** (presented by County Chief Financial Officer Helen Perraglio).

Council voted 6-1 (Councilor Reagor opposed) to tentatively approve the proposed ASD budget of \$10,538,924, which included five budget options. Council held an extensive discussion on the justification for five new FTE positions, particularly the Contract Manager. Councilor Hand concluded that "[Perraglio] has very good justification for outreach, efficiency, and also expediting the contract services that we need so that also helps small businesses out there, so I am very supportive of the budget options."

**Community Development Department (CDD)** (presented by CDD Director Paul Andrus).

Council unanimously voted to tentatively approve the proposed CDD budget of \$16,119,756, including two budget options:

- on-call development design services (\$75,000) in support of economic development projects and initiatives
- contractual support for Co-work and Maker Spaces (\$50,000).

The budget option requesting 1 FTE for a Business Assistance Coordinator (\$150,000) was put in the 'parking lot' at the request of Council Chair Ryti, who wanted a more detailed description of the responsibilities of this position. At a later date, with this information in hand, Council unanimously approved this position as well.

**Community Services Department (CSD)** (presented by CSD Director Cory Styron).

Council unanimously voted to tentatively approve the proposed CSD budget of \$31,630,030, with the following budget options:

- Administration
  - Activity Guide printing services (\$40,000). The Activity Guide is increasingly shifting to electronic format, but a substantial segment of the population still prefers a paper copy.
- Library
  - 1 FTE for Senior Librarian (\$130,000) to address technology management
  - 0.5 FTE to double-fill Library Manager for 6 months (\$76,000), for upcoming retirement
  - 0.25 FTE for Youth Services Temporary Library Associate (\$15,000)
- Public Recreation and Open Space
  - 1 FTE for Aquatic Center Front Desk (\$90,000)
  - mobile LED (23 ft x 13 ft) screen (\$250,000), for movies, other public performances, events, and information
  - permaculture barriers for weed prevention (\$50,000), in accordance with Integrated Pest Management Plan
  - on-call services for landscape architects (\$70,000)
  - contract to remove feral cattle from public lands (\$76,800)
  - contract services for trail maintenance (\$50,000). Attempts to recruit a fulltime person for this work have been unsuccessful.

**Fire Department** (presented by Fire Chief Troy Hughes)

Council unanimously voted to tentatively approve the proposed Fire Department budget of \$37,414,878.

**Police Department** (presented by Police Chief Dino Sgambellone)

Council unanimously voted to tentatively approve the proposed Police Department budget of \$11,069,851, including the following budget options:

- 2 FTEs for additional sworn officers (\$220,000)
- rescue vehicle (\$270,000), which is essentially an armored car such as would

be used in an active-shooter scenario. Councilor Lepsch asked whether borrowing such a vehicle from the LANL security was considered as an alternative to purchasing one, but Chief Sgambellone responded that too much red tape was involved for this option to be feasible.

- vehicle storage for a bomb truck and rescue vehicle (\$160,000).

Two items were placed on the 'parking lot' to be discussed on the last day of the budget hearings:

- 2 FTE positions for sworn officers (\$220,000) (in addition to the 2 FTE positions already tentatively approved by Council). This budget option was requested by Councilor Reagor to bring the Police Department into full compliance with recommendations made in its accreditation report to improve response times and officer safety. County Manager Lynne and Police Chief Sgambellone agreed that filling these positions could be delayed until next year. However, Council voted 5-2, Izraelevitz and Scott in opposition, to tentatively approve these additional hires in FY23.
- Tesla Model 3 Long Range electric vehicle (\$58,500), to be used primarily for traffic patrols. This budget option ultimately was not voted upon due to an absence of council's support for it.

