

# 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***

May 15 Lunch with a Leader, Unitarian Church, Kristina Fisher, noon  
May 22 Board Meeting, Unitarian Church, noon

## Responses by LWVUS to Recent Events –



### Washington, DC, April 25, 2025 –

Federal agents arrested Milwaukee County Circuit Judge Hannah Dugan at her courthouse for allegedly obstructing the unlawful arrest of Eduardo Flores-Ruiz. In response, the **League of Women Voters CEO Celina Stewart** released the following statement:

“Make no mistake: the targeting of Judge Dugan is terrifying, unacceptable, and dangerous. Federal agents arresting a sitting state court judge undermines the sanctity of the judiciary and threatens us all.

"Amid an alarming intensification of the targeting of noncitizens by this administration, this act is a clear attempt to silence and intimidate anyone who stands up for the rights of noncitizens. Today's action creates a chilling ripple effect that erodes faith in institutions meant to protect and serve us all.

"In this incredibly divisive and dangerous moment, it is up to all of us — no matter our political leaning — to fight for our neighbors, our communities, and the vision of the country we want to live in.”



*Celina Stewart, new CEO of LWVUS*

### Washington, DC, May 1, 2025

The League of Women Voters of the United States, a century-old nonpartisan organization, launched a powerful new initiative, [\*Unite and Rise 8.5\*](#), which aims to engage and mobilize 8.5 million voters through advocacy, civic education, and community engagement. On April 17, 2025, **Celina Stewart, CEO of the League of Women Voters**, and **Dianna Wynn, President of the League of Women Voters**, took the serious step of *labelling our current moment a constitutional crisis*, and concurrently announced the *Unite and Rise 8.5* initiative.

“In first 100 days of the Trump administration, as our constitution and rule of law have been assailed, the democracy movement has been on the defensive,” said **Celina Stewart, CEO of the League of Women Voters of the United States**. “Today, that changes. *Unite and Rise 8.5* embodies a proactive, positive vision of what America can be — something that anyone who cares about democracy, no matter their party affiliation, can participate in. More than 105 years ago, women of all political leanings fought together for the freedom to vote, and the unprecedented political moment we find ourselves in today demands we take action to lead a movement again.”

## ***May Lunch with a Leader: Kristina Fisher***

The speaker at the May 15 Lunch with a Leader program will be Kristina G. Fisher, Associate Director of *Think New Mexico*. The meeting will take place in the Fellowship Hall at the Unitarian Church from noon-1 p.m.

Fisher grew up in Santa Fe, where both her parents worked as teachers. She was valedictorian of her class at Santa Fe Prep, graduated Summa Cum Laude from Williams College, and earned her J.D. from the University of New Mexico School of Law, where she served as Editor-in-Chief of the *Natural Resources Journal*. She is a recipient of the Morris K. and Stewart L. Udall Scholarship and the Harry S. Truman Scholarship for Public Service.

At Think New Mexico, where she has worked since 2002, Fisher supervises the research and collaborates on the writing and graphic design of all of Think New Mexico's policy reports, as well as drafting the legislation to enact them. She also oversees the Leadership Internship program, which she helped create.

Beyond her work at Think New Mexico, Fisher is passionate about protecting, restoring, and enjoying New Mexico's natural environment. She served as President of the Santa Fe Watershed Association for nearly a decade, and is currently a leader of the all-volunteer Albuquerque Wildlife Federation, which organizes volunteer ecological restoration projects across the state.

Fisher will speak about Think New Mexico's most recent initiative to address our state's critical shortage of health care workers. She will share an update on the progress made during this year's legislative session to enact Think New Mexico's policy recommendations, and next steps for building on that progress.



*Kristina Fisher. UCF Athletics official photo.*

*Karyl Ann Armbruster*

## ***In Memory of Colleen Olinger***

Our wonderful friend and fellow League member Colleen Olinger passed away on April 25, 2025. Colleen and Bart Olinger were married for 56 years and had 2 sons, Miles and Seth. Colleen's career took her from doing environmental analyses of LANL projects, to owning and developing the Otowi Station Bookstore, to leading the Valles Caldera dendroglyph project (documenting historic carvings on aspen trees). She ran Otowi Crossing Press and published several books and maps. Colleen was a volunteer for the LWV, registering new voters. She was also a strong supporter of women's rights – and was preparing to welcome 2 women college students this summer – both refugees from Afghanistan. Colleen loved so many things, including native American kachinas, Irish music, baseball, travelling, and her dogs. We will miss you, Colleen.

*Jean Dewart*

## **President's Message: LWVLA, LWVNM, and LWWUS Working Together for Democracy**

This past month held two events just nine days apart: the Annual Meeting of our local League in Los Alamos, and the state League Convention held in Santa Fe this year.

