

UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos
P.O. Box 158, Los Alamos, NM 87544
www.LWVLosAlamos.org
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FIRST CALL TO LWVLA ANNUAL MEETING – In Person! *April 18, 2024 at the Unitarian Church*

Calendar

March 14 Lunch with a Leader, Unitarian Church, LAC Social Services Manager Jessica Strong, noon
March 18 Board Meeting, Unitarian Church, noon
April 18 **Annual Meeting:** Lunch with a Leader; LWVLA annual business meeting, Fellowship Hall, Unitarian Church, 1738 N. Sage Loop noon-2:30 p.m.

February Lunch with a Leader: LAC Social Services Manager Jessica Strong

The March 14 Lunch with a Leader will be at the Unitarian Church on N. Sage Loop from noon to 1 p.m. Our speaker will be Jessica Strong, Manager of the Los Alamos County Social Services Division. In this role, she oversees a staff of five and helps with programs that benefit the health and well-being of community members facing problems with their housing, physical and behavioral healthcare, state, and federal benefits, and/or food insecurity. She has been in this role for just over a year.

Strong was born and raised in Columbus, Ohio, and moved to Pittsburgh to attend graduate school in Public Policy at Carnegie Mellon University. She and her family moved to Los Alamos in 2020 to be closer to her in-laws. Her husband is Robert Sayre, the chef-owner of Secret City Kitchen.

Prior to joining Los Alamos County Social Services in 2023, Ms. Strong was the Executive Director of the Social Work Hospice and Palliative Care Network, a national non-profit that supports an interdisciplinary hospice and palliative care team. Prior to that, she was the co-founder of Flexible, a Pittsburgh-based start-up designing on-demand childcare solutions for working parents, and the founder of a co-working space with on-site childcare. She has spent many years working in the human services field as a trainer, programs analyst, grant-writer, and consultant, working with projects that intersect mental health and substance use, housing, aging, and trauma-informed care needs.



Jessica Strong, Social Services manager for Los Alamos County. Photo by Minesh Bacrania.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

LWV Dues Are Due in April

Dues for membership or sustaining membership in the Los Alamos League of Women Voters are due in April. A membership form is available at the end of this newsletter. Mail your completed form to the LWVLA, P.O. Box 158. Alternatively, you can renew your membership online at <https://my.lwv.org/new-mexico/los-alamos>.

The funds from regular memberships primarily support programs at the state and national level such as voter education/registration efforts and legal actions to protect voting rights. The additional funds from sustaining members of the League go to support programs in Los Alamos, such as our Voter Guide. All memberships are tax deductible because the League is a 501(c)(3) organization. Whichever way you join, your membership supports our effort to help citizens to participate in our democracy. We thank you!

Jean Dewart

Past President's Message: Supporting Our Open Spaces

At the Annual Meeting last year, League members approved updating the Environment Position, which contained references to several County documents. A committee including Ann LePage, David North, Akkana Peck, and me met to discuss which statements from the documents to include. The revised position will be presented to our members at the Annual Meeting on April 18 for approval. During the review, we realized that we should be speaking out more frequently in support of our positions. Our first action was to send the following letter to the County Council:

The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos believes that our natural environment is integral to our community's unique sense of place and to our well-being and prosperity. We support protection of this environment, including the canyons and other open space, vistas, wildlife habitat, and dark skies.

During the recent revision of the County's Development Code, our members submitted comments regarding the role of open space in the County. We asked that some parcels be re-zoned to reflect their existing uses. When the Council adopted the revised Development Code on December 13, 2022, we heard Mr. Andrus say that his department and the contractor, Dekker, Perich, Sabatini (DPS), planned to address these items. Jessica Lawlis of DPS then listed seven parcels for which re-zoning was requested:

1. The parcel between the Canyon Rim Trail and #502, currently zoned IND (for explanation of these abbreviations, see below). We believe it should be POS-AO.
2. Three parcels adjacent to the Golf Course, which Ms. Lawlis suggested be POS-PP. We believe they should be POS-PO.
3. Bayo Canyon, currently POS-AO. We believe it should be zoned POS-PO.
4. The softball field on North Mesa is currently POS-AO. We believe it should be POS-PP.
5. Piñon Park in White Rock is WRTC. We believe it should be POS-PP.

Mr. Andrus said that this matter would be addressed during the period of the DPS contract extension. He suggested that it be discussed by the Parks and Recreation Board with public outreach before the Planning and Zoning Commission hearing required for re-zoning. More than a year has passed without any action that we are aware of. We request that you direct staff to address the zoning problems now.

