

LWW 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

August 15 Lunch with a Leader, Unitarian Church, Fire Chief Troy Hughes, noon
August 22 Board Meeting, Unitarian Church, noon

August Lunch with a Leader: Fire Chief Troy Hughes

The next Lunch with a Leader program will be on August 15 at the Unitarian Fellowship Hall from noon to 1 p.m. Troy Hughes, the Los Alamos Fire Chief, will be our speaker.

Chief Hughes was born and raised on the plains of Nebraska. He began his career in 1985 as a firefighter/EMT-B with the Grand Island Fire Department and steadily rose through the ranks to achieve captain in 1992, division chief in 1998, and fire chief in 2008. He strongly believes in and utilized a participatory leadership style to facilitate many positive changes while serving with the Grand Island Fire Department.

Chief Hughes was appointed to lead the Los Alamos Fire Department in October of 2011 and eagerly moved here with his family. He has fond childhood memories of visits to family in Northern New Mexico and enjoys many outdoor activities, including hiking, bike riding, motorcycle riding, and camping.

His educational achievements include an A.A.S. in Fire Protection Technology, a B.A. in Public Administration, and an M.A. in Management with a Leadership Emphasis. He graduated Summa Cum Laude and was named the "Outstanding Graduate in the Public Administration Program" while completing his B.A. from Doane University. He is also a graduate of the National Fire Academy's

Executive Fire Officer Program and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government Senior Executives in State and Local Government Program. In 2017, Chief Hughes graduated from the Center for Homeland Defense and Security Program at the Naval Postgraduate School, earning a Master's in Security Studies.

Hughes is one of fewer than 1,000 fire service professionals in the United States who hold a Chief Fire Officer designation from the Commission on Professional Credentialing.

He will speak in general about many aspects of our fire department:

- How it is organized: people, stations, response vehicles, equipment to support response (what happens when you dial 911);
- How they are funded and managed (DOE partnership);
- Recruiting and retention;
- Qualifications (Q clearance, fitness requirements, training requirements);
- Current projects issues impacting LAFD and LAC (fire stations, homeowners' insurance, wild land and urban interface).

Karyl Ann Armbruster

LWV National Convention Very Impressive



It was a special privilege to attend the LWV National Convention in Washington, D.C. in June. I recommend every member consider participating in this biennial event, if possible. Only six people represented New Mexico this year – Felicia Orth, Board President, and I journeyed there from Los Alamos, joining the 864 other voting delegates, both in person and online. Two important experiences stood out for me: 1) meeting many other committed, motivated women from all over the country trying to make a difference in their communities; and 2) attending several very educational “breakout sessions” on topics that are highly relevant to our Los Alamos organization.

LWVNM Co-President Hannah Burling and Voting and Elections Director Dick Mason, delegates to the 2024 National Convention

The other participants were almost uniformly friendly and open to hearing about New Mexico, although most had never been here. Some state Leagues came to the convention with the hope of convincing other Leagues to vote in favor of their positions on issues, whether it was healthcare reform (Vermont LWV), the link between journalism and democracy (Washington state LWV), or creating the 51st state out of Washington, D.C. (Washington, D.C. LWV) – everyone was passionate and engaged. Tables outside of the main convention ballroom were laden with brochures, banners, and free gifts to sway all the participants to back their causes. It was wonderful to see these women devoted to making democracy work better in our nation.

Two of the breakout sessions, on Nominating Committees and on Fundraising, were particularly relevant to the Los Alamos LWV. To make the nominations process truly efficient and transparent, each Board member could write a job description that covers her specific duties. Then the Board determines what needs still exist to run our League. Armed with job descriptions, the Nominating Committee could invite members to “apply” to fulfill these duties. There are numerous other suggestions, which I can discuss with the Board and Nominating Committee in the near future.



LWV Los Alamos Delegates Leslie Wallstrom and President Felicia Orth, delegates to the National Convention from Los Alamos, 2024



Leslie Walstrom, delegate from Los Alamos to the National Convention, shows how we get the message across

The Fundraising session was run by two professionals from the national office, who each had engaging personalities and excellent advice. As they mentioned ideas, they threw LWV swag out to the audience, which really excited the crowd (need any LWV luggage tags?). Many of their ideas are now being incorporated by our own local Fundraising Committee. The good news is that one of these speakers is willing to visit local Leagues and provide advice. I suggest contacting her soon to arrange a meeting for the New Mexico state and local Leagues.

