



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF LOS ALAMOS

UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos
P.O. Box 158, Los Alamos, NM 87544
<https://my.lwv.org/new-mexico/los-alamos>
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Calendar

July 11 Board Meeting, Unitarian Church, noon
July 18 Lunch with a Leader, Unitarian Church, Abbey Hayward, noon

July Lunch with a Leader: DPU Conservation Coordinator Abbey Hayward

Our next Lunch with a Leader will be on July 18 at the Fellowship Hall of the Unitarian Church from noon to 1 p.m. Abbey Hayward will be the guest speaker. She works for the Department of Public Utilities as the Water and Energy Conservation Coordinator, developing education and outreach programming focused on reducing customer consumption and utility resource waste through behavioral and technological adaptations.

Hayward graduated from Bowling Green State University with a dual degree in Environmental Science and Geology, with a focus in Watershed Management. During her senior year, her honors thesis was to evaluate living a zero-waste lifestyle for nearly a year. She worked at Soil and Water Conservation Districts across Ohio, implementing watershed action plans for Grand Lake St. Marys

and Captina Creek. She ended her Ohio time as the Executive Director for the Captina Creek Land Conservancy.

In the fall of 2019 Hayward and her partner sold their house and cars, packed up their stuff, and traveled the country in a 1983 Vanagon. Since rejoining society and settling in the Land of Enchantment, they have started a family and enjoy time outdoors and touring the County playgrounds.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

President's Message: Highlights from the LWVUS Convention

Six New Mexican League Board members from around the state, including Leslie Wallstrom and myself from Los Alamos, traveled to Washington D.C. at the end of June for the 56th Biennial League of Women Voters U.S. National Convention. Additional New Mexican participants attended online. For four days we attended workshops, voted in plenary sessions, and introduced ourselves to League members from around the country. There were nearly one thousand attendees in person from all 50 states, D.C., and the Virgin Islands, and approximately 300 more online.



Some of the Convention attendees during a plenary session in the International Ballroom. Photo by Felicia Orth.

Highlights included:

1. An expert panel discussion on the movement to elect the U.S. president directly by popular vote, rather than through the electoral college, "Turn Up for One Person, One Vote."
2. A remembrance of Dr. Deborah Ann Turner, LWVUS President who died in January this year, with a tribute video and remarks from her niece, who was present with other family members.
3. An expression of gratitude to Sania Irwin, who stepped up to fill the President's role following Dr. Turner's death, and who moderated the convention plenary sessions. Ms. Irwin was the first LWVUS president from Southeast Asia (Bangladesh) and the first immigrant in that position.
4. The introduction of the new LWVUS President, Diana Wynn, and the new CEO, Celina Stewart. Ms Stewart has been LWVUS Chief Counsel for several years and is greatly admired by those she has advised in that role. Both women offered their personal biographies, their work for the League, and their vision for the future of LWVUS.
5. An inspiring keynote address from Convention Delegate Kim Teehee, Director of Government Relations for the Cherokee Nation, who gave a stark account of the history of the relationship between the Cherokee Nation and the U.S. Government, and told the stories of leaders Nancy Ward and Wilma Mankiller. Teehee also spoke to the importance of hearing from every voice. Watch the video here: [2024 Convention Keynote Address: Kim Teehee \(youtube.com\)](#)
6. An announcement of the new partnership between LWVUS and the Girl Scouts of America in support of the Voter Girl Project, a collaboration in which Girl Scouts are taught about civic engagement, voting, and advocacy.
7. Breakout sessions on many topics, including book banning, DC statehood, immigration, ending discrimination against women, combatting misinformation on social media, restoration of voting rights, engaging young voters, election observation, United Nations work, ranked choice voting, redistricting, DEI work, effective storytelling, litigation, and fundraising.

I was very glad to have the privilege to attend this year, and will be sharing more information with the Board and relevant committees. Do watch the keynote address if you can. You will find several other videos on the LWVUS YouTube channel of the other highlights mentioned above.

Felicia Orth



Cardboard cutouts for the Voter Girl Project, a collaboration between the League and Girl Scouts. Photo by Felicia Orth.



Newly elected LWVUS Board President Diana Wynn interviewing current LWVUS chief counsel and the next LWVUS CEO Celina Stewart. Photo by Felicia Orth.