For clarity, we are listing the abbreviations for the parcels discussed above:

IND = industrial

POS-AO = Active Open Space

POS-PP = Public Park

POS-PO = Passive Open Space

WRTC = White Rock Town Center.

Barbara Calef

Fundraising Committee Report

The Fundraising Committee completed the first request for donations from the Friends of the League. Nine League members attended a potluck dinner on February 26th. The group wrote personal notes to each friend, and then stuffed and stamped envelopes. Fifty-two letters were sent out on Tuesday. The group is anxious to see the response in this very important election year. The next step is to make donation requests to our local businesses.

Ellen Mills

Observer Corps Report – County Council – February 6, 2024

Minimum Wage; Food Waste Composting

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

Public Hearing: Establishing a Minimum Wage in Los Alamos County

By a vote of 3–4, with Vice Chair Cull and Councilors Hand, Lepsch, and Reagor in opposition, Council rejected a proposed ordinance that would have established a minimum wage in Los Alamos County that would be higher than the current State-

mandated minimum of \$12/hr. The ordinance, as amended, proposed to do so in a stepwise fashion:

- Incrementally increase the minimum wage in the County by \$1/hr each year for three years.
- Incrementally increase the minimum wage by \$0.50/hr for student employees and \$0.25/hr for tipped employees.
- Base subsequent increases on the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index.

If passed, this ordinance would have become effective January 1, 2025.

(For background on the origin of this ordinance, see the observer report for Council's session on 5/23/23, 'Presentation on Raising the Minimum Hourly Wage in Los Alamos County,' in June 2023 LWVLA Update).

Council discussion

Discussion among the councilors was spirited and passionate. Most councilors supported a living wage as a concept but debated whether the impact of increasing the minimum wage in the County at this time would be more negative than positive. Many critical comments echoed those of local businesses who attended the public forum hosted by the Chamber of Commerce in coordination with Los Alamos Main Street on January 22.

Impacts on small local businesses

Councilors Hand and Vice Chair Cull said that local businesses had expressed serious objections to the proposed increase in minimum wage.

"We keep on seeing businesses going out of business," said Councilor Hand, "and if we say that small businesses are important to us, I think we need to listen to what they are telling us, and they do not want this."

Impacts on contractual work

Councilors Hand and Vice Chair Cull enumerated several examples to illustrate how

raising the minimum wage could have negative consequences for contractual work.

- A lot of small businesses in town work on lowest price contracts, and the success of their bids depends in part on how their employees are paid. They may become less competitive when bidding against out-of-town businesses that are not subject to paying a higher minimum wage.
- Existing contracts would need to be renegotiated, which is a costly and time-consuming process.
- Increasing wages for the lowest-paid workers could set the stage for wage compression. This occurs when employees who have been in a job for a long time make less than new hires in the same position, so that they will also want a \$3/hr raise.
- Increasing the minimum wage could have a domino effect in which an expectation for a \$3 increase in hourly wages propagates up the chain.
- Other costs also increase when salaries are increased, such as costs for maintenance and supplies.

Impacts on non-profit organizations

Several councilors acknowledged the potential negative impacts on nonprofit organizations, including those under contract with the County, such as those that provide social services in town. "Many nonprofits are running on very tight budgets," said Councilor Reagor. "They pay their workers very little, and you're creating a real pinch for them."

Timing of an increase in minimum wage

"Now is not the time to raise the minimum wage," said Vice Chair Cull. "I think the market, currently, with a limited workforce, is driving wages higher," she said. "If employers want to hire people with certain skills and want to keep them, they're having to pay more than \$15/hr now."

She continued, "In a time when there's lots of employees looking for work, I think that's when a minimum wage is really important

because employers will try to hire employees at as low a wage as possible. Right now is not that time."

Councilor Havemann disagreed with this perspective. "I don't know that I resonate with the notion that, 'On the one hand, I support a living wage but now's not the time to do it.' The same excuses were given about climate change action and energy conservation. That's been a mindset with lots of social and business issues in our nation's history."

Impacts on minimum-wage workers

Several councilors commented that even \$15/hr would not constitute a living wage in Los Alamos. Raising the minimum wage, they said, is not going to solve the real issue of affordability in Los Alamos. Some saw this as an argument against raising it at all. "What's the point?" asked Councilor Reagor.

Another argument against raising the minimum wage was that some minimum-pay workers might consequently lose eligibility for certain social or safety net programs, such as Section 8 housing assistance and food assistance programs like WIC and SNAP.

Countering that point of view, Councilor Havemann said, "I think a desired outcome of this is to raise the floor, to raise all boats, to raise income levels and strive to have fewer people relying on government-subsidized social programs."