The LWV National Convention is not to be missed – plan now for 2026, when it happens again!

Leslie Wallstrom

Observer Corps Report – County Council – June 25, 2024

Draft Affordable Housing Plan

The regular session was attended by Chair Denise Derkacs, Vice-Chair Theresa Cull, and Councilors Suzie Havemann, David Reagor, Keith Lepsch, and Randall Ryti. Councilor Melanee Hand was absent.

The Affordable Housing Plan

Dan Osborn, Housing and Special Projects Manager, and consultant Carlos Zamora of Sites Southwest (SSW) presented the Affordable Housing Plan Final Draft Overview. This is the first update since 2010. The goal is “to outline the scope and assist the County in evaluating a range of strategies necessary to improve access to affordable housing.” The current ordinance allows assistance to households earning up to 80% of AMI (Area Median Income). The draft ordinance would expand eligibility to 120% of AMI.

Osborn explained that an ordinance is required to leverage the tools available to the County. The draft plan has been approved by the NM Mortgage Finance Authority; therefore, the ordinance will permit the County to participate in public/private partnerships. The County and Schools would provide land and project stewardship to a private developer who executes the housing development.

At 19,253, Los Alamos County’s population is the highest it’s ever been. Over 9,300 people (55% of employees) commute to Los Alamos for work; many of them would like to become residents but cannot due to insufficient, unavailable, or unaffordable housing.

Along with the increase in population, the housing shortage is exacerbated by the fact that since 2018, the Lab’s high salaries have pushed the County’s family median income to \$158,708 (approximately 50% of the population), which is double that of that state. The County wants to support LANL’s

expansion by supplying housing. It also wants to provide housing for “core and essential workers” who facilitate community needs. Income, rent, and housing prices have not kept pace. We need 1,300 – 1,400 new units just to maintain the unacceptably low vacancy number. This is a fraction of what we need, but Osborn and Zamora are looking at feasibility in the next 5 years. The potential market for new units is 6,310!

Los Alamos is experiencing a growing divergence between income and the cost of housing. Between 2018 and 2023, average income increased by 18%, sales prices increased by 75%, and rent increased by approximately 100 to 130%. Furthermore, Los Alamos has an extreme shortage of rentals with only 2.4% vacancy. Twenty-four percent of renters are paying more than is comfortable. Osborn and Zamora said the rental unit vacancy rate should be 6% or 7%, at least 5%.

Over the next five years, goals, strategies, and implementation include:

- **Goal 1:** Build Organizational Capacity: (Critical!) Expand organizational capacity either by increasing staff or partnering with other organizations.
- **Goal 2:** Specifically, Target Housing Affordability: A fully functional community needs all kinds of workers living here.
- **Goal 3:** Housing Development: More housing in a compact, walkable, environmentally sustainable diverse community.
- **Goal 4:** Funding and Resources: LAC needs to create a permanent Housing Trust Fund with revenue coming from the general fund, local and regional partners, state and federal programs and grants, taxes, fees, and other sources.

Surveys show most of the community supports higher density housing: cottages, row houses, townhomes, duplexes. There should be 10 to 15 units per acre; higher density could be 60 to 70 units per acre in the downtown core. Another possibility to increase density in the low-density areas of “old” Los Alamos

would be to update our Comprehensive Plan to allow homes to remodel into a duplex or quad.

Council Concerns

The Council expressed concern that 1200 is only small fraction of housing we need.

The consensus is that the County needs to get started on the five-year development plan for the 1400 to 2400 additional units.

Osborn and Zamora said they would return in a few weeks with a final draft of the Affordable Housing Plan.

Jody Benson

Observer Corps Report – County Council – July 9, 2024

REDI Plan; Draft Climate Action Plan

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 absent.

REDI Plan Presentation

Pat Vanderpool, Executive Director of Regional Development Corporation (RDC), a non-profit Economic Development Organization serving 7 counties and 10 pueblos in northern New Mexico; and Monica Abeita, Executive Director of the North Central New Mexico Economic Development District, presented the update on activities of their organizations and progress on the Regional Strategic Initiative (REDI) Plan.

Initially signed in 2009, the REDI Plan is a cooperative agreement between Los Alamos and local governments in Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, and Taos serving as a roadmap for regional investments. The investors include Triad (EDC), NM Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NM MEP), the Economic Development Administration (EDA), and a Good Luck Challenge Grant. The REDI Plan focuses on building capacity by equipping

communities and businesses with the building blocks and tools to improve economic well-being and quality of life through Professional Development/tools/infrastructure.