Observer Corps Report – County Council – June 11, 2024

Animal Code; Strategic Planning and Performance Dashboard; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force

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

Public Hearing on Animal Code Modifications

Council held a public hearing on proposed revisions to Chapter 6 of the Los Alamos County Charter, the Animal Ordinance. After a lengthy discussion, the modifications were adopted 7–0.

Many comments centered on how the proposed code addressed prohibited animal noise. The amendment specifies that "it is unlawful for anyone to own or harbor any animal that habitually howls, yelps, whines, barks, or makes other noises in a manner which unreasonably disturbs the public peace." Councilors and the public expressed concerns that, because there was no legal definition of "unreasonable," this provision was likely to be applied inconsistently, could be abused by callers to the police, and might not be enforceable. However, in his report to Council, Police Chief Sgambellone emphasized the need for officers to be able to handle animal-related complaints with discretion. He pointed out that Animal Control Officers continue to be more focused on education and providing resources rather than citations.

In her video summary of the meeting (*Los Alamos Daily Post*, June 14, 2024), Councilor

Havemann observed that, "The challenge to this is balancing the rights of animal owners, the community at large, and animals themselves."

Strategic Planning and Performance Dashboard

County Manager Anne Laurent updated Council on progress to deploy a performance tracking dashboard on the County website by mid-summer. "This new software tool will allow ... all of us a way to easily learn about any given County project or initiative," she said. "It will allow any of us to see action items, progress towards completion, metrics, graphics, descriptions, etc., on any project or initiative."

The dashboard is structured around the Council's 2024 Strategic Leadership Plan. That plan includes five goals and 22 priorities. From these goals and priorities, staff identified 107 action items in the Management Action Plan (MAP) to which they are assigning metrics to track and measure progress.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Board/Task Force

Following a presentation by Vice Chair Cull, Council voted 5–1 to create a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force. Councilor Reagor voted in opposition. The County Manager was directed to develop a draft charter for the Task Force.

Proposal to Create DEI Task Force

Vice Chair Cull gave a presentation about moving forward on a recommendation from the Racial, Equity and Inclusion (REI) Task Force in 2022 to create an active body of community volunteers to continue the conversation and develop recommendations related to REI issues within Los Alamos. The task force suggested that topics include community training, guest speakers, and expanding access to outdoor and recreational activities. (See observer report for Council's meeting on 8/30/2022 in the September 2022 issue of the *LWVLA Update*.)

However, in 2023, Council decided to not move forward with this recommendation due to the number of boards and commissions already supported by the County and the staff time required (See observer report for Council's meeting on 3/14/2023 in the April 2023 issue of the LWVLA *Update*.)

At tonight's meeting, Councilor Cull recommended that Council reconsider this decision due to ongoing racial equity concerns and recent incidents in the Los Alamos community. She recommended that a new group be organized to consider a broader theme of inclusivity: race, culture, sexual orientation/gender identity, income, physical/mental ability, gender, etc. and make recommendations to Council.

"We want to make sure that people who come here from diverse backgrounds such as race feel included," said Vice Chair Cull. "We want them to want to stay in Los Alamos."

Council Discussion

Councilor Havemann said, "I think it's important we keep a spotlight on this and keep awareness elevated on this very important topic related to quality of life and dignity and citizenship," she said. She added that the task force would be a way to gauge the level of public interest.

She also listed several metrics for determining interest and value:

- How many people apply to be on the test force?
- How many vacancies do we end up having?
- How often do they meet and stay engaged?
- How often do they have enough people to have a quorum?
- How long does it take them to produce something that's viable and helpful?

Explaining his vote in opposition to the motion, Council Reagor said, "All of this racial division is to intentionally distract people from the real economic structure that is just brutal for the whole middle class everywhere in the country. So, I think that we shouldn't

participate in that because this is really misleading." He felt that national media coverage was biased insofar as they were selective about the cases that they covered. "This is all just participating in a smoke screen of distractions. So, I'm definitely not supporting."

Councilor Ryti countered that, "We have a vision statement that includes that we're welcoming and I think that means everybody."

Local News Coverage

Los Alamos Daily Post, Kirsten Laskey, June 13, 2024 Council Unanimously Oks Revised Animal Code Ordinance.