The Los Alamos League Annual Meeting followed Lunch with a Leader on April 17, featuring New Mexico Representative Christine Chandler, who gave us a rundown of what happened during the 2025 legislative session. Aside from reports by League Board members, Barbara Calef reported on her advocacy on behalf of the League during the session and the non-discretionary amendments to our bylaws driven by changes to the membership fee structure adopted at the national level.

We also adopted the 2025-2026 budget and elected a few new officers and directors (below). We thanked Ellen Mills for her service on the Board, and are grateful that she will remain thoroughly engaged as a Fundraising Committee member and hostess. We welcomed Cecile Hemez as Secretary, Leslie Wallstrom as First Vice President, and June Fabryka-Martin as Second Vice President. Many thanks to the Nominating Committee for their excellent work: Rebecca Shankland, Leslie Wallstrom, and Eduardo Santiago.

In Santa Fe on April 26-27, the state League and New Mexico's four local Leagues (Los Alamos, Santa Fe County, Central New Mexico, and Southern New Mexico) met for the 2025 Convention. Santa Fe Mayor Alan Webber welcomed us with an inspiring speech "What Makes Santa Fe a Just City?" Criteria included equal treatment for all, a living wage, environmental justice, guaranteed income, support for community colleges, and building with a goal of no one being unhoused.

Following the first plenary session, we heard from national League liaison Alexis Juday-Marshall on the national League's efforts to protect democracy and voting rights in the current landscape, and the results of those efforts to date. Afternoon activities included committee meetings, and the option of a hike outdoors or a tour of the Vladem Contemporary Art Museum led by Mrs. Vladem.

We also heard an excellent presentation by Leon Howard, Interim Executive Director and Counsel for the ACLU of New Mexico (at right), describing the organization's efforts to oppose expanded military authority in the border buffer zone, and to challenge the arbitrary revocation of international student visas at New Mexico universities, including the visa revocation of a Ghanaian doctoral student at New Mexico Tech.

Of note in the second plenary session and state League Board meeting that followed, there was strong support for turning up the volume on the actions taken and statements made by the national League in support of democracy and voting rights. Stay tuned for more!



*Leon Howard, Interim Executive Director and Counsel for the ACLU of New Mexico. Photo by Becky Shankland*

*Felicia Orth*

# **Action Summary of the 2025 Legislative Session**

LWVNM followed four priority topics this session: Voting & Elections & Ethics (that's one topic); Environment; Health Care; and Housing.

## **VOTING & ELECTIONS & ETHICS**

We had two big wins here.

SB16, Non-Majority Voters in Primary Elections allows voters who are registered as DTS (Decline to State) to choose a ballot and vote in primary elections without having to change their party.

HJR2, Eliminate Pocket Vetoes will be on the ballot in the next statewide election. If it passes, it will require the Governor to give a message for any bill she vetoes. Any bill on which the Governor does not act by a given deadline will automatically become law. Previously, bills which were not acted upon were "pocket vetoed," killed without any explanation.

A lot of other good bills failed to pass. There were several attempts to "modernize" the legislature -- a term that generally covers paying legislators and increasing the length of the session, but they all stalled in various committees. (There was one step forward in the effort to modernize; funding to provide staff for the legislators was approved in 2024.)

HB143, Lobbying Activity Reports would have required lobbyists (even volunteer lobbyists like our Action team) to report on what bills they're supporting or opposing, so the public can see who's supporting what. It passed both houses but was vetoed by the Governor on the grounds that it would be too much work for lobbyists.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

There were a lot of environmental wins this session.

SB23, Increase Oil & Gas Royalties will allow the state to charge more for new oil and gas development on State Trust Land. Public Lands Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard pushed this bill, and it is now law.

SB37, Strategic Water Reserve Fund creates a new fund directed by the Interstate Stream Commission to assist in compact compliance; support programs for threatened or endangered species; assist the state or water users with water management to support aquifer recharge.

SB21, Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Act allows the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) the authority to implement the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) parts of the federal Clean Water Act. This became necessary because of a 2023 U.S. Supreme Court decision that removed EPA authority over seasonal and temporary streams, leaving 95% of our state's waters unregulated by the EPA. It also requires groundwater users to clean up any prohibited discharges.

SB5, Game Commission Reform changes the name of the Game and Fish Department to the Department of Wildlife and changes the name of the Commission to State Wildlife Commission. It changes how the members are selected and broadens its purpose to protecting and managing all of the state's wildlife as a public trust resource with ecological, economic, and intrinsic value.