The RDC has focused mostly on business retention and expansion and workforce development.

Of interest to Los Alamos is the \$20,000 grant to SALA for the important role they play and their commitment to Los Alamos. It also awarded Micro-Grants to 43 businesses located in the 4-County Service Area for a total award amount of \$109,087. RDC assists with workforce development, focusing primarily on building a qualified Northern New Mexico workforce in the construction and skilled trades area by streamlining and aligning academic and non-academic training programs and services.

Accomplishments of the economic development agencies in northern New Mexico include grants for:

- Marketing, labor, time management; technology grants to assist with cash flow, labor, lead times for materials;
- Outreach to business retention and expansion to discuss issues and how REDI can help;
- Higher education workforce projects;
- Taos Pueblo work to support people in recovery;
- Santa Fe Community College to have real world experience,
- UNM-LA to provide funding for the EMT program
- Economic Development Organization training—what do Economic Developers need to make themselves successful?

Council Discussion

In response to Councilor Ryti's concern about the very low workforce participation in the state (57% in NM compared with 64% in the US and 70% in Los Alamos), Vanderpool described the efforts his organization is making to reach out to the different communities to raise the employment rates.

Ryti listed two more issues to include in the plan: housing and transportation for the workforce. Vanderpool responded that although there has been discussion, there is no regional housing plan.

Abeita added that although housing is “what floats to top for all communities,” childcare and transportation are also essential for the goal of a healthy workforce. “If you don’t have those supports, your workforce will be weaker.” The North Central Regional Transit gets funding and is writing more grants to enhance public transportation.

To Councilor Havemann’s concern that many businesses and communities don’t have the capacity to leverage opportunities to respond to RFPs from LANL, Vanderpool stated that on September 19 there will be a small-business office workshop to train businesses that might be eligible. One idea for the workshop is to give San Miguel and Mora County businesses that lack capacity “a shot” at responding, possibly by introducing them to one another so they can partner with someone who has the capacity.

In response to Councilor Reagor’s question about creating an economic development plan to expand LAMC, i.e., to make it a regional health care center, Vanderpool said they do need to work on that.

Public Comment

Bill Wadt thanked the Council for supporting regional economic development with its recognition of the economic disparity across the counties, and the RDC that led to creation of the LANL Foundation. Investment in Communities of Excellence is systems-based improvement effort. There is an item in the budget to help support RDC that serves as backbone to the Communities of Excellence effort.

Other issues approved by Council

- A loan agreement with NMED to obtain project loan funds \$1,500,000 + \$500,000 grant funds;
- A \$2m FY 2025 grant to the North Central Regional Transit District;

- Resolution for the MDOT program for (1) transportation for the elderly and disabled and (2) for public transportation, funding for EVs to meet the County’s goal of replacing vehicles with zero emissions, will start hopefully by end of 2024;
- To fund the on-going project to upgrade production water wells-- mechanical/electrical components for eight wells in Pajarito and Guaje Canyons.

The Los Alamos County Climate Action Plan

Sustainability Manager Angelica Gurule and Andrea Martin, the consultant for Cascadia Consulting Group, provided an update on the Climate Action Plan (CAP) development process including an overview of the draft plan, community engagement efforts, and the target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The community is invited to provide feedback at <https://losalamoscaps.konveio.com> through August 9. Cascadia and County staff will review public comments and integrate them into the final CAP to be presented to the Council in October 2024. Following approval, there will be a two-year implementation period.

For the CAP draft, the team conducted multiple Zoom and in-person meetings to create a plan that builds on existing County initiatives and priorities, primarily those developed in the current Los Alamos Resiliency, Energy and Sustainability Plan (LARES), to address major emissions sources, offer cost savings for community, and lead by example to set a foundation for future action.

As always, increases in population and housing impact the attainment of the goals, and therefore, the County must address zoning codes and amendments to the Comprehensive Plan to include more mixed-use to help decrease transportation emissions.

The FY 25 budget reflects County’s commitment to the plan. Some recommendations have already begun: providing electric vehicle (EV) chargers, conducting energy audits, and replacing two gas vehicles with EVs. LANL and LAPS are collaborating to share what they’re doing.

