

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

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos  
P.O. Box 158, Los Alamos, NM 87544

<https://my.lwv.org/new-mexico/los-alamos>

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## ***FINAL CALL TO LWVLA ANNUAL MEETING*** *April 17, 2025 at the Unitarian Church*

**Please bring the entire printed Call to Annual Meeting that was mailed to you recently.**

### ***Calendar***

April 7	Fund Drive Meeting, 1577 Camino Medio, North Mesa, 2 p.m.
April 17	<b>Annual Meeting:</b> Lunch with a Leader; LWVLA annual business meeting, Fellowship Hall, Unitarian Church, 1738 N. Sage Loop, noon-2:30 p.m.
April 26-27	LWVNM Convention, The Lodge, Santa Fe.

# Response of LWVUS to Executive Order Concerning Voter Registration



The League of Women Voters of the United States issued the following statement in response to President Donald Trump's signed executive order, "*Preserving and Protecting the Integrity of American Elections*," that threatens Americans' freedom to vote and tramples states' constitutional authority to run their own elections.

"Let's keep it real: this order is not about protecting elections; it is about making it harder for voters — particularly *women voters* — to participate in them," said **Celina Stewart, Chief Executive Officer of the League of Women Voters of the United States**. "This executive order is an assault on our republic and a dangerous attempt to silence American voters. The President continues to overstep his authority and brazenly disregard settled law in this country. To be very clear — the League of Women Voters is prepared to fight back and defend our democracy.

"The President can't unilaterally change election law," said **Marcia Johnson, Chief Counsel for the League of the Women Voters of the United States**. "This order is not only an attack on American voters' fundamental freedom to vote, it is also plainly unlawful. The League is committed to working with our partners and legal advocates to pursue all avenues in fighting back against this dangerous order, and we will use every tool at our disposal to defend voters from unjust restrictions on their freedom to vote."

The *order's* extreme provisions include:

- Impermissibly requiring documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote by altering the federal voter registration form. *Nearly 80% of married women — more than 69 million American women — adopt their partner's surname, and they would be unable to register to vote if the name on their ID does not directly match their proof of citizenship.* Additionally, noncitizens registering to vote and then casting a ballot is already illegal in federal elections, and there is *no evidence* to suggest that noncitizen voter registration and voting is occurring at any meaningful scale.
- Prohibiting the counting of absentee and mail ballots postmarked by Election Day but received after, which *18 states and Washington DC currently permit.*
- Giving the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) the authority to review states' voter rolls.
- Withholding federal funds from states that do not cooperate with the order's provisions.



*The Los Alamos League created an exhibit about Women's Suffrage; we shared some of it in the Roundhouse. Photo by Becky Shankland*

## ***April Lunch with a Leader: NM State Representative Christine Chandler***

On April 17, Lunch with a Leader will begin at noon. The Annual Meeting will follow at 1:10 p.m. Our speaker during lunch will be our own Representative Christine Chandler, who will review this last legislative session. Currently she serves as Chair of the House Judiciary Committee and as a member of the House Taxation and Revenue Committee. During the interim, she chairs the Courts, Corrections and Justice Committee and is a member of the Revenue Stabilization and Tax Policy Committee.

Chandler has focused on the state's employment laws with the aim of leveling the playing field between the employer and employee. In 2020, she was the lead co-sponsor on the Healthy Workplaces Act, which ensures that every worker in the state receives paid sick leave. She continues to work to pass paid family and medical leave legislation.

As Chair of the Taxation & Revenue Committee, she led the fight to lower the tax burden on more than 70% of working New Mexicans. She led efforts to protect workers from wage theft, ensure due process in the leasing of water rights, provide consumer protections for private post-secondary students, and offer retirement security for private sector workers. She also worked to pass Roxy's Law to prohibit trapping on public lands.

Chandler graduated from Smith College with a degree in economics and earned law degrees from Boston College and Georgetown University. Prior to her election as State Representative for House District 43 in 2019, she had served as Probate Judge and as County Councilor for two terms while working as an attorney and manager at LANL.



Photo from her website,  
<https://www.nmlegis.gov/members/Legislator?SpokenCode=HCHAN>

*Karyl Ann Armbruster*

## ***LWVLA Fund Drive Meeting April 7***

All League members are invited to participate in a short Fund Drive Meeting beginning at 2 p.m. on Monday, April 7 at the home of Ellen Mills (1577 Camino Medio). The purpose is to stuff envelopes with a copy of a letter for donations to our organization. This is an opportunity to catch up on local news and get to know our fellow League members.

## ***President's Message***

Members! We are in a transitional period around dues and donations, and are looking forward to seeing you on April 17 at our annual meeting.

