

# LWW LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS<sup>®</sup> OF LOS ALAMOS

# UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos  
P.O. Box 158, Los Alamos, NM 87544  
[www.LWVLosAlamos.org](http://www.LWVLosAlamos.org)  
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## ***Calendar***

May 18 Lunch with a Leader, Sen. Leo Jaramillo, Zoom, noon  
May 25 Board Meeting, Zoom, noon

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### ***May Lunch with a Leader: State Senator Leo Jaramillo***

Lunch with a Leader will be held on Thursday, May 18, via Zoom from noon to 1 p.m. Our speaker will be State Senator Leo Jaramillo, who was elected in November 2020. He actually represents only Los Alamos and not White Rock, but we know he works for all of Los Alamos County. He currently serves as the Vice Chairman of the Rules Committee and as a member of the Tax, Business and Transportation Committee in the New Mexico Senate.

Senator Jaramillo is a native son of the Española Valley and a proud alumnus of Española Valley High School. His passion for advocating for his community led him to an elected position on the Rio Arriba County Commission where he served as chairman of the board prior to being elected to the New Mexico State Senate.

Senator Jaramillo earned his bachelor's degree in Mass Communication and Journalism from the University of New Mexico and went on to earn his master's degree in Curriculum Design and Instructional Leadership from the College of Santa Fe. He is a former educator, news writer/producer, and financial business analyst. He is currently the Staff Operations Manager for the Associate Laboratory Director of Facilities and Operations at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

*Karyl Ann Armbruster*

## President's Message: Many Thanks!

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as Board President this year. The Board includes many hard-working, aware, and thoughtful community members, and it is my privilege to serve in a leadership role.

Profound gratitude is due to our long-standing Co-Presidents, Barbara Calef and Becky Shankland. They have served for more than a decade with dedication and grace, and have agreed to continue serving on the Board in other roles, assuring continuity and wise guidance.

The three of us, along with several other Board and League members, spent this past weekend hosting the State League's Convention in Los Alamos. Thank you to Ellen Mills, Jody Benson, Rebecca Chaiken, Jean Dewart, Karyl Ann Armbruster, Wendy Swanson, Rosmarie Frederickson, Addie Jacobson, and Maire O'Neill for their help as hosts.

Ellen hosted a welcoming reception Friday evening, before we got down to business Saturday and Sunday. On Saturday morning, Los Alamos County Council Chair Denise Derkacs welcomed convention attendees to Los Alamos; we also heard from our national League Liaison Alexis Juday-Marshall. Reports followed, from the Credentials Committee, Treasurer, Nominating Committee, Legislative Action Committee, and more. Over lunch we heard from State Representative Christine Chandler, who had a lot to share with us about the 2023 legislative session — the bills sponsored, passed, and/or signed — and knowledgeably fielded questions about key players and the process. The afternoon included more meetings, on fundraising, communications, and the environment, and a hike led by Jean on the Kwage Mesa Trail. We enjoyed a delicious dinner at Pig + Fig that night, while State Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard spoke about the activities of the State Land Office, successes in the 2023 session, her vision for the future of state land management, and the education fund to which lease and extraction monies go.

Sunday included adoption of the budget, adoption of recommended programs for study and action, adoption of current positions (used as a basis for advocacy), election of officers and directors, and the results of the silent auction. We began on Sunday with one of my favorite parts of the convention, the reports from local League Presidents in Las Cruces, Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Los Alamos, on their special events and activities in the past year. Becky presented for our local League, in a purple and gold suffragist sash, and we can be proud of just how vibrant our local League is, with educational exhibits, parade groups, Lunch with a Leader, and other well-attended programs. It was fascinating to hear about the events and activities of the other local Leagues, especially the ways in which they are engaging younger people and civics teachers.

You will hear more about our activities during the State League Convention this past weekend, and the ways in which we will implement some of the great ideas we heard there. Stay tuned!