Chair Derkacs pointed out that, "When people are paid low wages – and I'm talking adults here – and they have to depend on public assistance to live, ... the entire State is then supplementing the wages of individual employees. By increasing the minimum wage, those costs to the employee then would be expected to be passed on to the people who use their services. ... From my perspective, I think that it is better that the people that use the services pay for the cost of wages rather than to share the burden among the general public."

Councilor Ryti emphasized the importance of indexing the minimum wage so as to take inflation into account. "We're trying to address

the floor, and make sure that floor increases as we have inflation," he said.

Council's constituency

Councilor Havemann reminded the Council that it also represented working people, not just business owners. "We've also received a lot of letters and input from non-business owners, who are also our constituents, also residents and taxpayers and contributors to this community who are hoping that we do this, and do this aggressively and quickly."

"Council has an obligation to help people who might otherwise not be heard," she said. "I think that it is important that we try to help people and individuals who might otherwise fall through the cracks and who maybe don't have an opportunity or the means to advocate for themselves."

Broad public support

Councilor Havemann said that, based on what she had heard and from conversations she had had with constituents, most people supported the concept of a higher minimum wage. "People said that yes, while they had concerns, if it was done thoughtfully, they might be able to support it. And I also found that people fundamentally actually support in general a minimum wage but it's how they incorporate it into their own organization or business, that's where it gets a little sticky."

Councilor Havemann felt that the ordinance, as amended, represented the thoughtful approach that constituents desired. "We have many priorities as a Council and as a County government, and small business support is absolutely high on that list. I just feel that that's why a compromise is being presented, to say that we're not going to start this for a long time, so organizations can plan, and we're going to do it very gradually."

Nationwide trend

Councilor Havemann pointed out that the ordinance to raise the minimum wage was not a radical proposal but rather was in line with a nationwide trend. "Thirty states and dozens of local governments have already taken action to

raise their minimum wages. Twenty-four states are going to be doing so again this year. Santa Fe led on this issue over 20 years ago, way back in 2003. I feel pretty passionately about this," she concluded. "But I do understand, I am listening to the challenges, and if there are other ways that this ordinance can be modified to try to incorporate some of the challenges, I'm all ears."

Food Waste Composting Site

Voting unanimously, Council accepted staff's recommendation and directed staff to seek an amendment to the DOE Lease Agreement to accommodate the composting project; and, following DOE approval, to implement food composting at the Eco Station using Aerated Static Piles; and to provide drop-off sites for residents and curbside collection for businesses.

Public Works Director Juan Rael began his presentation with a recap of the compost feasibility study and the initial selection of a site in Bayo Canyon to compost food waste using a windrow system. He then explained why that site was deemed infeasible, how the staff proceeded to search for alternative sites, and the rationale for tonight's recommendation that the composting program be sited at the Eco Station and that the waste be treated using aerated static pile technology.

Recap of compost feasibility study

Los Alamos County contracted with SCS Engineers to conduct a food waste composting feasibility study in April 2021. The program's intent was to reduce the waste stream being trucked down the Hill for disposal at an offsite landfill, and instead keep some of that waste in town and reusable.

The SCS study evaluated several locations in the County, several technology options for treatment, and different collection locations throughout the community to implement a food composting program. As a result of that study, in September 2022 Council approved implementing a food composting system at Bayo Canyon using the windrow method and

providing drop-off sites for residents and curbside collection for businesses.

(For background on the feasibility study and site selection, see observer reports covering Council's sessions on 5/17/22 'Food waste composting feasibility study overview' [June 2022 LWVLA *Update*] and 9/06/22 'Implementation of a food waste composting program' [October 2022 LWVLA *Update*]).

Infeasibility of sites in Bayo Canyon

Rael explained that, due to unforeseen difficulties, the proposed site location in Bayo Canyon faced significant and costly challenges. When they began to design the site, they realized "there were severe grading challenges, making it very expensive." Then, another costly problem arose, the need to relocate water and sewer lines running underneath the site.

At this point, staff decided to evaluate alternative sites within Bayo Canyon so as to stay within the original direction from Council. However, these were deemed unsuitable due to potential operational conflicts or the proximity to DOE monitoring wells.

Evaluation of a site at the Eco Station

The search then shifted to the Eco Station as a potential composting site. While having multiple benefits, this solution hinges on successfully obtaining an amendment to the existing DOE Lease Agreement for the Eco Station, which is on DOE property. The County has a 25-year-lease, which was signed in 2011. Two provisions in that lease are very specific:

- The Lessee may engage in a containerized composting operation on this parcel with Lessor approval.
- If Lessor determines that the fully composted material creates a nuisance because of unpleasant odors, it may request the Lessee [the County] to remove the material.