As a member, you may have already renewed through a link sent by LWVUS in early February. Thank you! If not, you may renew through this link: <https://portal.lwv.org/>

You will see that a \$75 membership is portioned among the local, state, and national leagues. You will also have an opportunity to add a donation to the Local league specifically. We encourage all of this. In the event you have any difficulty, please contact me at [orthf@yahoo.com](mailto:orthf@yahoo.com) or 505-695-8944. I'm happy to help. You may also seek assistance in person at our annual meeting on April 17. See you then, regardless! We will vote on our nominating slate, and on by-law amendments, and hear from Rep. Christine Chandler about the recently ended legislative session.

Also: our most recent Lunch with a Leader was with Gwen Kalavaza, Library Manager. Even being a regular library patron, I learned a lot about library resources from Gwen's talk, and commend the video recording to you if you weren't in attendance. I saw a friend immediately following the presentation; she and her husband moved to Los Alamos not long ago. She mentioned that she had been part of a writing group established by her local library in North Carolina, and had approached the folks at Mesa Public Library to ask whether they had a similar group. The staff said they did not, but if she were willing to be the 'anchor' member, they would set one up. It's been just 5 months, but it's been remarkable! Starting with 4 members, they are now at 10; the library staff liaison creates custom bookmarks each month with a special logo and writing prompts; and they will have a guest author speak at the next meeting. We live in a wonderful community.

*Felicia Orth*

## ***Dues Due***

Traditionally, at the Annual meeting we ask our members to pay their dues. However, as we have written previously, the national League has changed the process. Our treasurer used to send two checks, called per member payments, one to LWVUS and one to LWVNM, each year. Now each member is asked to go online and make a payment by credit card to LWVUS. The payment is immediately divided, with 20% going to the local League, 47% to the state League, and 33% going to LWVUS.

You may have already been contacted by LWVUS and renewed your membership. Thank you for that! If you have not yet renewed, please go to: <https://portal.lwv.org/>

If you really object to paying by credit card, you may give a check to our treasurer, Addie Jacobson (607 Meadow Lane, White Rock 87547), but it must be made out to LWVUS.

At the Annual Meeting we will have membership forms that we would like you to fill out to let us know how you would like to participate. For instance, do you want to receive friendly reminders? Would you like to assist in developing the Voter Guide? Your answers are very helpful to the board.



## ***Updates from the Los Alamos County Health Council***

The Los Alamos County Health Council (LACHC) elected a new Chair and Vice-Chair and now we also have three new members! We are now up to nine members, so we can add six more to the Council. The LACHC met monthly in January through March. At January's meeting, we finalized our workplan and discussed what programs and events we would like to have throughout the year.

At the February meeting, we formalized establishment of a Community Health Action Center Working Group to identify what providers and services should be housed in the Center (if available).

At the March meeting, Social Services Division (SSD) Manager Jessica Strong gave a presentation highlighting the roles and work of SSD and our Health Council. We discussed monthly PSA-type articles that will be published in the local newspapers. We also discussed what topics and presenters we would like to have for upcoming meetings. Finally, we discussed regional collaboration with other entities that would help further our Comprehensive Health Plan's Action Plan recommendations.

Our next several meetings will involve supporting the Health Center Working Group and preparation of the Directory of Los Alamos Health and Health-Related Services. We will also be looking at issues related to bullying in the public schools, outcomes of the legislature's Health Care Bills, and activities for grief support and suicide prevention.

Coming up in the next several months are lots of health-related events that our LACHC members are involved with:

- Saturday, April 19: Wildfire Day
- Saturday, April 26 (10 am - 2 pm): PEEC's 25th and Earth Day Festival SSD/HC
- Thursday, June 5 (10 am - 2 pm): Wellness Resource Fair for Older Adults (LARSO)
- Saturday, June 7 (12 pm): ChamberFest
- Saturday, June 21 (9 am - 2 pm): ScienceFest Discovery Day
- October 2025: Older Adult Summit (LARSO)

*Lisa Hampton*

## **Observer Corps Report – County Council – March 11**

### *Trail Improvement Projects; Economic Development Updates; Appointment of New Director of the Community Development Department; 9th Street Apartments Rehabilitation*

The regular session was attended by Chair Theresa Cull, Councilors Melanee Hand, Suzie Havemann, Ryn Herrmann, Beverly Neal-Clinton, David Reagor. Councilor Randall Ryti was absent.

No video recording of this meeting is available because of the internet outage at that time. However, an audio file is available on the County's Legistar website. Our observer report is based on the audio file and documentation provided in the full agenda package.