Pre-Convention Reception . From left: Eileen VanWie, Johnnie Aldrich, Louise Marquez, Kathy Brook, all from Southern NM, and Ann LePage and Becky Shankland from Los Alamos. Photo by Jody Benson



Becky Shankland reports to the state convention about Los Alamos activities. State President Hannah Burling looks on. Photo by Barbara Calef

*Felicia Orth*

## Welcome, New Members!

### *Lisa Hampton writes:*

Earlier this year I retired from a 32-year career in the Nuclear Weapons Complex, working as a Project Controller, Quality Engineer, and Program Manager. When my children were growing up, I coached Youth Soccer and coached, officiated, and participated in Track and Field at all levels. Last year, I was very involved in local and state politics, hosting candidate forums and doing some fund raising. I also volunteered at a table at Ashley Pond during the LA Summer Concert Series. I enjoy wine tasting, traveling, swimming, and boating (anything coastal), and occasionally hiking with my husband, David. Whenever possible, I hang out with my six-year-old grandson who lives in Albuquerque. I have been particularly impressed with your Voter Guides and Candidate Forums, as well as your other worthwhile activities, and am looking forward to getting involved with the League!

### *David Hampton writes:*

I've lived in Los Alamos County since 1998 and retired from Los Alamos National Laboratory in 2017. Since then I've become involved in many local boards and other activities and have developed a passion for building community.

I've served as the President of the Los Alamos Cooperative Market Board, Treasurer of the Los Alamos Retirement Community Board, and Co-Chair of the County Parks and Recreation Board.

## Annual Meeting

The LWVLA Annual Meeting was attended by 28 League members. The minutes will be included in the next issue of the Update, but I can report that the draft budget was adopted, the bylaws were amended, the new board was elected, and the proposed program was approved. Please consider participating in the Pit Study. See the invitation below.



*Ellen Mills welcomes Jean Dewart to her home for the State Convention reception. Photo by Jody Benson*

*Barbara Calef*

## New Study: Pit Production in Los Alamos?

The LWVLA invites you to participate in the study "Should large scale pit production for nuclear weapons occur in Los Alamos?"

Please contact Jody Benson, [anteaterjrb@gmail.com](mailto:anteaterjrb@gmail.com), or leave your name and phone number at 505-662-4782. We will meet monthly beginning mid-May, so please respond by May 11. Then we can find a day and time that works for everyone.

### **Scope: Should large scale pit production for nuclear weapons occur in Los Alamos?**

1. Background information
  - a. Explain/define pits and how they are used for nuclear weapons.
  - b. Where were the former pit factories and why was production discontinued there?
  - c. What is the current plan for pit production?

2. Does the country need to build new pits?
  - a. Evidence pro and con that the existing weapons are not viable
  - b. Are they needed for new weapons?
  - c. Effect of production on national security—pro (deterrence) and con (increased tension)
3. If new pits are needed, why build them in Los Alamos?
  - a. Why not build them at Pantex or Savannah River?
  - b. Advantages/disadvantages of building them in Los Alamos
  - c. Advantages: jobs, federal dollars
  - d. Disadvantages: safety, security, and environmental issues

Here are links to three background articles related to plans for pit production in Los Alamos.

1. <https://discover.lanl.gov/publications/national-security-science/2021-winter/pit-production-explained/>
2. <https://www.energy.gov/nnsa/articles/nnsa-approves-start-construction-plutonium-pit-production-subproject-los-alamos>
3. <https://pubs.aip.org/physicstoday/article/76/4/22/2879444/Despite-unknowns-NNSA-plunges-ahead-on-plutonium>

## **Observer Corps Reports – County Council – Regular Session – April 4**

The hybrid session was attended by Council Chair Denise Derkacs and Councilors Theresa Cull, Melanee Hand, Suzie Havemann, David Reagor, and Randall Ryti, Councilor Keith Lepsch was absent. Our observer report is based upon discussion during the meeting and documentation provided in the full agenda package.

## **Feral cattle capture**

Council approved (5–1), with Councilor Hand in opposition, a contract with Busted Spur Cattle Company, LLC for feral cattle capture for an amount not to exceed \$595K. This is a seven-year agreement that is renewable each year and is paid based on the number of cattle “wrangled.”