**Public Works Department (PW)** (presented by Public Works Manager Juan Rael)

Council voted 6-1, with Councilor Reagor opposed, to tentatively approve the Public Works budget of \$55,914,480 with the following budget options:

- Engineering & Project Management
  - Chevy Volt electric vehicle (\$35,000), assigned to a project manager in engineering. Three vehicle options were considered in that price range, but the Chevy Volt was selected because it aligned with several other County goals.
  - Chip and seal the road from NM502 to the Wastewater Treatment Plant in

Pueblo Canyon, also serving the compost facility (\$376,087)

- Facilities
  - 1 FTE for Capital Projects Manager (\$170,000), to manage routine maintenance and major facility replacement projects
  - asset management software (\$150,000) to help facilitate better maintenance of County infrastructure, along with \$60,000 for the software's annual cost.
- Custodial
  - 2 FTEs for custodians (\$130,000) and equipment to help address past and future increases in space and focus on floor maintenance. Past efforts to contract out for custodial services have been unsuccessful.
- Transit
  - \$500,000 for the design of a new transit center, which would include a study, design, and location of a new transit center as well as an analysis of the projected impact of a new transit center in downtown Los Alamos.
- Los Alamos Resiliency, Energy & Sustainability (LARES) Task Force
  - 1 FTE for Sustainability Coordinator (\$150,000), LARES Task Force general recommendation GR-4
  - Community outreach and education program (\$40,000), LARES Task Force general recommendation GR-8

A Public Works budget option requesting 1 FTE for an Equipment Operator (\$100,000) for right-of-way maintenance associated with the glyphosate ban was put in the 'parking lot.' The ensuing discussion of this budget option by Council and County staff is summarized at the end of our observer report because the issue at hand – the costs of the glyphosate ban — involved several County departments.

## **Department of Public Utilities (DPU)** (presented by DPU Manager Philo Shelton)

Council voted unanimously to tentatively approve the DPU proposed budget of \$86,581,568. The approved budget included using utility profits transferred from the County's General Fund to fund the repair and replacement of electric, gas, and water utilities infrastructure under Arkansas Avenue in coordination with the Public Works' road surface replacement project on that street, and replacement of the vitrified clay pipe sewer mains in residents' backyards along Arkansas Street that were installed in the 1950's.

## **Capital Projects**

Council voted 6-1, Councilor Reagor in opposition, to tentatively approve the Capital Project budget as amended:

- Add a new line item for Social Services Support, with a FY23 budget of \$500,000 for planning and design, e.g., for a shared social services facility.
- Switch the order of construction of shared Community Recreational Spaces so that a space in White Rock is addressed before the proposed North Mesa facility, as a result of the school district's plans to replace both its White Rock elementary schools.
- Balance funds added to the FY24 budget, by reducing funds for economic development, which totaled \$6 million.

Councilor Reagor expressed his preference to fund capital projects on a pay-as-you-go basis, i.e., spending money as it comes in, rather than by using bond revenue to finance more bonds and increasing the County's debt. He felt that GRT revenue bonds were risky because the state could change the law regarding the allocation of GRT taxes paid by Los Alamos National Laboratory. Councilors Izraelevitz and Scott have followed these discussions at the State Capital and expressed confidence that such an outcome was improbable. County Manager Lynne further explained that using GRT revenue bonds helps to even out the timing of projects and to align payment for a project by those who use it. Further, he pointed out that issued bond ratings take risk into account; the County's



bonds have AA+ ratings which means that the market views these bonds as having little risk.

## ***Council Extended Discussion and Public Input on Cross-Cutting Budget Items in the Parking Lot***

### **New County FTEs.**

Los Alamos County currently employs 704 FTEs, and Council approved an additional 17.25 FTEs for FY23 (one of which is a conversion, not a new position). Throughout the budget hearings, Council and County staff discussed the multiple drivers for the increase in FTE requests, particularly new positions necessitated by shifting in the types of technological skills needed for a job, changing programmatic needs, or launching or expanding new programs.

Alternatives were considered and often debated in detail by Council, County Manager, and Department heads for many of the requested new FTEs. Options included contractual services, reducing staffing elsewhere in the department, establishing internships or trainees, amending the job description to attract lower-cost employees, and opting not to backfill an existing position after it has been vacated.

### **Glyphosate ban.**

Three departmental budgets and operations are affected by the ban on glyphosate use: Public Utilities, Community Services, and Public Works. After the scope of the ban's effect became apparent during the hearings, Councilor Izraelevitz remarked, "I have to say, I'm starting to feel buyer's remorse about the prior decision we made on the glyphosate ban, which we approved without understanding the financial implications because, if we follow the original proposal of 2 FTEs plus \$50,000 a year, that's more than what we spend – in actual costs, not in-kind services—for the whole health commons, just as an example."