### **Trail improvement projects**

By votes of 6–0, with Councilor Ryti absent, Council approved resolutions of support authorizing three grant applications for several trail improvement projects in White Rock and Los Alamos.

The applications will be submitted in response to a call for projects issued by the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) under the Federal Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and Recreational Trails Program (RTP) for funding cycle FFY2026+. The application requires a resolution of sponsorship as part of the application process.

Public Works Director Eric Martinez described each of the three proposed applications:

- The first resolution seeks funding for the Piñon School Elementary trail connection, with the State covering 86% and the County 14%. This trail segment could be included in the bid package with the NM 4 Crossing and Multi-Use Trail Project to save time and money by combining the projects.

- The second resolution seeks State grant funding to resurface two existing paved trails currently in need of constant maintenance. In White Rock, the NM 4 Trail parallels the State highway between Piñon Park and Monte Rey Drive in Pajarito Acres. The Canyon Rim Trail in Los Alamos runs parallel to NM 502 between Fire Station #6 and the Underpass Trailhead to the east. These projects have a total budget of \$700,000 and a County match of \$100,000.
- The third resolution focuses on the Cañada del Buey Trail, funded over two fiscal years, upgrading the trail to become fully ADA compliant. If the grant application to the State is approved, it would provide \$3,844,800 (85.44%) in federal funds and would require a county match of \$655,200 (14.56%).



### **Economic Development Update from County Economic Development Division and LACDC**

In response to its request for a quarterly update on economic development, Council heard presentations from Shanna Sasser, the County's Economic Development Administrator, and Lauren McDaniel, Executive Director of Los Alamos Commerce and Development Corporation (LACDC).

#### *Small business outreach*

Acknowledging the Council's focus on small business outreach, Sasser described some of

the division's many initiatives to improve communication with local businesses:

#### Small Business One-on-One meetings.

Sasser said, "We know that there's a lot of issues that the small businesses are having with our department, and we're going to work really hard meeting with each one of these small businesses, one-on-one, to learn more of their needs, how we can help them, what type of grants they may need."

Pre-application meetings. These meetings have been a useful resource for small businesses, said Sasser, by helping them avoid unexpected financial burdens that could arise when moving into new spaces. She noted that the issue of small businesses unknowingly signing leases for properties that need major renovations—like electrical work or ADA compliance—is a significant concern, especially since many leases make the tenants responsible for those costs.

Collaboration with the building and code department. "Our building and code department is great," said Sasser. "They'll take the potential addresses of properties that a small business is looking at to help them better understand what they might be up against as far as getting the building up to code. So, that way, they're not taking on a huge financial burden unknowingly before signing the lease."

Change of use workshops. Sasser said that small businesses need advice about changes needed if they want to convert a building to a new use.

### *Lessons learned from business survey results*

Sasser said that the small business surveys conducted last fall revealed to the Economic Development Division that it needed to do a better job of educating the public and the small business community about what the County can and can't do. She gave an example of many requests in the surveys for the County to implement rent control to keep the rents of small businesses down. However, the New Mexico Rent Control Preemption bans local governments in New Mexico from imposing rent control measures of any kind.

As another example, Sasser said there were many comments in these surveys requesting funding from the County. However, New Mexico's Anti-Donation Clause prohibits the state and its political subdivisions from making direct grants to entities or person, unless the strict requirements of the provision are satisfied. We have a lot of more small business-friendly states that surround us, said Sasser, and people moving here often think we have a lot of the same services. "But we do not, and so we're really hoping to educate the small business community about what we can and can't do, to try and help our community better understand what our parameters are."

### *Tourism workshops and niche markets*

Sasser said she created a small working group last summer of people in the community involved in tourism, such as the national parks, putting together packets with restaurant information, so that if someone's coming for an event, they know what restaurants are open, they know what opportunities are there for them to spend their time and money.

When the group gets together, said Sasser, it asks "How can we create more economic activity around these sporting events, and get people to go out into our restaurants and spend the money?" The group also reaches out to restaurants to give them a heads-up about upcoming events, giving restaurants the opportunity to hire staff to allow them to stay open with a flexible schedule. "We're hoping with these efforts, we can begin to help our small business owners profit and increase their revenue from just communicating better about what's going on."

The tourism group is also focusing on niche markets like senior citizens and families, and conducting outreach to attract these groups to Los Alamos. The group is working with the New Mexico Tourism Department. "They're putting together a list of the big bus tours, the National Bus tours, that travel around the US," Sasser explained. "And as soon as we get that list, we're going to start doing outreach to these big bus tour groups to see if we can get some menu items for [activities to do in] Los Alamos."