The contractor is responsible for holding cattle in a temporary corral or other methods necessary in preparation for collection and transport by the New Mexico Livestock Board.

Councilor Hand objected to the proposed contract. “The cattle are not property of Los Alamos County. They’re actually property of New Mexico Livestock Board; that’s per New Mexico Statute. I just don’t understand why we’re having Los Alamos County taxpayers paying the money to extract cattle out of the County. Why aren’t we asking New Mexico Livestock Board to come get these cattle that are causing all these problems?”

Community Services Director Cory Styron responded, “Those are some questions that we have had all along. The reason we got into this business was purely public safety.” Deputy Chief Morris reported that, before the County started trying to manage the cattle issue, the Police Department was called out for 26 calls of cattle standing in the Y in January and February of 2021 and responded to a serious crash at that time.

“In March of 2021,” Styron continued, “our Open Space staff got an emergency agreement in place for a wrangler to start removing these animals. Also, our staff went out and repaired fencing that is our boundary markers between some of the National Forest, LANL, and the Pueblos. Calls immediately dropped to two per month on average.” He said the wranglers have tagged/bagged about 100 animals since the effort was started in 2021 and expects the rate of capture to decrease provided the County keeps its fencing in good shape. Nevertheless, Styron said there continue to be multiple incidents between feral cattle and cars, and also with cattle on County trails chasing hikers. He concluded that, “Between the public safety, and with our Police

Department and our team, we felt it was important for us to be proactive in protecting our residents and people coming up and down the Hill. But more importantly, as Deputy Police Chief Morris says, his fear is that, if we wait on the state or nothing is done, we'll have a fatality crash at some point. This is the prudent thing to do.”

## **Introduction of ordinances to amend the Development Code**

Council introduced an ordinance to increase the maximum building height along the edge of Los Alamos Canyon south of Trinity Drive in the Downtown Los Alamos (DTLA) Zoning District. The recently adopted Development Code allows a maximum building height of 86 ft in the DTLA north of Trinity Drive (with some restrictions to protect adjacent residential neighborhoods), and a maximum building height of 45 ft between Trinity Drive and the edge of Los Alamos Canyon. The proposed ordinance would increase the maximum building height to 54 ft within 150 ft of a property line abutting Los Alamos Canyon.

Council also introduced an ordinance to revise off-street parking requirements in downtown districts. The proposed ordinance would make the following changes to the Development Code:

- reduce off-street parking requirements for specific uses;
- clarify that off-street parking reduction allowances in downtown Los Alamos (50% reduction allowance) and the White Rock Town Center (25% reduction allowance) are not applicable to multi-family dwellings, which are required to provide at least 1 parking space per dwelling unit;
- reduce minimum off-street parking requirements for specific institutional and commercial uses;
- reduce minimum parking requirements when a parking facility is shared by uses with opposite peak parking demand hours; and

- clarify that additional parking reductions may be granted within any zone district if certain amenities are present (public transit stop, bicycle amenities, electrical charging stations, solar parking canopies).

At the Public Hearings for these ordinances held by the Planning and Zoning Commission on March 8, 2023, the Commission voted unanimously to forward recommendations to Council to approve both ordinances (see our observer report in the *April Update*). Public hearings on these ordinances are scheduled for Council's May 2, 2023 meeting.

## **Updated County-wide Trails & Open Space Management Plan**

Council voted 6-0 to change the scope of the Pueblo Canyon conceptual trail project to a single, comprehensive, consolidated county-wide trails and open space management plan.

Council included in its adopted motion that the consolidated plan will incorporate four plans (2013 Community Trail Plan, 2015 Open Space Management Plan, 2022 Los Alamos County Trailhead Assessment and 2009 Trail Management Planning Document), along with ADA audit and transition plans and the Los Alamos County open space restoration feasibility assessment. This plan will be holistic in its scope, including maintenance and improvements, and will consider recreation, mobility, economic vitality, and environmental sustainability. The County will coordinate with the Parks and Recreation Board and receive input from the board.