<https://ladailypost.com/council-unanimously-oks-revised-animal-code-ordinance/>

Los Alamos Daily Post, June 14, 2024, Video: Councilor Havemann Discusses June 11 Meeting. <https://ladailypost.com/video-councilor-suzie-havemann-discusses-june-11-meeting/>

June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin

Observer Corps Report – County Council – June 18, 2024

Environmental Management Quarterly Report; Regional and State Activities and Issues; Council Strategic Goal— Economic Vitality

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

Cleanup of Department of Energy Legacy Waste Sites

Ellie Gilbertson, Deputy Manager of the Environmental Management-Los Alamos Field Office (EM-LA), provided Council with a quarterly update on cleanup of legacy waste at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). Topics covered included the status of TA-21 waste characterization in preparation for cleanup, cleanup of the hexavalent chromium plume, staffing, and developing a skilled workforce for nuclear safety. Housing and transportation issues were raised as challenges in attracting and retaining employees at the laboratory. Efforts to retain and recruit talent through various initiatives were also discussed.

TA-21 Cleanup

Gilbertson provided an overview of the corrective measures for the TA-21 nuclear facility (at the end of DP Road). As required for nuclear facilities that exceed a specified nuclear-material threshold, she said, EM-LA is currently conducting Documented Safety Analysis (DSA) that includes characterizing nuclear safety hazards and proposing controls to reduce consequences. The DSA will enable non-intrusive sampling of Building 257 (the Radiological Liquid Waste Facility), the last remaining building on the site. If necessary, the DSA will be revised to enable decontamination and decommissioning (D&D) of Building 257 and industrial waste lines.

Gilbertson noted that there are also 38 other contaminated sites at TA-21, many of which will need to be remediated before other work can proceed. She said that the ultimate objective is to clean up the site sufficiently to allow transfer of the property to Los Alamos County, but reaching this goal will take a long time.

Chromium Plume

Gilbertson provided an update on the interim measures put in place to prevent the advancement of the hexavalent chromium plume in the groundwater. She explained EM-LA's plan to surround and pump the

contaminated groundwater. The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) expressed concerns about the validity of EM-LA's plan to control the plume and ordered the interim measures to be shut down. Since then, said Gilbertson, the monitoring wells have shown a rebound in chromium concentrations.

To resolve the impasse between EM-LA and NMED, the two agencies agreed to convene an expert team to evaluate the effectiveness of the chromium interim measures and to validate the plume modeling. The team's final report is to be issued by the end of 2024. "EM-LA is prepared to abide by whatever the recommendations are that the independent technical review team puts forward," stressed Gilbertson.

Workforce Development and Skills Mix at LANL

Brad Smith, President/General Manager of N3B, shared staffing updates, including the number of vacant positions and novel ideas for attracting employees, with a focus on remote work and FTE sharing. The laboratory is taking several steps to address workforce and housing challenges:

- Working with local colleges on apprenticeship programs to develop local talent;
- Expanding recruitment efforts through military programs and job fairs nationwide;
- Exploring flexible work arrangements like remote work, where possible;
- Sharing staff with other federal offices to cover vacancies;
- Giving housing allowances and working with partners to find temporary housing solutions like RV parks; and
- Increasing pay for some technical roles to be more competitive.

Council Discussion

Councilor Havemann asked Smith (N3B), "Is the challenge with even just getting applicants, period, because there's just workforce shortages in this space everywhere,

or is the challenge that we get applicants but they don't accept our offers because it's just impossible to find a place to live? Or maybe a little bit of both?"

Smith replied, "It's pretty much all the above. For instance, most of my nuclear operations staff live in and around Albuquerque. They can't afford what's around, and it is scarce." He added that the family may not even wish to leave the Albuquerque area. Furthermore, he said, "because we are a legalized state for certain substances, some of them won't pass a drug test, which is a condition of employment. We have lost recent hires to the drug screening initial test."

The staffing problem is no different at EM-LA, said Gilbertson. She added that the attrition and vacancy loads are having a significant impact on progress with cleanup in this area. "NMED is suffering from the same issues and we need them as a part of our process."

Regional and State Activities and Issues

The quarterly presentation from Danielle Duran, the County's Intergovernmental Affairs Manager, centered around regional partnerships as well as initiatives at the state and federal levels to address local issues in Los Alamos. A few of the issues that she covered briefly included healthcare access, housing and homelessness, broadband agreements, landfill opportunities, and environmental cleanup.