Rael provided background about these provisions. "At the time this lease was signed in 2011, the biosolids composting operation

was occurring on the Eco Station," he said, "and it was causing a smell issue that emanated from that area. That was the impetus for this restriction to be put into this lease."

Staff also evaluated two treatment options for the Eco Station site: in-vessel containers and aerated static piles. Rael described the latter as food compost mixed with chipped mulch. Air is introduced from the bottom through very low-tech technology - in this case, large fans and PVC pipes. This technology offers advantages such as lower capital costs and minimal construction requirements in comparison to the previous windrow method.

Rael pointed out that another advantage of the aerated static pile technology is that there is an example in Santa Fe. "We visited an operation in Santa Fe that's actually doing this," he said, "and doing this very well and successfully. They are collecting food scraps from anybody that wants to drop them off – schools, businesses, whoever, they'll take them. And it's working. So, it's working in our climate, it's working in our region, and I love the technological approach to this because it's easy to scale up, it's easy to scale down."

Time frame

Rael estimated a 1–2-year time frame for implementation. "There still is a design process to this, we still have to get those utilities permitted, we still have to go to DOE to get their approval. And then we'd have to order the equipment. It would be a new collection truck and a new piece of heavy equipment that we would use to turn this material within the site."

Council questions

Councilor Reagor was skeptical that DOE would be willing to amend the lease. "I remember how stinky that was, about five years ago," he said. "That's really what they're talking about, isn't it?" Rael replied that Reagor was correct, "but at that time, it was a different operation. It wasn't food composting. We're not anticipating a huge odor increase," he said.

Chair Derkacs asked what the options would be if DOE was not willing to amend the

lease agreement to allow the facility. Rael said staff would then either consider the more costly in-vessel container system at the Eco Station or look at one of the existing vacant spots within the County. However, some of these other sites might be close to residences.

Councilor Ryti asked about the feasibility of using the area of the solar panels on the old capped landfill. Sustainability Manager Angelica Gurule answered that they looked at that site, but, -because of the geosynthetic clay liner on the landfill and the type of moisture there, it's really hard to drive there during the winter months or spring showers.

Council discussion of motion

Council was uniformly supportive of the staff's recommended action. "I think that the most obvious place for this is where you are proposing," said Vice Chair Cull, "and I hope that we can get DOE's approval to implement this at the Eco Station."

Councilor Havemann added that, "I would hope that DOE has its own sustainability objectives and metrics it needs to meet, and NNSA as well."

Summarizing, Chair Derkacs said, "It's disappointing that the first option didn't work out but this sounds like a viable alternative and hopefully DOE will be amenable to amending the lease so we can move forward with this."

June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin

Observer Corps Report – Planning & Zoning Commission – February 14, 2024

The Planning & Zoning (P&Z) Commission meeting was attended by Chair Rachel Adler, Vice Chair Stephanie Nakhleh, and

Commissioners Katherine Bruell, David Hampton, Benjamin Hill, and Rebecca White. Commissioners Neil Martin and Karen Easton were absent.

Proposed townhouse subdivision called Sherwood Rounds

Philip Gursky, applicant, represented IMG, LLC, which is a development advisory group and investment group, and Twilight Homes of NM, LLC, on behalf of the Handy Family Trust, property owner.

The development proposes 29 two-story, attached housing units or townhouses on 1.05 acres on vacant land on both sides of Longview Drive. Twenty-five (25) of the 29 lots will front onto Longview Drive. The proposed density would be similar to the 1- and 2-story townhouses in Village Place to the east. To the west are two buildings owned by Montessori Day Care.

The other 4 units in the proposed development are duplex units on the south part of the property, facing the back sides of single-family homes along Aztec Drive. County open space provides a 50-ft wide buffer to those back yards.

Gursky described some of the key objectives of the development's design. "We're basing this project on building entry-level and affordable housing for a place that hasn't had an affordable or entry-level subdivision since 2009," said Gursky. Several County policies and plans call out the need to provide a wide range of housing at various price levels, and "we're looking to provide something that nobody is providing already," he said.

Townhouse density was one design element to try to create affordable housing. "Under the [White Rock Town Center] Master Plan, you're allowed to have either vertical or horizontal density," said Gursky, "We elected to do horizontal density and create what would be an excellent rowhome-style construction.