Additional details on Council's discussion of this agenda item can be found in the article by Kirsten Laskey, <https://ladailypost.com/council-action-taken-april-4-2023/>

## **Local Adopt-A-Road Program in Los Alamos County** (presented by Public Works Director Juan Rael)

Council approved unanimously the creation of an Adopt-A-Road Program and authorized the County Manager to proceed with the implementation.

Details of the proposal were provided in the County staff report. Mr. Richard Sturgeon, President of the Jemez Riders Riding Club, and member of LANL's Motorcycle Safety Committee, presented the Adopt-A-Road Program to the Transportation Board and County staff and asked that such a program be started in Los Alamos. The purpose of the program is to provide an opportunity for service organizations and volunteer groups to do a cleanup project and to interact as a team for a positive impact in the community. Many communities throughout the state have created their own "Adopt-A-Road" programs, modeled after the national program. Groups can pick a road section and, through their group, coordinate clean up days for that stretch of road. A sign can be installed indicating the Adopt-A-Road program and list participating groups. Potential streets identified by the County for this program consist of 5 miles along Central Avenue, Diamond Drive, and Overlook Road, broken up into 0.75-mi segments for adoption. Depending on the interest, additional roads can be added later.

### **Local news coverage of this meeting**

Kirsten Laskey, *Los Alamos Daily Post*, April 6, 2023. <https://ladailypost.com/council-action-taken-april-4-2023/>

*June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martn*

## **Observer Corps Reports – County Council, 4/17, 18 & 24/2023 – FY24 Budget Hearings**

The public hearings on the FY24 budget hearings were conducted in hybrid format over three days and were attended in person by all seven County Councilors.

### **Adopted FY24 County budget.**

During its final budget hearing on April 24, Council unanimously approved the County's proposed overall expenditures of \$382.1M for FY24 (up from \$280.4M in FY23 adopted budget). Staffing in the approved budget includes 43.5 new full-time-equivalent (FTE) employees, for a total of 768.48 FTEs in FY24. The new positions include 38 additional firefighters based upon LANL's projected needs. Included in the approved budget total are Capital Project expenditures of \$74.6M, which includes \$35M for the broadband project.

### **Projected County revenues and proposed GRT rate increase.**

Anticipated revenues for FY24 are \$391.4M, up from \$261.8M in FY23. The FY24 budget assumes a 0.5% increase in the municipal gross receipts tax (GRT), beginning January 1, 2024. GRT accounts for about 75% of the total budgeted revenues, and comes primarily from the community's largest employer, Triad. However, the County projects a significant decline in GRT revenue once LANL moves into pit manufacturing and takes advantage of the GRT exemption allowed for manufacturers. The proposed increase in GRT rate is intended to offset that long-term revenue decrease.

The proposed 0.5% rate increase in GRT will be considered by Council in a future meeting. Council voted 5–2, with Councilors Ryti and Reagor in opposition, to have the County Manager present two ordinances for council's consideration to raise the GRT by 0.5 % starting in January 2024 or July 2024. The County anticipates bringing the requested two

options to Council in June, with a public hearing scheduled in July.

Detailed coverage of the Council's discussion of the proposed GRT rate increase is provided by Kirsten Laskey in the *Los Alamos Daily Post*, April 27, 2023, <https://ladailypost.com/los-alamos-county-wrestles-with-increasing-grt>.

## General process for FY24 budget hearings

The proposed FY24 budget was guided by the goals and priorities established in the 2023 Strategic Leadership Plan adopted by County Council earlier this year and the subsequent Management Action Plans developed by County staff.

The budget review process began with an overview of the proposed FY24 budget and long-range financial projections from County staff. Council then reviewed each department base budget and any budget options for one-time or recurring expenses. Council motions were made to tentatively approve each department budget and the budget options. Items were placed in a "parking lot" for further evaluation after all of the budgets had been tentatively approved. At the end of the hearings and resolution of outstanding issues, Council voted on a final motion to approve the total budget, with any amendments, and associated fund transfers.