Councilors Ryti, Cull, and Havemann participated in the working group.

Council Discussion

Councilor Reagor asked, “If we do all this and get rid of our CO2 what difference does that make in the world? We won’t notice a change in temperatures if even a thousand communities do it.” Martin responded that the CAP includes a cost-benefit analysis and also estimates the global public benefit from implementation.

Councilor Ryti recommended adjusting the plan to clarify the numbers so the public can understand both where the numbers come from, and the reductions that would accrue over time. He would like the appendices to include: the cost-savings over time that can offset the slightly higher cost to build green buildings; the costs associated with the green-energy grid including infrastructure costs, implementation costs and benefits; and all the technical information in detailed appendices.

Gurule stated that mitigation of emissions is the focus of the CAP. Although people want to see something about dealing with adaptation and resilience (i.e., a more detailed mitigation like where would be cooling shelters in hot weather, or where you can go to find information about personal needs), those mitigation measures are not in the CAP. Adaptation could be part of Year 2.

In response to Councilor Hand’s question of who’s tracking cumulative impacts from local initiatives on the global scale, Gurule said that the state had recently released a New Mexico Climate Action Plan. The state and local governments are reporting their progress to the EPA as part of Inflation Reduction Act.

Councilor Havemann asked about assuring vigorous community engagement. Gurule listed some plans and pointed out that they have a budget for community outreach. Martin recommended focus groups and interviews and noted that this is just the beginning of a long journey. Lots more dialogue and community partnerships will be needed in addition to feedback from the Environmental Sustainability Board.

Finally, Chair Derkacs remarked that the 2015 Paris Agreement sought to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees centigrade by the end of the century. She concluded that, “As citizens of the world, we have to start somewhere and I think Los Alamos should be at the forefront of these efforts.”

One P&Z Board Member Confirmed

Kyle Christiansen was selected to serve, but Joshua Muck and Ronald Nelson tied at 3- each. The vote will resume at a later date.

Jody Benson

Observer Corps Report – County Council – July 23, 2024

Public Utilities Update

The work 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 absent. Our observer report is based on discussion during the meeting and documentation provided in the full agenda package.

Los Alamos County Public Utilities: Present and Future

Robert Gibson, Chair of the Board of Public Utilities (BPU), provided Council with an annual update on County Public Utilities. Philo Shelton, Director of the Department of Public Utilities (DPU), was also present to answer questions.

Gibson summarized the current status of each of the utility systems. The good news, he said, is that there have been no major operational issues this past year.

Wastewater

Gibson reported that the new White Rock Water Resource Reclamation Facility is on track to be completed before the end of August. DPU is also continuing upgrades to the Los Alamos wastewater treatment plant. Shelton added that they brought Class 1A effluent from the treatment plant online this year. "So we're going to be working on trying to expand the use of that to conserve our groundwater resource," he said.

Water

Gibson presented a graph showing how, on average, annual water use by the County continues to decline. Water use by LANL is going up, primarily because of its increased staff. "At present, we're good at supplying our community with water, even with the infill," said Shelton. Water use is lower for infill development; it's much higher for homes with yards.

If the community were to expand, then the County might need to tap its surface water rights, said Shelton. Currently, its surface water rights remain untouched.

Councilor Ryti asked about the impact on the County's water supplies if LANL's hexavalent chromium plume were to reach the County's PM-3 well, which is not currently functioning. Shelton replied that DPU brought another well online last year, Otowi Well 2, which is higher producing than the PM-3 well. Because Otowi Well 2 has all new pump controls and is far more reliable, "we're in better shape," said Shelton.

Natural gas

The big cost spike that the County experienced a year and a half ago is long past, said Gibson. "In fact, the typical costs of gas right now are actually quite low by historical standards, but that keeps varying," he said.

Gibson told Council to expect an ordinance for a "rather modest" rate increase because of decreasing revenue for this division of Public Works. [See our observer report for Council's 7/30/24 meeting, at which this ordinance was passed.]

Electric power supplies

Gibson reported that carbon-free sources of electric power encountered several setbacks this past year.

- Hydroelectric power from Abiquiu was out of service for two and a half months due to a fault in the hydroelectric plant, which has since been repaired.
- The hydroelectric plant at El Vado is not operating at all. Gibson explained that "the Bureau of Reclamation drained the reservoir and started refacing the dam, and then discovered that problems were apparently worse, or at least different, than what they were anticipating. They basically stopped to figure out a new game plan. ... We don't know what's going to happen there."
- The Uniper and Carbon-Free Power Projects were terminated this past year. "The good news is we have a contract for a large amount of solar power at Foxtail Flats, starting in 2026," said Gibson.