The interior of the housing units was designed to try to produce something affordable, said Gursky. The smallest townhouse units are just over 1000 sq ft, with 3

bedrooms, 2-1/2 baths, a 1-car garage and small yards in back and front.

Gursky said, “We can’t tell you exactly what our prices will be, but every decision we’ve taken has been to reduce the cost and to make them affordable, and we hope to be able to bring these in at very little over \$300,000 for the small ones. That is a price equivalent to what one-quarter of a 70-year-old quad that needs rehabilitation [would cost].”

The duplexes will be somewhat larger and more expensive than the townhouses. Gursky explained that the larger lots were designed to provide a buffer between the townhouses and the single-family houses on Aztec.

Gursky added, “In order to make it affordable for the Los Alamos Housing Partnership, we have to do what any developer does; we need to have a few houses that produce a higher level of return so that we can subsidize the costs paid by the nonprofit housing partnership to acquire them.”

Conformity with County policies and plans

The proposed subdivision, Sherwood Rounds, is within White Rock Town Center (WRTC). Like all developments, it is required to meet relevant criteria in the Development Code, which include a requirement to conform to the intent and policies of the comprehensive plan and other adopted county policies and plans. The relevant plans include the WRTC Master Plan and the White Rock Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA).

Jane Mathews, a Senior Planner with the Community Development Department, presented the draft findings of fact prepared by the planning staff. The staff agreed that the proposed development “conforms to the Comprehensive Plan through the promotion of a diverse economic base by the encouragement of a variety of housing options. The proposed subdivision is in conformance with the Development Code.”

Density of housing

Notwithstanding its conformance with the Comprehensive Plan and Development Code, the staff objected strenuously to the proposed development on the grounds that, in several respects, it did not adequately address the vision set out in the WRTC Master Plan. Staff felt that the development plan did not meet the potential of providing the density of housing envisioned by Master Plan.

The Master Plan shows 1- to 3-story townhouses on this property. The infill potential of these townhouses is listed as 109 units assuming 3-story townhouses of 1000 sq. ft. each.

In response, Gursky noted that “To get the 109 units that the County is talking about applies to more than just this property and would require tearing down Montessori and the Dance Arts Studio.” Gursky also pointed out that “going to three stories doesn't create any more units, just bigger ones that cost more and would be less affordable.” Three-story buildings would need to be wider than two-story buildings, which would reduce the density of buildings on the site. Three-story buildings would also require excavation, a costly enterprise because of the shallow basalt underlying the property.

Gursky also made the point that the density of the development more than meets minimum standards set forth in the Master Plan. “Fortunately, we don’t have to rely on what will be a subjective look at whether we’re meeting the requirements because this Master Plan was adopted in 2021, and in 2022, the Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) [Plan] was adopted. ... And you can see that they have objective standards for what is an appropriate density, what’s an appropriate design, what’s an appropriate layout of the property:”

In the MRA Plan, the recommended minimum development intensity in the area targeted for redevelopment calls for 2 or 3 stories in height, 20 residential units per acre, and a 0.75-acre development area. The density of the proposed development is slightly

more than 28 units per acre on a development area just slightly greater than 1 acre.

Why not condos instead of townhouses?

Gursky said that there were several reasons for the decision to build townhouses instead of condominiums or apartments. First, in the Master Plan, townhouses were the intended use of this property. “Given our Code, the definition of a townhouse means one lot, one owner.” In contrast, apartments and condominiums involve more than one owner located in a building with multiple stories.

By building these townhouses, said Gursky, “we feel that, not only have the conditions of the White Rock Master Plan been met, we are furthering a much more important goal, and that is starting the process and looking at how we're going to be able to meet affordable, entry-level housing needs for people. ... Let's be honest. People do not want to buy condos. They would rather not live in apartments. They like to have houses, yards, garages. That's what people want, not rental units or condos.”

Gursky also said that financing is nearly non-existent for small condos.

Character of the development

The planning staff objected to the residential nature of the development as not in keeping with the vision set out in the WRTC Master Plan, which states that “White Rock Town Center ... is envisioned as a thriving hub with a vibrant mix of residential, retail, and office development at a character and scale appropriate for the surrounding community.”

Gursky said that he believed that the Master Plan intended for this horseshoe-shaped section of Longview to be a residential area. “The proposal and the idea and the determination that they wish to have in the Master Plan,” he said, “is to replace the [curved section of] Longview Drive with the straightened-out Longview that goes across,” along the north border of the proposed development. The Master Plan intended that a mix of residential, retail, and office development be along this new, straightened Longview Drive. Gursky said that his plan

allows “a piece large enough for us to build three-story, possibly retail on the first floor and residential on the other floors so that we do in fact retain both the character and the look that is required by the Master Plan.”