Regional tourism efforts are also being explored, said Sasser, including creating regional tourism maps and videos to promote nearby attractions.

Sasser mentioned a troubling recent trend in declining tourism. "So, Canada has implemented a Ban on American Tourism movement, and it's gaining momentum. And our hotels are getting calls and cancellations, and people are saying, 'I'm canceling because of the worldwide ban on America for tourism. They're canceling travel plans for the summer.' So that's another reason we need to start seeing where our regional tourism opportunities are, she said, in case this trend continues and we see a drop in our tourism."

### *Small business support and Ambassador Program*

Lauren McDaniel detailed several new initiatives of the LACDC:

- LACDC's support for small businesses includes the new community cash eGift card program. McDaniel explained that this program evolved out of the Chamber Checks Program, which offered physical checks that encouraged purchasing for local businesses. The new digital option allows LACDC to track metrics for exactly what businesses are being frequented and popular amongst the Los Alamos community.
- LACDC is working with county staff for the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) Program, helping to get information out to property owners and small business owners so they know how to participate in that program. "That program is intended to help enhance the physical properties in Los Alamos, make them more energy efficient, and ideally pass lots of utility savings to small business owners," said McDaniel.
- McDaniel highlighted the organization's relatively new Ambassador Program, which encourages locals to promote Los Alamos and serve as advocates for the community. About 80 new ambassadors were trained in

2024, and over 50 ambassadors trained so far this year.

### *Business Accelerator Program and Business Hub*

The Business Accelerator Program was started as a collaborative effort between the Chamber of Commerce and Main Street Program, said McDaniel, and over the years, has resulted in several new businesses starting brick and mortar stores. That program will evolve in 2025, in part by creating a business hub online through the Los Alamos County Library.

McDaniel said they've been working with library staff on identifying video resources to film key players in our community that will serve as resources for small businesses. These will be Evergreen Videos that business owners can continually refer back to. The Hub will contain Business Accelerator Program videos as well.

### *Deep Tech Entrepreneurs*

McDaniel noted that, while the focus is mainly on smaller businesses in Los Alamos and White Rock, LACDC also supports deep tech entrepreneurs. That support is done primarily through the Lab-Embedded Entrepreneurship Program (LEEP), in partnership with Los Alamos National Laboratory Feynman Center for Innovation, which is LANL's tech transfer division. "We're currently recruiting for the next cohort of entrepreneurs who want to move to New Mexico, ideally to northern New Mexico or Los Alamos County," she said. "And they're partnered with laboratory scientists to accelerate and grow their product and hopefully establish a permanent location here in Northern New Mexico."

### **Appointment of Elias Isaacson as Community Development Department Director**

By a vote of 6–0, with Councilor Ryti absent, Council approved the appointment of Elias "Eli" Isaacson as Community Development Department Director.



County Manager Anne Laurent noted that the County Charter requires Council approval for appointments of department heads. Isaacson previously held the position of Community Development Director for the City of Santa Barbara in California, where he was responsible for the direction and organizational activities of the Community Development Department and its 80 employees. He was also the Planning and Land Use Director for the City of Santa Fe and the City of Espanola.

Isaacson received his Bachelor of Arts in Geography from the University of Wisconsin, a Master of City Planning, Master Certificate of Urban Design and Development from the University of Pennsylvania, and a Master of Architecture from the University of New Mexico. He was selected after a nationwide search, which included a final round of interviews in Los Alamos with community members, County staff, and the County Manager.

## **9th Street Apartments Rehabilitation and Affordable Housing Project Overview**

Dan Osborn, Acting Community Development Director, presented the Ninth Street Apartments Rehabilitation and Affordable Housing Project, which aims to preserve 87 units at or below 45% of the area median income (AMI) for 20 years. The Project, located at Aspen and Thunderbird Apartments, will cost \$8.44 million, with \$6.13 million for acquisition and \$2.3 million for capital improvements. The County will provide \$3.48 million in grants, and the developer will contribute \$5 million. Rents will start at \$900 in year one, increasing incrementally, capping at 30% of qualifying income. The project will also include ADA upgrades and energy efficiency improvements.

As justification, Osborn highlighted that similar apartment complexes have 100 people on their waiting lists, and the currently 83 individuals utilize housing choice vouchers and an additional 124 people are on the waiting list, with a waiting period of two years.

Acquisition costs for the units, about \$6 million, would be the responsibility of the developer, and the County would grant a total of \$4 million to subsidize rents and make improvements to the units. "This public-private partnership represents a significant opportunity to achieve the County Council's goals by leveraging private investment capital with affordable housing grants that will allow the preservation of these units," Osborn said.