County guidance to departments in preparation of their proposed budgets was to allow for an average 5% adjustment in salaries (on top of a 10% increase in salaries approved by Council in midyear).

## Elected Officials

Council voted to tentatively approve all of the proposed FY24 budgets for elected officials, for a total of \$3.2M (up from \$2.6M in FY23 adopted budget). This total includes the budgets for County Council, County Assessor's Office, County Clerk's Office, Sheriff's Office, Municipal Court, and Probate Court. Council also approved the budget option for a deputy clerk position in the Clerk's Office, which will allow the office to better handle the increased

workload and complexities relating to elections. Council's approvals were unanimous except in the case of the Assessor's proposed budget, which was approved 6–1 with Councilor Reagor in opposition.

## County Manager's Office (presented by County Manager Steven Lynne)

Council unanimously voted to tentatively approve the County Manager's proposed budget of \$53M (up from \$17M in FY23 adopted budget), which included \$35M of projected funding for the broadband program. Approval included three of four associated budget options:

- \$250K for the Regional Workforce Development Initiative utilizing the Communities of Excellence framework,
- \$50K for contractual services for grant writing, and
- \$100K set aside for potential grant match requirements.

Council later approved a proposed budget option for a \$107K fulltime position in Human Resources to address employee recruitment. Lynne explained that this additional position was a high priority for him, given County difficulties in hiring to fill vacant positions with high-quality personnel and filling entry-level positions which tend to have higher turnover rates. As examples, Public Works Director Juan Rael reported vacancies on the order of 20% in his department for much of the year, and 30% vacancies in transit drivers. He noted that this new position would be a tremendous help. "We're constantly hiring, or we're constantly interviewing, reviewing applications; that cycle just never ends, in terms of trying to hire transit staff," he said. Additionally, DOE is requiring that the County hire 38 new firefighters (see discussion below).

## County Attorney's Office (presented by County Attorney Alvin Leaphart)

Council unanimously voted to tentatively approve the proposed budget of \$1.4M (up from \$1.1M in FY23). No budget options were requested.

## **Administrative Services Department (ASD)** (presented by Deputy County Manager Anne Laurent)

Council voted 6–1, with Councilor Reagor opposed, to tentatively approve the proposed ASD budget of \$13.7M (up from \$12.5M in FY23 adopted budget). Several budget options were moved to the "parking lot" for discussion on the final day of the budget hearing, at which time Council approved an Administrative Services Director position for \$243K while reducing the ASD Special Pay Fund to be used for upcoming retirements by \$500K.

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

Council unanimously voted to tentatively approve the proposed CDD budget of \$20.5M (up from \$16.4M in FY23 adopted budget). No budget options were requested.

## **Community Services Department (CSD)** (presented by CSD Director Cory Styron on Day 2 of the budget hearings)

Council unanimously voted to tentatively approve the proposed CSD budget of \$29.6M (down from \$33.0M in FY23 adopted budget), along with several budget options:

- \$25K for a parttime office specialist for the Parks and Recreation Division,
- \$111K for a program specialist, whose duties would include facilities contract management of social services vendors and assisting the Health Council strategy implementations,
- \$130K for software to assist with the management of parks, open space, and recreational assets,
- \$20K to expand digital collections on Hoopla and Overdrive for the libraries, and
- a quarter-time office specialist position and another fulltime program specialist.

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

Council unanimously voted to tentatively approve the proposed Fire Department budget of \$57.0M (up from \$37.4M in FY23 adopted budget) which included 38 new fulltime firefighter positions. Currently, the Fire Department has a staff of 150.

Hughes explained that the need for 38 new firefighters resulted from the Baseline Needs Assessment conducted by LANL this year as part of its contract with DOE. The additional positions were needed to meet National Fire Protection Agency standards and DOE Orders related to the number of responders required for high-rise properties and high-hazard occupancies. Under the agreement it has with DOE, the County's share of costs for these new personnel is currently 26%, with DOE paying the rest. Once the negotiations for a new agreement are completed later in FY24, the County's share will go down.