The future of Longview Drive

Does the County in fact plan to straighten Longview Drive? The White Rock Downtown Master Plan states that “the existing alignment of Longview Drive is awkward and has been identified as a safety concern and hindrance to development of this area. The straightening of the Longview Drive alignment between Bonnie View Drive and Sherwood Boulevard is seen as crucial to ensure the Center's redevelopment into a pedestrian-oriented environment.”

However, the County does not currently have a plan or timeline for the realignment of Longview.

P&Z decision

When it came time to vote on the development application, most of the commissioners felt that Gursky made a strong case and voted in favor. The exception was Commissioner Nakhleh. “I do believe this could be higher density. I think it's kind of strange to have single-family homes in a downtown area,” she said. “What density we put in there now, it's locked in for generations. So, I am disappointed that we're not able to figure out how to get higher density in that area.”

By a 5–1 vote, with Commissioner Nakhleh in opposition, the P&Z Commission approved a Sketch Subdivision Plat application for a 29-unit townhouse development along Longview Drive in the WRTC zone district, subject to a couple minor provisions.

June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin

Observer Corps Report – County Council Work Session – February 20, 2024

Transportation Board Briefing; Quality of Life; Downtown Los Alamos East MRA (Metropolitan Redevelopment Area)

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

Transportation Board Briefing

Transportation Board Chair David Hampton began his presentation by noting that the board is looking for three new members.

Among the achievements of the board during the past year, Hampton listed the formation of the Bicycle Working Group, involvement in the development of the Urban trail Phase I and II, and the Snow and Ice Control Plan. He is especially pleased with the bicycle pilot project at Diamond Drive and West Road, which has resulted in a safer and friendlier bike route. Among the tasks for the year ahead, the board is working on the Comprehensive Transportation Plan, which must allow for the increase in population and help to solve regional challenges.

Quality of Life

County Manager Linda Matteson began her presentation by explaining that staff was working to implement a dashboard to enable the public to see the projects related to the Council's strategic goals. They hope to launch it in time for the budget hearings in April. She then delivered an overview of progress on the first of those strategic goals, quality of life, which includes:

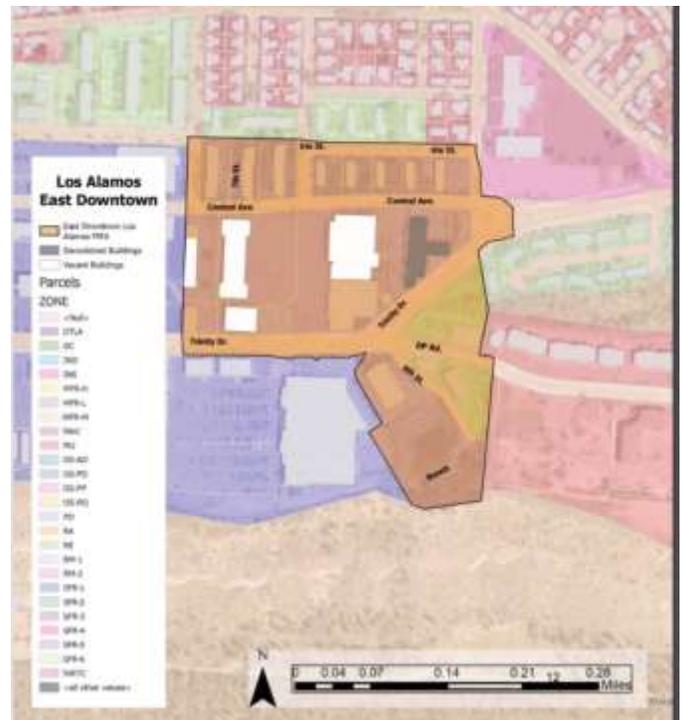
- health, wellbeing, and social services;
- diversity, equity, and inclusivity;
- mobility;

- educational, historical, and cultural amenities;
- open spaces, parks, and recreation; and
- public safety.

For each element Matteson highlighted actions taken by County staff to improve the quality of life in the County.

Downtown Los Alamos East MRA (Metropolitan Redevelopment Area)

County Planning Manager Sobia Sayeda introduced Helen Ganahl of Groundwork Studio to explain the proposal to designate the eastern section of the Los Alamos Downtown as a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA). The purpose of the MRA statute, Ganahl said, is to allow public resources to be contributed to private development projects without violating the New Mexico Anti-donation Clause. In order for an area to be designated as an MRA, the bulk of it must manifest conditions of blight; aged infrastructure; and low occupancy rates. Ganahl noted that the statute does not enable eminent domain.