Electric supplies in the future

Base load power — Gibson reported that looking for new and more diverse sources of carbon-free electric power is a challenge. At present, there are no nuclear projects that DPU thinks it can get into. And although some new geothermal technology looks promising, it's not yet ready for prime time.

Intermittent power — Gibson said that DPU might look to purchase more solar power, particularly if a facility is built next door at San Ildefonso. However, they do not want to risk being over-reliant on solar energy, preferring to diversify sources. As is true for other intermittent energy sources, storage is really the big issue. "When it comes to intermittent renewables," he emphasized, "it's not the supply anymore. It's the storage itself."

Electric distribution

Electric distribution in the County has not had major issues this year, said Gibson. He noted that the index that measures the total time, on average, that a customer experiences

power interruptions over the course of a year, was down to only 15 minutes this month. "It's about as low as it ever gets," he said. "Our benchmark is 60 minutes. DPU is also continuing the project it started a year ago to replace all of the direct buried cable in town.

Following up on the general topic of electric power transmission, Chair Derkacs asked about the implications for the County if the additional transmission line requested by DOE to bring power into the County does not get approved.

Approval of the additional line could affect the County, Gibson replied, because the Energy Coordination Agreement (ECA) between LANL and the County, which has been in place since the mid-1980s, calls for the two entities to pool virtually all of their electrical resources. "Then we both pull out of that pool," he said. "It turns out to be roughly 80 or 78% Lab and the balance is the County."

Adding details to this response, Shelton explained that the third transmission line is needed to support the additional supercomputer that will serve new lab mission elements. "So, if it doesn't go in, obviously, that could limit mission expansion, as well as our electrification needs," he said. The proposed plan is currently in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) phase. Shelton added, "If the line is not approved, it could change our whole design plan, but as part of our ECA renewal next year, we would do an updated Integrated Resource Plan that will help us inform the next steps."

Electric demand in the future

Gibson said that, going forward, EV charging and building electrification will require new energy supplies and changes to the distribution system.

- Electric Vehicle (EV) charging. The use of electric cars in town is growing, and the County is evaluating how much power will be needed to supply all of those. The County's Sustainability Coordinator, Angelica Gurule, and Public Works are leading a study to come up with a plan for community-wide EV charging, including the

locations of the chargers and how the distribution system might need to evolve to supply them.

- "Building electrification is the biggest issue because that's going to affect every occupied building in town," said Gibson. He emphasized that, if the County is to meet its Climate Action goal to phase out natural gas by 2070, then it needs to reduce its heavy reliance on gas for heating, and to transition to using electrical power for this purpose.

Changes to the electric rate structure

To help address increasing energy demands from electrification, DPU is looking into possible changes to its overall electric rate structure and how it assigns costs to different parts of pieces of the bill, said Gibson.

He enumerated some of the ways in which time-of-use rates and other demand management strategies could help address increasing energy demands. Councilors Havemann and Ryti contributed additional ideas during Council's subsequent discussion of this agenda item.

- Time-of-use rates incentivize customers to shift their energy usage to off-peak hours when electricity is cheaper, and there is less demand on the grid. This can help flatten the load curve and reduce the need for additional generation and distribution capacity.
- Demand response programs allow the utility to temporarily reduce or shift customer energy usage during peak demand periods, providing more flexibility in managing the grid.
- Energy efficiency and conservation measures can reduce overall electricity consumption, lowering the total demand that needs to be met.
- Integrating energy storage, such as EV batteries, can help store excess renewable energy generated during the day and discharge it during peak evening hours when demand is higher.

Councilor Ryti asked whether vehicle-to-grid storage was directly on the horizon. He suggested a time-of-use policy could serve as an additional incentive to purchase an EV if the car's battery could be tapped when the price of electricity was high and recharged when it was low.

Gibson responded, "I would say it's already here. There are some vehicles that have that capability already, and presumably there will be more. I think market pressure will probably push it so that many vehicles, maybe all, will have that capability, and then probably in the not too distant future. And those are big batteries in electric vehicles. So, it is a potential major factor in how electric power is managed in the future."