Hughes reminded Council that the budget being presented was not the department's entire budget. DOE picks up costs for nearly all of the department's expensive assets. The three fire stations on LANL property are 100% funded by DOE. One fire station is currently under construction, with two more stations scheduled to follow. Nearly all of the department's vehicles are also owned by DOE, with two ladder trucks and three more engines on order for \$5.1M for which DOE will pay.

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

Council unanimously voted to tentatively approve the proposed Police Department budget of \$13.8M (up from \$11.9M in FY23 adopted budget), along with budget options for design plans for an emergency operations center at Fire Station #3 (\$100K), a crash data retrieval system (\$31K) and a canine program (\$35K).

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



Council unanimously voted to tentatively approve the Public Works budget of \$60.9M (up from \$55.9M in FY23 adopted budget), with the addition of two limited-term fulltime Project Manager positions. Rael explained, “These are temporary positions to help us get through the bulk of the CIP and are proposed to be for three years.”

The Public Works Department does not have any budget option requests for FY24. However, looking towards FY25, the Capital Projects and Facilities Division will build upon the recently completed *Facilities Condition Assessment* to evaluate cost data and planning for future repair and maintenance of the County’s facility asset portfolio [see our observer report in the April LWVLA *Update* for the Council meeting held on March 17].

“We have a plan to start looking at our long-term building maintenance,” said Rael, “and we will be working with our new Sustainability Manager and the Department of Public Utilities to establish a baseline of our energy use. This will be used for future sustainable decisions that are on the horizon regarding our building facility maintenance for large ticket items, such as HVAC. While we could have proposed a sizeable increase in the capital projects and facilities operating budget this year—especially since the theme of this budget hearing seems to be maintenance—we felt it prudent to wait until we had further analysis and data before proposing anything further. We want to make sure that any additional dollars that we invest with the goal of sustainability be evaluated to make sure we are getting the best benefit for our money.”

**Department of Public Utilities (DPU)**  
(presented by DPU Deputy Utilities Manager James Alarid, Deputy Utilities Manager of Finance Heather Garcia, and Utilities Manager Philo Shelton)

Council voted unanimously to tentatively approve the DPU proposed budget of \$115.4M (up from \$87.7M in FY23 adopted budget).

**Non-departmental budget** (presented by Helen Perraglio)

Council voted unanimously to tentatively approve the non-departmental proposed budget of \$7.4M (up from \$4.6M in FY23 adopted budget). Council also approved a \$3.4M budget option for a salary plan to address employee retention and recruitment as well as a market study and compression impacts.

**Capital Projects** (presented by Steven Lynne)

Council voted 5–2, with Councilors Reagor and Ryti in opposition, to tentatively approve the proposed Capital Project budget of \$74.6M (up from \$33.6M in FY23 adopted budget).

Council later approved the proposed budget of \$1M per year for three years to renovate existing athletic field renovations in lieu of preceding with a capital project for a tennis tournament complex that had been approved in the budget for FY23. Lynne explained that this proposal was based upon three factors: Council’s strategic discussion about focusing on maintaining existing assets as a higher priority than new assets, similar feedback received during the CIP Town Hall meetings, and the unexpected increase in costs estimated for the new complex. These costs escalated from the original estimate of \$2.5M to updated estimates of \$6.5M for the North Mesa site and \$7.5M for the Overlook Park site.

*June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin*

***April Lunch with a Leader:  
Chief Justice Shannon Bacon***

Shannon Bacon, Chief Justice of the New Mexico Supreme Court, began her talk by praising the League of Women Voters, which, she said, “is particularly helpful because of its neutrality.” She shares the League’s belief that everyone who is registered to vote, whatever their party, should be given every opportunity to vote. Justice Bacon reflected that it was her desire to look at both sides of issues that led her to think she might want to be a judge.