Los Alamos East Downtown area showing the MRA

The proposed area is mostly but not entirely within the designated Downtown District. It stretches from the north side of Iris to the south side of Trinity and from 8th Street to the roundabout, and includes the Knights of Columbus property, approximately 55 acres in all. The zoning is mixed use and the current land use is primarily commercial.



Derelict Building at Mari Mac. Photo by Barbara Calef.

Ganahl explained that the land owners have not been notified; that comes later. The first step is public notice, followed by a Council hearing, and then adoption of a resolution. Then an MRA Plan must be developed, followed by another public hearing and adoption of the Plan. Implementation and funding must then be set up.

Councilor Ryti noted that the boundaries of an MRA can be altered. In response to a question from Councilor Reagor, Ganahl said that the owners are not required to take any action, but the MRA designation opens up opportunities if they wish to retrofit their buildings or make other changes. Furthermore, there is an appeals process if they are dissatisfied with the outcome.

The statute offers tools such as creation of a board to make plans and pursue implementation; access to an MRA fund; public-private partnerships; and development incentives such as tax abatement and the waiver of permit and hook-up fees. Councilor Hand asked why the Columbus Capital project, which encompasses Mari Mac Shopping

Center, seems to have stalled. She was told that the company has not consulted with County staff; the timeline is out of the County's control since it is a private development. However, the MRA tools could help the project.

In response to questions from councilors about the lack of progress in the White Rock MRA, staff said that no board had been set up. If the LA Downtown MRA proceeds, the toolkit for both areas can be developed concurrently.

During public comment Phil Gursky argued for expanding the boundaries of the proposed Los Alamos MRA and remarked that the County does not have to appropriate funds. Tax abatement would be a good incentive for redevelopment.

The Council chose not to try changing the proposed boundaries at this time. Instead, they voted unanimously (6-0; Councilor Lepsch had left) to direct the County Manager to prepare and return to Council with a resolution starting the process of establishing the Downtown Los Alamos (DT-LA) East Metropolitan Redevelopment Area boundaries; and proceed in accordance with the New Mexico Metropolitan Redevelopment Act.

Barbara Calef

LWVLA

Membership List

As of February 29, 2024

Albright, Esta Lee
Alme, Rosemary & Marv
Armbruster, Karyl Ann
Auden, Elizabeth
Bartlit, Nancy & John
Bedell, Bettie
Benson, Jody
Biddlecomb, Cynthia & Paul
Bradley
Birnbaum, Amy
Bohn, Laura & Roy
Calef, Barbara
Carpenter, Helen
Chaiken, Rebecca & Cameron
Counters
Chandler, Christine & George
Collins, Linn & Dave
Collins, Julie
Cooper, Beverly
Cull, Theresa
Deschamp, Elaine
Determan, Andrea & John
Dewart, Jean
Doolen, Marilyn
Dunn, Hedy
Fabryka-Martin, June & Craig
Fisher, Patsy
Frederickson, Rosmarie

Gallagher, Gwendolyn & Don Krier
Garimella, Madhavi
Gisler, Susan & Galen
Hampton, Lisa & David
Haval, Lyn
Havemann, Suzie & Scott
Hemez, Cecile
Hertzman, Jeri Berger
Holmes, Jennifer
Hopkins, John
Howell, Jeffrey
Izraelevitz, David & Terry
Jacobson, Adelaide
Jones, Lynn & Mark
Jorgensen, Mari
Krohn, Susan
Lemmick, Barbara
LePage, Ann
Machen, Judy
Macke, Jennifer & Josip Loncaric
Marcus, Wendy
Mason, Caroline (Cas)
McClay, Marguerite & Andy Fraser
McFarland, Tracy
McReynolds, Maxine
Mendel, Susan
Mills, Ellen
Mills, Alex
Morgan, Sarah
Morris, Don
Mortensen, Jeannette (JJ)
Nakhleh, Stephanie
Nickols, Joyce
Nobile, Anne

Olds, Cristina
Olinger, Colleen
O'Neill, Maire
Orth, Felicia & Evan Rose
Ortiz-Moss, Nereida
Peck, Akkana & Dave North
Priedhorsky, Reid & Erin Tatge
Prono, Judy
Quinn, Heather & Zack Baker
Reilly, Dorothy
Rose, Harvey & Sherry King
Rousculp, Susannah
Santiago, Eduardo & Ginger
Young
Sartor, Charlotte
Sayre, Katie & Richard
Shankland, Rebecca
Sherwood, Jane
Skolnik, Richard
Stockton, Margie
Swanson, Wendy & Randall Ryti
Taylor, Jessica
Thomas, Carroll
Trujillo, Janice
Wallstrom, Leslie
Weisbrod, Elizabeth
Weller, Alahna
Wells, Ann
Wheeler, Kyle & Mike
Whyte, Helena
Williams, Bob & Judy Buckingham
Williams-Hill, Julie