The developer would be obligated to complete the renovations within three years, verify income requirements for tenants, and submit annual reports for the 20 years of the project agreement. No tenants will be displaced without their consent for renovations of units. Tenants who exceed the income requirements will be able to stay for two years, after which the lease will not be renewed.

County Manager Anne Laurent added, "I just want to say it again, and just say it very clearly, given the contrast of this presentation [on housing] to our earlier presentation about small businesses, ... it's a very stark difference, and the reason for that is because the anti-donation clause has an exemption for affordable housing."

Councilor Reagor asked for clarification. "Well, I'm in for the exact same apartment, but we're [the County] essentially providing a subsidy. I'm just trying to figure out how big it is."

Osborn responded, "So overall, if we're looking at overall numbers through the life of the project, it's about \$166 per month over the 20-year life of the project. So, for \$166 we're getting \$400 in rent reduction. So, from that standpoint, it's a pretty good bang for our buck that we're gonna subsidize. You know, I don't particularly like that word, but that is what we're doing. We are buying a deed restriction that will hold those rents below a certain rate, that cost will be \$166 over the 240 months that we are a participant in this project.

Councilor Neal-Clinton commented, "I just think ... this is smart. And we're also looking at developing private and public partnerships. If we don't start embracing these relationships,

we're not going to have a developer to come and work with us.”

The project will go to Council on March 25 for a vote.

### *Local news coverage*

*Los Alamos Daily Post*, March 16, 2025:  
Video: Councilor Neal-Clinton Shares Highlight from Tuesday's Meeting.

<https://ladailypost.com/video-councilor-neal-clinton-shares-highlights-from-tuesdays-meeting/>

*Los Alamos County*, March 11, 2025:  
County Council Regular Session Audio [Video] YouTube. The YouTube video itself is blank, but the audio is discernible as well as providing closed-caption text.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tL4WQXC6ic>

*June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin*

three-story hotel development (The Guest House Hotel), at 400 Trinity Drive, the former location of the Hilltop House.

The applicant sought a variance to the streetscape design requirements, proposing to flip the landscape zone and sidewalk, with a 6-foot sidewalk adjacent to the curb and an 8-foot landscape zone adjacent to the hotel patio walls. The requested variance was needed to accommodate several site constraints, including the property's small lot size, irregular shape, grade changes, corner location at the intersection of Central Avenue and Trinity Drive near the roundabout, and guest privacy concerns.

*June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin*

## **Observer Corps Report – Planning & Zoning Commission – March 12**

Commissioners present: Rachel Adler, Marlon Brown, Katherine Bruell, Karen Easton (Chair), David Hampton (Vice Chair), Benjamin Hill, Stephanie Nakhleh, Ronald Nelson, Rebecca White

### **Variance from Downtown Los Alamos Streetscape Standards**

By a split vote (5–2, with Commissioners Hill and Nelson in opposition), the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) approved a variance from the Downtown Los Alamos (DTLA) Streetscape Standards along Central Avenue. This variance pertains to an approved

## **Observer Corps Report – County Council – March 18**

### *NNSA Update; Wildland Urban Interface*

This work session was attended by Chair Theresa Cull, Councilors Suzie Havemann, Melanee Hand, Ryn Hermann, Beverly Neal-Clinton, David Reagor, Randall Ryti.

Our observer report is based on discussion during the meeting and documentation provided in the full agenda package. This report was prepared with the assistance of two artificial intelligence software applications: otter.ai and ChatGPT.

### **Quarterly Update from the NNSA Los Alamos Field Office Manager**

Ted Wyka, NNSA Los Alamos Field Office Manager, briefed the Council on developments at LANL:

- The recently passed Federal budget for FY25 held no issues and no major reductions in funding through September, so LANL can continue normal operations.
- The Lab recently hired about 1,000 new staff members, of whom 900 were replacements from normal attrition.
- The Lab and the County are working on an extension of the Electrical Coordination Agreement. This agreement includes a proposed new powerline, and NNSA is working with local tribes and other agencies to address any adverse effects from it.
- The Site-wide Environmental Impact Statement, which assesses future operational impacts from LANL activities, is out for public comment until April 11.
- The Lab continues to conduct fire mitigation activities to address wildland fire potential, and recently completed thinning work in Rendija Canyon.

Wyka also recapped the status of the County's request for additional remediation of a potential land transfer in Rendija Canyon. The County had requested more thorough identification and removal of unexploded ordinance to a depth of four feet on 28 acres for a possible RV park and storage area. NNSA is discussing this project with the Army Corps of Engineers to arrive at a cost estimate for the work.