Justice Bacon discussed her concern about the erosion of confidence in democracy and in the rule of law. She referred to the 2022 report of the National Center for State Courts, which reveals that public trust in the state courts continues to slide. The poll, which was previously conducted in 2012, indicates that confidence in the courts is dropping at a higher rate than for the other branches of government. In 2012, when asked how much confidence they had in the various government institutions, 73% of those polled had a great deal or some confidence in the U.S. Supreme Court, but in 2022 only 53% expressed confidence in that court. For the state courts, there was also a loss of confidence, but it was less severe – from 67% to 60%.

Justice Bacon said that judges across the country are concerned about this decline; it highlights the need for neutral information. Teaching people to discern what is the truth, what are the facts, is difficult because of the constant news cycle. She commented that some people say the *Washington Post* is the most neutral of the newspapers. The *New York Times* is not neutral, she added, although she reads it. It is important to be aware of the neutral sources of information. This is where the League excels.

How to increase the public trust is a difficult problem. Justice Bacon said that we have a robust judicial code of conduct in the New Mexico courts enforced by the New Mexico Judicial Standards Commission. In addition, the Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission was created to improve the performance of judges and provide useful, credible information to voters on judges standing for retention.

The New Mexico Supreme Court has developed a civics education program about the judiciary's role in our democracy and the development of the rule of law. The Supreme Court goes on the road, conducting oral arguments before classes around the state. The justices select actual cases that will be of interest to students and develop lesson plans as well.

In response to questions about judicial elections, Justice Bacon said that New Mexico

is the only state that has public financing for the races; this keeps “big money” out. The recent race in Wisconsin was the most expensive state court judicial race ever. The candidates ran on their positions on abortion and gerrymandering, something that would not be allowed in New Mexico.

The current elections system for judges in New Mexico is a compromise between election and appointment. The Judicial Nominating Commissions (JNC) screen applicants for judicial appointments. When there is a vacancy on a court, the Governor selects one of the candidates on the JNC list. However, the appointee must run in the next general election and may face opposition from a candidate who has not been vetted by the JNC. Potential jurists may not want to engage in the electoral process. Perhaps it would be better to have the governor appoint, the Senate confirm, and then require a retention vote rather than election. Justice Bacon announced that the Supreme Court is putting together a commission to study the system.

Another drawback in finding experienced attorneys to serve in the judiciary is the retirement program. Currently to be eligible for a pension, judges must hold office for 20 years, like other civil servants. Justice Bacon believes that it would be better to appoint people in their 50s rather than their 30s because they have more experience, but then they must work into their 70s to get a pension.

Other questions from League members raised some interesting issues. In the future the courts will see more litigation over water as well as fracking and alternative energy. This is a concern because most judges come from criminal law background, not civil law. They need to be trained to handle those matters.

Also, tribal sovereign immunity issues come to the state courts because people file lawsuits there regarding land use, tort law, personal injury, and criminal law. The judge must determine where the lawsuit can proceed, whether the court has jurisdiction. There are many unresolved questions.

*Barbara Calef*

## Tickler Report – Tentative Council Agenda Items

## Tickler Report – County BCC Vacancies

### Tickler Report Tentative Council Agenda Items for April 2023

This is a partial list of tentative Council agenda items. All of the items are subject to change.

- Agreement with DOE/NNSA authorizing construction of new water tank as part of Jemez Mountain Fire Protection System
  - Possible action to approve agreement at 5/2/23 meeting
- Grant of utility easement by DOE/NNSA to the County for construction of water and electric lines associated with Jemez Mountain Fire Protection System
  - Possible action to approve grant of easement at 5/2/23 meeting
- Ordinance to increase building height south of Trinity Drive in Downtown Los Alamos Zoning District (Development Code)
  - Public hearing and possible action to adopt ordinance at 5/2/23 meeting
- Ordinance to revise off-street parking requirements in downtown districts (Development Code)
  - Public hearing and possible action to adopt ordinance at 5/2/23 meeting
- Potential Ordinance that Prohibits Feeding of Wild Animals
  - Discussion at 5/16/23 meeting
- Wildland Fire Preparedness Presentation
  - Presentation at 5/16/23 meeting
- Redevelopment Concept Plans of 20th Street south of Trinity Dr in Downtown Los Alamos
  - Presentation at 5/16/23 meeting
- Climate Investment Center by Coalition of Sustainable Communities New Mexico
  - Presentation and possible action to support Center at 5/23/23 meeting
- Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions Study and Climate Action Plan
  - Possible action to support services agreement at 5/23/23 meeting