In a public comment made earlier in the hearing, Dina Pesenson emphasized the

strong public support for the glyphosate ban, calling it a community value. She pointed out that the requested ban was initiated by a citizen petition in 2016, signed by over 230 residents, and that the public process took over six years, during which it was reviewed by two boards, both of which approved passing it on to Council, and continued on despite multiple staff turnovers in County park supervisors and managers as well as changes in Council membership.

As a whole, Council solidly supported maintaining the ban, at least for now. Councilor Reagor was one of several who made the point that, "We already made the decision when we voted for the ban and have the obligation to fund it appropriately, in the absence of new information indicating otherwise." Councilor Scott added, while agreeing with this point of view, "We need to continue to monitor costs and the positive and negative consequences of glyphosate ban."

CSD Director Styron pointed out that, although the glyphosate ban initiated the discussion on the County's use of chemicals in the environment, the ban was now just one facet of the much broader objective of the newly updated Integrated Pesticides Plan to reduce pesticide use overall. For example, reduced pesticide use would be one advantage of replacing athletic fields with artificial turf.

Council Chair Ryti asked Public Works Director Rael if his department could contract for a weed removal service instead of hiring 1 FTE for an equipment operator to mow road rights-of-way. Rael said the proposed new position would have other duties during the non-growing season and would not be dedicated solely to mowing.

DPU Manager Shelton said the glyphosate ban would necessitate manual weeding around the solar panels, adding about \$45,000 to those maintenance costs.

### **Los Alamos Resiliency, Energy & Sustainability (LARES).**

Although all of the proposed budget options related to LARES were put under the Public Works budget, the scopes of work for the

proposed FTE positions, studies, and programs cut across several of the County's departments. Consequently, these options also instigated discussion about the overall financial impacts of the new sustainability program.

Katie Leonard, former chair of the LARES Task Force, thanked the Council for moving forward financial support for the baseline greenhouse gas study and the creation of a Climate Action Plan. "Tonight [April 17], I would like to advocate for support for the Sustainability Coordinator position. This staff position will be critical for achieving net zero; current employees are already busy with their job descriptions. We need somebody else to take on the organization of the emissions study and the implementation of the Climate Action Plan, once we have it." Later, Katie Leonard and Robert Gibson provided additional public comment asking Council to support all of the LARES-related new budget options for FY23 rather than delaying any until next fiscal year, as had been suggested by some Councilors, particularly with regard to hiring of an Education Coordinator (1 FTE at \$125K) and staff to conduct energy audits (2 FTEs, \$250K).

Councilor Reagor argued, "These things, because it's a global issue, when you go back to the main issue, it's like vanity, wealthy people putting a burden on the people that are closer to minimum wage or maybe working in a services job or maybe on Social Security and where their utility bill is a big deal and that's what all of this turns into. So of course, I'm going to vote against all of this. Because I think it's just virtuous signaling by wealthy people and the people who are really hurt are not on the Council, but we should be considering them even if they don't have the ability to come out here and speak to the Council."

Ultimately, Council voted 6-1, with Councilor Reagor in opposition, to approve all of the LARES budget options.

*June Fabryka-Martin*

## **Observer Corps Reports – Planning and Zoning Commission, 4/21/22**

The Los Alamos Planning & Zoning (P&Z) Commission meeting on April 21, 2022 was attended by Commission Vice-Chair Martin and Commissioners Hill, Nakhleh, Neal-Clinton, and Roberson.

**Public Hearing: on a request by Transcor Development Corporation to amend the Los Alamos County Official Zoning Map to rezone two parcels as Mixed-Use (MU).** (The properties, Eastern Area 3 Q1 and Q2, and commonly known as 2100 and 2202 Canyon Road, respectively, are currently zoned as Multiple-Family Residential, very high-density (R-3-H-40).)