Wyka noted a decrease in the number of speeding vehicles on site and on the Truck Route, and added his thanks to local law enforcement for their cooperation in increasing public safety,

More details of Wyka's remarks are provided in local news coverage (see below).

## **Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)**

Deputy County Manager Juan Rael, Chief Building Official David Martinez, and Wildland Fire Chief Kelly Sterna discussed an upcoming proposed ordinance concerning changes to the County Building Code to have it better align with the International Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Code of 2021. The WUI is defined as

the zone where wildland areas, such as forests, meet with urban development.

Rael pointed out that this is an optimal time to consider the change in the Building Code because of elevated fire risk this year, to assist with emergency planning, to enhance property resilience, and to address insurance considerations.

Martinez detailed changes that would affect building construction materials. New construction or improvements would require materials rated extremely ignition-resistant for external walls, class A roofing material, and additional protections for skylights and eaves. There would also be a requirement for sprinklers for commercial and multi-family structures.

Chief Sterna emphasized the importance of defensible space around structures, particularly the zero- to five-foot area around homes that should be clear of combustible materials. He cited a dramatic increase in the number of requests for home fire hazard assessments the Fire Department has seen this year.

Rael said the County will hold an educational meeting in April on the proposed changes, followed by an introduction of the ordinance to Council in late April, and a public meeting on the ordinance in May.

During Councilor questions and comments, Councilor Havemann asked about the requirement for sprinklers in multi-story and commercial buildings, citing a concern that installing such systems may be onerous to developers. County Manager Anne Laurent answered, "I'll put my architect hat on for a minute and just share what this means to me as an architect." She explained that residential units of no more than three stories tall are exempted. Town homes with firewalls between them are counted as single family residences. "Once you get over a certain height, you're going to want to put in a sprinkler system to buy time for people to get out in case they need to."

Councilor Ryti commented, "This ordinance is proposed to have the entire county rated as extreme hazard, White Rock included. So, I

think that's reasonable, based on everything we've seen in other communities.”

Councilor Reagor asked about insurance coverage for homeowners. “Could insurance companies actually have tougher rules that are harder than a five-foot buffer?”

Chief Sterna replied, “Unfortunately, insurance companies have a variety of risk factors that they can put into their assessment which differentiate from what we do. And that's ... really where the work is being done, in Santa Fe, to really get everybody on the same talking points and understanding what mitigations truly matter to the defense of a home. You know that's what we're really trying to do, we're not trying to get people the best insurance rate....”

Summarizing, Rael added, “I just want to add one point of clarification. We did have many of these requirements in our code post-Cerro Grande, and they were inadvertently taken out a few years ago. So, we're really adding a lot of the Class One requirements back. So, it's really not a change, and that's why we see the high rate of compliance with many of the existing buildings in the community.”

### *Local news coverage*

Maire O'Neill, *LA Reporter*, March 20, 2025: Wyka Updates Los Alamos County Council on Lab Hiring, Budget, and Operational Safety Improvements.

<https://losalamosreporter.com/2025/03/20/wyka-updates-los-alamo-county-council-on-lab-hiring-budget-and-operational-safety-improvements/>

Kirsten Laskey, *LA Daily Post*, March 28, 2025: NNSA Field Office Manager Ted Wyka Reveals Plans To Improve Driver Safety Near Los Alamos National Laboratory.

<https://ladailypost.com/nnsa-field-office-manager-ted-wyka-reveals-plans-to-improve-driver-safety-near-los-alamos-national-laboratory/>

*June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin*

## **Observer Corps Report – Planning & Zoning Commission – March 26**

Commissioners present: Marlon Brown, Katherine Bruell, Karen Easton (Chair), David Hampton, Benjamin Hill

Commissioners absent: Rachel Adler, Stephanie Nakhleh, Ronald Nelson, Rebecca White

### **Request for a Wireless Telecommunication Facility Tower in a Public Park**

Voting 5–0, with four commissioners absent, the P&Z approved an application from Pinnacle Consulting (aka Sun State Tower) and Co-Applicant Verizon Wireless to construct a new 80-foot tall Wireless Telecommunication Facility tower to collocate two commercial antenna arrays and to construct a block wall to surround ground equipment. The property is within the ballfields area at Overlook Park, and within the Open Space (OS-PP) Public Park sub-zone district.

Because of its location in the OS-PP subzone district, the co-applicants also requested a Conditional Use Permit to allow this land to be used for the tower, as well as a variance to a height increase from the allowed 50-ft in an Open Space zone district, to the proposed 80-ft.

The applicant presented detailed data to show that the proposed telecommunications facilities are necessary to close a demonstrated and significant gap in service coverage.