### County BCC Vacancies as of April 25, 2023

Los Alamos County has 12 standing Boards and Commissions (BCCs). Generally, the purpose of a board is to serve in an advisory capacity to the County Council, but some have statutory responsibilities as well. All BCCs are listed below with their current vacancies. Upcoming vacancies (in the next 6 months) are in yellow.

• Art in Public Places Board	1
○ 2 terms ending on May 24	
• Board of Public Utilities	0
○ 1 term ending on June 30	
• County Health Council	2
• Environmental Sustainability Board	1
○ 1 term ending on July 31	
• Historic Preservation Advisory Board	0
○ 2 terms ending on April 30	
• Labor Management Relations Board	0
• Library Board	0
• Lodgers' Tax Advisory Board	0
• Parks and Recreation Board	1
• Personnel Board	1
• Planning and Zoning Commission	2
• Transportation Board	2

Interested Los Alamos County residents may submit an online application by visiting the County's Boards and Commissions webpage and selecting "apply."

[https://www.losalamosnm.us/government/boards\\_\\_commissions](https://www.losalamosnm.us/government/boards__commissions)

# **LWVLA Board of Directors 2023-2024**

## **Officers:**

- President: Felicia Orth
- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President: [open]
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President: Ellen Mills
- Past President: Barbara Calef
- Secretary: Rebecca Chaiken
- Treasurer: Addie Jacobson

## **Directors:**

- Reservations: Amy Birnbaum
- Lunch with a Leader: Karyl Ann Armbruster
- Newsletter Editor: Robert Williams
- Publicity: Jody Benson
- Director at Large: Akkana Peck
- Director at Large: Rebecca Shankland
- Voter Services: Lynn Jones

## **Off-board Directors:**

- Arrangements: Wendy Swanson
- Nominating Committee: [open]
- Fundraising: Ellen Mills, Leslie Wallstrom, and Tracy McFarland
- Observer Corps, County Council: June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin
- Membership: Jean Dewart
- Website/Social Media: Madhavi Garimella and Helena Whyte
- Video: Eduardo Santiago



## MEMBERSHIP FORM

LWV Los Alamos/ P.O. Box 158 / Los Alamos, NM 87544

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone(s) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Categories:** All checks for memberships and contributions should be payable to LWV-Los Alamos and all are tax-deductible. Let us know if you'd like a tax-deduction statement. A substantial portion of Single and Household membership dues support state and national League of Women Voters work. The additional funds from sustaining single or household memberships support Los Alamos LWV initiatives such as the Voter Guide, candidate forums, etc.

\_\_\_\_ 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: Free (must be 16 or over)

\_\_\_\_ Additional donation to support the Los Alamos LWV work: \$\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ 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.

### Ways to help the League if you wish to be an active member (check as many as apply)

\_\_\_\_ Register voters at events such as the Farmers Market. Training by the County Clerk's office

\_\_\_\_ Organize/provide refreshments at forums when we meet in person.

\_\_\_\_ Observer Corps: Watch Council, DPU, P&Z meetings etc. and write a short summary to publish in our newsletter. (All meetings are recorded, so you can watch them later.)

\_\_\_\_ Write newsletter articles on a local issue or League activity.

\_\_\_\_ Assist in developing the Voter Guide: edit, develop questions, enter data onto League database, work with news publications to get the information printed, etc.

\_\_\_\_ Assist with Lunch with a Leader: order/deliver lunches when we meet in person, help set up tables.

\_\_\_\_ Website/social media: technical assistance and content development.

\_\_\_\_ Advocate for League positions: communicate with local, state, and federal leaders.

\_\_\_\_ Serve on the LWV-Los Alamos Board.

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P.O. Box 158  
Los Alamos, NM 87544