LWVLA Board of Directors

2023-2024

Officers:

- President: Felicia Orth
- 1st Vice-President: [open]
- 2nd 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: Rebecca Shankland, Eduardo Santiago
- Fundraising: Ellen Mills, Leslie Wallstrom, and Tracy McFarland
- Observer Corps: June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin
- Membership: Jean Dewart
- Website/Social Media: Madhavi Garimella and Helena Whyte
- Video: Eduardo Santiago

Tickler Report – Tentative Council Agenda Items

Tickler Report – County BCC Vacancies

Tickler Report

Tentative Council Agenda Items as of January 29, 2024

This is a partial list of tentative Council agenda items that was distributed with the Council's agenda package for its March 5, 2024 session. All of the items are subject to change.

- Greenhouse Gas Inventory & Climate Action Plan Process and Potential Budget Options
 - Discussion at 3/5/24 meeting
- Chapter 6, Animal ordinance
 - Discussion at 3/19/24 meeting
- North Mesa Housing & Los Alamos Housing Partnership
 - CDD updates at 3/19/24 meeting
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Program
 - Discussion and possible action requested at 3/19/24 meeting
- Chapter 16, Development Code clean-up
 - Discussion at 3/19/24 meeting
- Ted Wyka, NNSA Los Alamos Field Office Manager
 - Presentation at 3/19/24 meeting
- Representative Chris Chandler, Overview of the 2024 NM Legislative Session
 - Presentation at 3/19/24 meeting
- Comprehensive Health Plan (interim report)
 - Presentation at 3/26/24 meeting
- County Lobbyist Scott Scanland, Overview of the 2024 NM Legislative Session
 - Presentation at 3/26/24 meeting

County BCC Vacancies as of February 29, 2024

Los Alamos County has 11 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 and current vacancies are below as of February 29, 2024.

Upcoming vacancies are in yellow text. Changes from last report have a magenta highlight.

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Art in Public Places Board | 1 |
| ○ 2 terms ending Mar 24, 2024 | |
| • Board of Public Utilities | 0 |
| ○ 1 term ending Jun 30, 2024 | |
| • County Health Council | 7 |
| ○ No terms ending soon | |
| • Environmental Sustainability Board | 0 |
| ○ Five terms ending soon | |
| • Historic Preservation Advisory Board | 0 |
| ○ No terms ending soon | |
| • Library Board | 0 |
| ○ No terms ending soon | |
| • Lodgers' Tax Advisory Board | 0 |
| ○ No terms ending soon | |
| • Parks and Recreation Board | 2 |
| ○ No terms ending soon | |
| • Personnel Board | 0 |
| ○ No terms ending soon | |
| • Planning and Zoning Commission | 1 |
| ○ 2 terms ending Mar 31, 2024 | |
| • Transportation Board | 3 |
| ○ No terms ending soon | |

Totals: 14 vacancies, 10 terms ending soon

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



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

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

Name(s): _____

Address: _____ Date: _____

_____ ZIP: _____

Phone 1: _____ E-mail 1: _____

Phone 2: _____ E-mail 2: _____

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 supports state and national League of Women Voters work.

_____ 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: \$ _____

_____ **Newsletter Update** – Check here to receive it 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)

Name1 Name2

_____ _____ Voter Registration 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: assist in inviting leaders to give presentations; order/deliver lunches when we meet in person, help set up tables, etc.

_____ _____ 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.

_____ _____ Other: _____

In this issue

Page

Calendar 1
February Lunch with a Leader: LAC Social Services Manager Jessica Strong..... 2
Past President’s Message: Supporting Our Open Spaces 3
Fundraising Committee Report..... 4
Observer Corps Report – County Council – February 6, 2024..... 4
Observer Corps Report – Planning & Zoning Commission – February 14, 2024 8
Observer Corps Report – County Council Work Session – February 20, 2024..... 11
LWVLA Membership List As of February 29, 2024..... 13
LWVLA Board of Directors 2023-2024..... 13
Tickler Report – Tentative Council Agenda Items 14
Tickler Report – County BCC Vacancies..... 14

League of Women Voters of Los Alamos
P.O. Box 158
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