The applicant first proposed a 90-foot tower and concealment shroud that would likely have drawn more attention to the facility. In response to the request by Parks and Recreation staff for less intrusive proposal, the applicant redesigned the tower at a height to match that of the existing light poles surrounding the ballfields.

*June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin*



## ***March Lunch with a Leader: Los Alamos County Library Manager Gwen Kalavaza***

Gwen Kalavaza, the Los Alamos County Library Manager, spoke on March 20 at Lunch with a Leader. She shared her insights on the role of libraries in fostering intellectual freedom and community engagement. A key theme of her discussion was the vital role libraries play in providing access to diverse types of information, enabling communities to engage in critical thinking, and protecting privacy in an increasingly digital world.

### **Intellectual Freedom: A Cornerstone of Democracy**

Kalavaza discussed the metaphor of “mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors,” coined by Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop. This metaphor illustrates how literature can serve as both a reflection of one’s identity (mirrors), a view into the lives of others (windows), and an opportunity for connection and empathy (sliding glass doors). In her role, Kalavaza ensures that the library provides a wide variety of materials to support diverse voices and promote inclusivity.

One of the key ways that libraries protect intellectual freedom is by adhering to the American Library Association’s *Library Bill of Rights*, which calls for equal access to materials, opposes censorship, and safeguards the privacy of library users. The Los Alamos Library has guidelines for procedures regarding the library’s collections. For instance, if a patron objects to a book, they submit a form to Kalavaza. She checks to see if staff followed the identified process for acquisitions. In fact, the Los Alamos Library has had only one request for reconsideration of materials since 2022, highlighting the effective implementation of these policies.

In response to a question about culling or weeding the collection, Kalavaza said they have guidelines based on usage as well as condition. A well-used book may merit replacement. The library makes sure that in a particular subject area all viewpoints are represented. When materials are removed from the collection, they are taken by the Friends of the Library, with whom the library has a contract. Anything that is not sold in their shop goes to Thrift Books, which returns a percentage of the proceeds. The Friends of the Library is giving the Los Alamos Library \$45K this year.

Donated items are evaluated against the current collection. Kalavaza said that a donation of one or two books may be handed to a staff member. Boxes of books go directly to her. Whether the book goes on the shelf or to The Friends Bookstore depends on condition, but also subject matter, e.g., whether there are many books in the collection on the same subject.

### **The Digital Divide and Technological Changes in Libraries**

The landscape of libraries has drastically changed with the advent of digital technology. Kalavaza highlighted the shift from physical to digital collections, with services like OverDrive and Libby. However, this shift has also led to complications, particularly around licensing. Libraries often do not own digital content outright but instead purchase licenses that restrict the number of times a book can



*County staff; Los Alamos; Los Alamos County; New Mexico; studio portraits;*

be checked out or how long it remains available. This model has led to limited access for users and has raised concerns over the sustainability of such arrangements.

For example, libraries using services like Libby or Hoopla face the challenge of limited availability of digital titles, especially newer releases, which are often only available for a set number of checkouts before the library must repurchase or renew the license. In contrast, physical audiobooks on CDs or cassettes are owned by libraries and can be checked out indefinitely.

Kalavaza discussed the importance of balancing technological advancements with the needs of the community, particularly when it comes to the digital divide. The library works to ensure equitable access to technology and the internet. For instance, a patron can call to make an appointment for dedicated help with a personal computer. And, in response to growing reliance on technology, the library offers the “Library of Things,” which includes nontraditional items such as thermal cameras and induction cooktops.

## **The Role of Libraries in Social Connection**

As Kalavaza pointed out, libraries are increasingly becoming community centers—places where people gather not only to read but to connect, learn, and engage. This shift is particularly important in an era marked by isolation and loneliness. At the library, this is evident in programs that foster social connection and inclusivity, such as the seed library, outdoor classrooms, and evening hours for caseworkers offering social services. Kalavaza emphasized the importance of creating spaces for diverse voices, pointing out that the library is committed to offering programs and services that reflect the community's evolving needs.

## **Challenges and Future of Libraries**

Budget cuts, political pressures, and the increasing threat of censorship all pose significant obstacles to maintaining the library's role in promoting intellectual freedom. For example, the Trump administration's executive orders eliminating federal funding for library services have deeply impacted smaller libraries, which may lose access to grants that support essential services. (The availability of reciprocal library cards throughout New Mexico may offer some relief for those communities.) Kalavaza noted that our library services are not impacted because we are funded fully by the County, with large donations coming from the sales from the Friends Bookstore.