Regional Landfill

Duran listed the next steps to address regional landfill and trash disposal issues:

- having the City of Española decide whether to move forward with a feasibility study on properties they have available for a potential landfill site;
- continuing discussions with Española, Sandoval County, and other neighbors about potential partnership opportunities for a closer regional landfill;

- discussing the possibility of technologies like combustion of trash at a future point once initial partnership and siting issues are addressed; and
- pursuing these regional opportunities as part of the ongoing work of the Regional Roundtable team and intergovernmental partnerships.

Access to Medical Services

Duran also described ways in which Los Alamos County is collaborating with neighboring jurisdictions to improve access to medical services across the region. These include exploring how to engage more with state agencies and leverage relationships with congressional representatives to advocate for initiatives that expand access to healthcare. One example provided by Duran was current efforts to work with state legislators to support New Mexico joining PSAP, which is a mental health coalition of states. Doing so would allow mental health providers to practice in New Mexico even if they weren't licensed in this state, she said.

Council Strategic Goal—Economic Vitality

Paul Andrus, Director of the Community Development Departments (CDD), provided an overview to Council on CDD's activities related to the Council's Strategic Goal for Economic Vitality. His presentation focused on strategies to revitalize the local economy, including:

- housing and business development,
- Metropolitan Redevelopment Area designations and the opportunity for private-public partnerships,
- infrastructure modernization, and
- providing opportunities for mobile food vendors.

Helping Local Businesses Access Grant Funding

Andrus listed several ways in which CDD was helping local businesses, including:

- providing information sessions to educate businesses on available grant programs and how to apply;
- offering one-on-one assistance to help businesses identify suitable grants and strengthen their applications;
- partnering with organizations like LA CDC that can support businesses through the application process;
- pursuing additional small business grant opportunities from sources like USDA Rural Development; and
- streamlining the County's small business grant process to have a wider application window and simplify documentation requirements.

Local News Coverage

Los Alamos Daily Post, June 21, 2024, Video: Councilor Keith Lepsch Discusses Work Session. <https://ladailypost.com/video-councilor-keith-lepsch-discusses-work-session/>

June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin

Observer Corps Report - Planning & Zoning Commission – June 26, 2024

Nothing relevant to League issues was on the agenda for this meeting.

The report of the June 25 County Council meeting will be published in the August Update. The major item of interest was the presentation of the Draft Affordable Housing Plan.

LWVLA Board of Directors 2024-2025

Officers:

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

Directors:

- Lunch with a Leader: Karyl Ann Armbruster
- Newsletter Publisher; Archivist; Membership: Robert Williams
- Publicity: Jody Benson
- Voter Services/Voter Guide: Lynn Jones
- Community Health and Wellbeing: Lisa Hampton
- Reservations and Refreshments: Wendy Swanson
- Director at Large: Akkana Peck
- Director at Large/Newsletter Distributor: Becky Shankland

Tickler Reports – Council Agenda Items and BCC Vacancies

Tickler Report

Tentative Council Agenda Items as of June 25, 2024

This is a partial list of tentative Council agenda items in the County tickler that was distributed with the Council's agenda package for its June 25, 2024 session. All of the items are subject to change.

- Update on Council LARES Working Group Recommendations
 - Presentation at 7/9/24 meeting
- Draft Climate Action Plan
 - Presentation at 7/09/24 meeting
- Regional Development Corporation (RDC) Activities
 - Presentation at 7/09/24 meeting
- Council Strategic Goal–Operational Excellence
 - Presentation at 7/23/24 meeting
- County Strategic Goal — Economic Vitality
 - Presentation at 7/23/24 meeting
- Board of Public Utilities
 - Presentation at 7/23/24 meeting

County BCC Vacancies as of May 31, 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 June 30, 2024.

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

- Art in Public Places Board 0
 - No terms ending soon
- Board of Public Utilities 0
 - No terms ending soon
- County Health Council 4
 - No terms ending soon
- Environmental Sustainability Board 0
 - 5 terms ending July 31, 2024
- Historic Preservation Advisory Board 0
 - No terms ending soon
- Library Board 0
 - 3 terms ending Aug 31, 2024
- Lodgers' Tax Advisory Board 0
 - No terms ending soon
- Parks and Recreation Board 0
 - No terms ending soon
- Personnel Board 0
 - No terms ending soon
- Planning and Zoning Commission 2
 - No terms ending soon
- Transportation Board 3
 - No terms ending soon

Totals: 9 vacancies, 8 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: _____

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