The Commission denied by a vote of 4-1, Commissioner Neal-Clinton in opposition, a request for a zoning change on the property commonly called the old Boy Scout property on Canyon Road, adjacent to the Jewish Center. Transcor requested a change from high-density residential to mixed-use to provide more flexibility in developing a site plan. A site plan is not required for consideration of a zoning change. The current zoning would permit residential units and some specific commercial uses in character with the development, and Mixed-Use zoning would permit greater density of residential uses, a wide variety of commercial uses, and fewer parking spaces. Mixed-Use zoning has been applied to other areas adjacent to residential zones, but in those cases adjacent to commercial zoning (e.g., the Black Hole). Staff supported the zoning change in part because of the proximity of the property to downtown. Philip Gursky, representing the Jewish Center, opposed the zone change on the basis that it would fundamentally alter the character of the neighborhood, which he defined as four churches, the nature center, and adjacent open space. Mixed-Use would potentially introduce detriments to the Jewish Center, for example, a cannabis processing facility and its associated odors. The majority of the commissioners expressed their concern that the proposed

zoning change would not support the goals of the comprehensive plan and possibly could be construed as spot zoning, a situation that often winds up in court. They felt there was sufficient flexibility in the current zoning to provide the developer with ample opportunities, while protecting the neighbors.

### **Hearing on an ordinance amending the text of the Development Code to adopt local regulations for mobile food vending**

The Commission unanimously approved text amendments to the Development Code to insert regulations for mobile food vending. Staff presented a proposed text amendment to the Development Code to regulate mobile food vending, on which the current code is silent. This amendment was in response to requests from the public and business owners to clarify regulations for mobile food vending on private and public land as well as on public rights-of-way. Although a comprehensive revision of the code is underway, staff felt it important to amend the current code as soon as possible to accommodate mobile vending this summer. The resulting text changes are a result of public surveys and research of regulations in other communities. Changes to the code include definitions, specifications on permitting requirements, permissible locations, and time frames for permits.

*June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin*

## **LWVLA Board of Directors 2022-2023**

### **Officers:**

- Co-president: Barbara Calef
- Co-president: Rebecca Shankland
- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President: Felicia Orth
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President: Ellen Mills
- Secretary: Rebecca Chaiken
- Treasurer: Rosmarie Frederickson

### **Directors:**

- Lunch with a Leader: Karyl Ann Armbruster
- Publicity: Jody Benson
- Voter Services: Lynn Jones
- Newsletter Editor: Robert Williams
- Director at Large: Addie Jacobson
- Director at Large: Akkana Peck

### **Off-board Directors:**

- Arrangements: Wendy Swanson
- County Council and P&Z Observers: June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin
- Membership: Jean Dewart & Dotty Reilly
- Nominations: Ellen Mills & Leslie Wallstrom
- Website and Facebook: Madhavi Garimella & Helena Whyte
- Video Editor: Eduardo Santiago



## 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 Newsletter Update as an electronic file, saving postage and paper.

\_\_\_\_\_ **OR** Check here if you prefer to have a hard copy of the newsletter mailed to you.

\_\_\_\_\_ 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-deduction statement.

\_\_\_\_\_ Single membership: \$45.

\_\_\_\_\_ Household membership (two or more people at the same address): \$70.

\_\_\_\_\_ Single Sustaining membership: \$75.

\_\_\_\_\_ Household Sustaining membership (two or more 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 area of interest: \_\_\_\_\_

##### Ways to Help with League Activities

- \_\_\_ Voter Registration
- \_\_\_ Organize/provide refreshments at forums
- \_\_\_ Observer Corps: Council, DPU, P&Z, etc.
- \_\_\_ Write newsletter articles
- \_\_\_ Assist in developing the Voter Guide (editing, developing questions, data entry, etc.)
- \_\_\_ Assist with Lunch with a Leader
- \_\_\_ Website/Social Media – Technical assistance and content development
- \_\_\_ Advocate for League positions – Communicate with local, state, and federal leaders
- \_\_\_ Serve on LWV-Los Alamos Board (we need a Treasurer and a Lead for the Voter Guide)
- \_\_\_ Other ideas?

(Details for these activities can be found in the March, 2022 Update.)



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