## **Conclusion: Libraries as Pillars of Community**

Kalavaza's discussion underscored the vital role libraries play in safeguarding intellectual freedom, promoting inclusivity, and offering access to diverse ideas and resources. The future of libraries, Kalavaza emphasized, lies in their ability to stay true to their mission of fostering community engagement while navigating the complexities of the modern world.

*These notes were organized by ChatGPT. I said THANK YOU and GPT responded with the following paragraph.*

You're very welcome! 😊 I'm so glad you liked it! It was a pleasure putting it together. If you need anything else, just let me know — I'm always here to help!

*Jody Benson*

# Tickler Reports – Council Agenda Items and BCC Vacancies

## Tickler Report

### Tentative Council Agenda Items as of March 25, 2025

A partial list of tentative Council agenda items from the County tickler distributed on the above date. All items are subject to change.

- Los Alamos County Pedestrian Master Plan Update
  - 4/08/25 meeting. Briefing. No action requested..
- 2025 Legislative Session and Intergovernmental Update Presentation
  - 4/08/25 meeting. Quarterly update. No action requested.
- Approval of Modification 24 to the Electric Energy and Power Coordination Agreement (ECA) Between Los Alamos County and the United States Department of Energy (DOE)
  - 4/08/25 meeting. Briefing/report. Action requested.
- FY2026 Budget Hearings
  - 04/21/25, 04/22/25, 04/28/25, 04/29/25. Action requested.

#### eComment Tool for Council meetings:

You can submit comments at:

<https://losalamos.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>.

Find the meeting and select “eComment” in the far-right column. Items open for public comment are marked with a “Comment” tag.

See details at:

<https://ladailypost.com/county-launches-ecomment-tool-for-council-meetings/>

## County BCC Vacancies as of March 31, 2025

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 listed below as of the above date.

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

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • Art in Public Places Board           | 2 |
| ◦ No terms ending soon                 |   |
| • Board of Public Utilities            | 0 |
| ◦ 1 term ending June 30, 2025          |   |
| • County Health Council                | 5 |
| ◦ No terms ending soon                 |   |
| • Environmental Sustainability Board   | 0 |
| ◦ 3 terms ending July 31, 2025         |   |
| • Historic Preservation Advisory Board | 0 |
| ◦ No terms ending soon                 |   |
| • Library Board                        | 0 |
| ◦ 2 terms ending August 31, 2025       |   |
| • Lodgers' Tax Advisory Board          | 0 |
| ◦ No terms ending soon                 |   |
| • Parks and Recreation Board           | 0 |
| ◦ No terms ending soon                 |   |
| • Personnel Board                      | 0 |
| ◦ 1 term ending March 31, 2025         |   |
| • Planning and Zoning Commission       | 0 |
| ◦ 3 terms ending March 31, 2025        |   |
| • Transportation Board                 | 0 |
| ◦ No terms ending soon                 |   |

Totals: 7 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” at:

<https://www.losalamosnm.us/Government/Leadership/Boards-Commissions> .



Mail to: LWV Los Alamos / P.O. Box 158 / Los Alamos, NM 87544  
(Each individual must complete a separate application.)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Partner\*: \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
(cellular phone)

Phone 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
(other phone)

E-mail (required): \_\_\_\_\_

**Dues:** The recommended dues amount is \$75, but members can pay any amount from \$20 up. **All checks for membership dues should be payable to LWVUS.** 20% of dues will go to LWVLA, 47% will go to LWVNM, and 33% will go to LWVUS. (Only the 20% for LWVLA is tax-deductible. A tax-deduction statement will be supplied on request.)

**Newsletter:** How do you want to receive the *Update* newsletter:

\_\_\_\_\_ email it as a PDF file \_\_\_\_\_ mail a hard copy \_\_\_\_\_ no newsletter

\_\_\_\_\_ 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)**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Advocate for League positions: communicate with local, state, and federal leaders.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Serve on the LWV-Los Alamos Board
- \_\_\_\_\_ Observer Corps: Watch Council, DPU, P&Z meetings etc. and write a summary to publish in our newsletter. (All meetings are recorded, so you can watch them later.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fundraising – Assist in raising money for LWVLA.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Voter Guide – Assist in developing the Guide – edit, develop questions, work with news publications, etc
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lunch with a Leader – order/deliver lunches when we meet in person; help set up tables.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Newsletter – Write newsletter articles on a local issue or League activity for the *Update*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Organize/provide refreshments for forums and other in-person meetings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Publicity – Submit press releases to local media.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Voter registration – Register voters at events such as the Farmers Market (with training by the County Clerk's office).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Website / Social Media – Provide technical assistance and develop content.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Another area (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_



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