Achieving Net Carbon Neutrality

Chair Derkacs referred to Gibson's earlier comment about a possible disconnect between the draft Climate Action Plan's timeline and BPU's timeline for achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions (2050 vs 2070, respectively). "I think it's important for the Board, Department to look into that, and we on Council need to know that before we approve the Climate Action Plan."

Gibson replied, "the board (BPU), four years ago, adopted the goal of phasing out natural gas by 2070 and the Council has concurred with that. That's kind of a formal, deliberately considered goal that might be changed here." The more aggressive goal of phasing out natural gas by 2050 came from some informal discussion at the Council's March work session, he said. "I encourage you to look at it very carefully," said Gibson, "and we will too. Upgrading the distribution system could probably be done. It just takes money, which means higher rates for a shorter period of time."

Summarizing the topic of transition, Gibson said, "the real challenge is on the user end. That's the big challenge here because it does affect every property, every heated building in town, every occupied building. Can that be done in 25 years instead of 45 years? That's the big question. What can the community do, and how fast can they do it?"

Local News Coverage

Los Alamos Daily Post, July 25, 2024,
Video: County Council Chair Denise Derkacs Briefs Public On Tuesday's Work Session.
<https://ladailypost.com/video-County-Council-chair-denise-derkacs-briefs-public-on-tuesdays-work-session/>

June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin

Observer Corps Report – County Council – July 30, 2024

Gas Rate Increase

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

Public Hearing on Gas Rate Increase

Council approved the gas rate increase proposed by the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) by a vote of 5–1, with Councilor Hand absent and Councilor Reagor in opposition.

Proposed increase and its impact on the customer's gas bill

Karen Kendall, Deputy Utilities Manager for Finance, spoke about the proposed gas rate increase. Her presentation focused on the reasons for that increase:

- decreased gas revenue because of declining gas usage by DPU customers;
- increased costs due to a recent gas audit by the New Mexico PRC Pipeline Safety

Bureau and an associated probable notice of violation; and

- upcoming rate increase rates charged by two companies with which DPU contracts for its gas.

The FAQ sheet distributed in the Council's agenda package provided an estimate of the impact the proposed rate change would have for a residential customer using 65 therms per month. Under the current rates, the gas bill would be about \$70.88. Under the proposed rate changes, the bill would be about \$72.15, a difference of \$1.27. The set of assumptions underlying these estimates is described in the document.

Declining use of natural gas

Gas use in the County declined from 9.4 million therms in FY2023 to 7.5 million therms in FY2024, said Kendall, continuing a downward trend in gas use over the past five years. Consequently, gas revenue also dropped, to the extent that the Gas Fund had negative cash because of unfunded reserves.

Kendall attributed the downward trend in gas purchases to conservation measures put in place by Los Alamos County customers, including weather-proofing their homes. An exception to this overall declining trend in use occurred when the County experienced the extreme cold snap caused by the polar vortex in December 2022 to January 2023.

DPU's Utilities Assistance Program

Councilor Ryti said that, although the increase isn't large, "I know there's been concerns about making sure people know there are funds available for people that are having trouble paying their utility bills." He asked how difficult it was for someone to qualify for financial assistance through DPU's Utilities Assistance Program (UAP).

Kendall answered, "We're very proud of our Utility Assistance Program. It does reach quite a few of our customers and, when people are struggling to pay their utility bills, we know about it very quickly because they'll be talking to our customer service folks." There are multiple programs and services that are

available for assistance based on different eligibility criteria, such as age and income. The online application for assistance from UAP is very simple, and both Social Services as well as Customer Care can walk the applicant through the process.

Councilor Ryti said, "I appreciate the efforts to let people in the community know about those opportunities for making donations [to UAP] since that's something that the County is prohibited by anti-donation from making direct payments to individuals."

Local News Coverage

Los Alamos County Staff Report, *Los Alamos Daily Post*, August 1, 2024, "Los Alamos County Council Approves Gas Rate Increase."

<https://ladailypost.com/los-alamos-county-council-approves-gas-rate-increase/>

June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin

July Lunch with a Leader: Abbey Hayward

Abbey Hayward, the Water and Energy Conservation Coordinator in the Department of Public Utilities (DPU), “came from water conservation,” as she said, but in her current role, she has greatly expanded her knowledge. Her job is to provide education and resources for the DPU’s customers. She is guided by the 2015-2019 Water and Energy Conservation Plan, which is scheduled for an update that will begin with public outreach in the fall.

Hayward focuses mainly on retrofits, coupling efficiency and conservation education with new technologies. (Angelica Gurule, the County Sustainability Manager, is responsible for major sustainability efforts.) The DPU’s Induction Cooktop Loaner Program provides free loaner kits for two weeks. So far 130 people have checked out the units, available at <https://www.losalamosnm.us/Services/Public-Utilities/Conserve-and-Reduce>

Hayward mentioned that the library also has induction cooktops available to anyone with a library card in their “Library of Things.”

https://losalamos.ent.sirsi.net/client/en_US/default/search/results?qf=ITYPE%09Material+Type%091%3ASET-

[HOME%09LOT+Home+Appliances&rm=BORROWING+MATE0%7C%7C%7C1%7C%7C%7C0%7C%7C%7Ctrue&te=ILS&dt=list](https://losalamos.ent.sirsi.net/client/en_US/default/search/results?qf=ITYPE%09Material+Type%091%3ASET-HOME%09LOT+Home+Appliances&rm=BORROWING+MATE0%7C%7C%7C1%7C%7C%7C0%7C%7C%7Ctrue&te=ILS&dt=list)

Other tools available to borrow include a zero-waste kit, an energy meter kit, and a thermal camera that can be connected to a smartphone to detect leaks (83 check-outs so far).

Hayward is always on the lookout for ways to interact with residents. She gave the Social Services Department a stove for clients and is considering targeting LANL interns. She is working on a how-to video, a heat conversion calculator telling cost and savings for different heat sources, an efficiency showcase, and a consumption report card. In the fall the DPU will offer an electrification workshop.

The DPU partnered last year with the Los Alamos Master Gardeners to put on a workshop on sustainable landscape design. Videos of the series may be viewed online at <https://www.losalamosnm.us/News-articles/Sustainable-Landscape-Design-Tips-and-Tricks>.

Hayward announced that a focus on smaller landscaping (garden in a box) will roll out in the fall.

Finally, addressing concerns about extreme weather, Hayward remarked that she was compiling a list of places people can go for shelter and water year-round without needing to make a purchase. In addition to the libraries and grocery stores, Bathtub Row Brewery, the Coop, and the American Legion have volunteered to help.



Barbara Calef

LWVLA Board of Directors 2024-2025

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- 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 July 26, 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 July 26, 2024 session. All of the items are subject to change.

- Request from Española for Regional Capital Funds
 - Briefing. Action requested at 8/06/24 meeting.
- Boards and Commissions Rules Revisions
 - Briefing. Action requested at 8/06/24 meeting.
- Affordable Housing Plan and Affordable Housing Ordinance
 - First reading. No action requested at 8/06/24 meeting.
- Revised Charter for Council Racial, Equity, and Inclusivity Task Force
 - Briefing. Action requested at 8/06/24 meeting.
- Task Force Charter
 - Briefing. Action requested at 8/06/24 meeting.
- Council Strategic Goal - Quality Governance
 - Presentation. No action requested at 8/20/24 meeting.
- Unite Us Closed-Loop Referral Program
 - Presentation. No action requested at 8/20/24 meeting.
- Bear-resistant Roll Cart and Dumpster Program
 - Presentation. Placeholder agenda item for 8/27/24 meeting.
- Jemez Mountain Fire Protection Phase 1
 - Presentation. Action requested on award of bid at 8/27/24 meeting.
- Community Broadband Network Services
 - Action required on approval of General Services Agreement contract at 8/27/24 meeting
- Rezoning property at 2127 North Road (North Road Inn) from Residential Mixed Zone District to Multi-Family Residential Low Zone District
 - Public hearing for County Council to uphold the Planning & Zoning Commission's

County BCC Vacancies as of July 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 July 31, 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
 - 5 terms ending Jan 6, 2025
- Environmental Sustainability Board 0
 - No terms ending soon
- Historic Preservation Advisory Board 0
 - No terms ending soon
- Library Board 0
 - 3 terms ending Aug 31, 2024
- Lodgers' Tax Advisory Board 2
 - 1 term ending Dec 1, 2024
- Parks and Recreation Board 0
 - 3 terms ending Nov 30, 2024
- Personnel Board 0
 - No terms ending soon
- Planning and Zoning Commission 2
 - No terms ending soon
- Transportation Board 2
 - No terms ending soon

Totals: 10 vacancies, 12 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



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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