HB291, Recycling & State's Circular Economy makes changes to the Recycling and Illegal Dumping Act (RAID) to promote a "circular economy" in New Mexico. It also creates two new positions to assist in this process.

Other environment bills that passed included HB128 Creating a Local Solar Access Fund; SB9 Pipeline Safety Act Violations; and HB137 Strategic Water Supply Act, which creates new ways to conserve and reuse the state's existing water resources to protect New Mexico's water supply for the future.

One very disappointing loss was SB4 the Clear Horizons Act, which would have codified the Governor's proposed greenhouse gas reductions and required rulemaking by the Environment Department to enforce them.

## HEALTHCARE

The session started on a high note for healthcare advocates with the passage of a trio of bills related to behavioral health. SB1 establishes a Behavioral Health Trust Fund. SB3 introduces regional behavioral health committees and improves behavioral health care access for Medicaid recipients, and SB2 made an appropriation for building the necessary infrastructure.

Another good bill that passed, SB88, Medicaid Trust Fund & State Supported Fund, created a permanent trust fund for Medicaid, allowing for increasing Medicaid rates.

HB586, Review of Certain Healthcare Transactions was a last-minute win. Early in the session, SB14, the Health Care Consolidation & Transparency Act, which aimed to add review of proposed corporate takeovers and mergers of hospitals, stalled in its second committee. But a week before the end of the session, a "dummy bill," HB586, was repurposed to accomplish more or less the same thing. It was rushed through its committees and signed. This was a rare good use of "dummy bills," which the League generally opposes because they reduce transparency and make it hard for the public to follow the action.

Otherwise, the session was disappointing. There was a push led by the nonprofit Think New Mexico to address the shortage of healthcare workers. That included joining ten interstate healthcare worker compacts, which would have allowed doctors and other healthcare workers licensed in other states to practice in New Mexico; adding tax incentives and loan repayments for medical professionals practicing in NM; increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates; improving educational opportunities for future healthcare workers; and reforming the state's malpractice limits. The League supported all but the last point. But aside from SB88, on Medicaid rates, the rest of the proposal stalled, along with related bills like SB12, Out of State Telehealth Providers.

## HOUSING

Over 200 bills sought to address a wide variety of housing needs and issues including:

SB145, Housing Trust Fund to provide funds for the development of new and/or rehabilitated housing; and SB205/HB448, legislation to create a new State Office of Housing Planning and Production.

Most notable was the legislation introduced to address the landlord – tenant contractual relationship. There were bills introduced to address the terms of rental applications, screening of tenants, allowable income streams, background and screening processes as well as adequate notices of fee and rent increases.

In the end, only one of the housing-related bills passed and was signed into law. SB267, Housing Application Fees and Tenant Protections caps late fees and application fees and requires adequate notice of any changes in fee structure.

HB571, Building Communities Act, which would have created incentives for municipalities to reform their zoning codes to promote the construction of affordable housing, was pocket vetoed. The rest of the housing bills died in either the Senate Judiciary Committee or the House Judiciary Committee.

## OTHER TOPICS

In addition to the four priority areas, the LWVNM Action team lobbied on several other topics: Education; Budgets & Taxes; Immigration, which had a win in the passage of SB36, Sensitive

Personal Info Nondisclosure; and gun safety, where HB12, Extreme Risk Protection Orders Changes passed and was signed into law.

## **FUTURE**

In the aftermath of the session, we're working on a list of improvements we'd like to see to make legislative committee hearings more transparent. Contact Barbara Calef or Akkana Peck, or join the Action mailing list, if you want to help with that.

*Barbara Calef and Akkana Peck*

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

The Los Alamos County Health Council (LACHC) met monthly in April and May. In April we had a presentation from Dan Osborn, Los Alamos County Housing and Special Project Manager, about the County's future plans to create Affordable Housing. We published an in-depth and comprehensive article in March, written by Celeste Raffin, about the measles virus. We also published an article in April in the local newspapers related to Aging in Place and Falls Prevention, written by Tylerr Jones. Members of the Health Council teamed with the Social Services Division at PEEC's Earth Day Festival.

In May Los Alamos Public School (LAPS) Prevention Specialists Kristine Coblentz and Sylvia Diehl gave a presentation highlighting LAPS Prevention Initiatives. We also discussed a recent article about a teen who contacted a mental health hotline and the chain of events that ensued as a result of that call. On May 7 County Social Services Division Manager Jessica Strong and County Health Council Chair Lisa Hampton attended a statewide Community Collaborative Forum in Albuquerque, sponsored by the NM Alliance of Health Councils. The forum facilitated networking, collaboration, and forming strategic alignment to improve public health and gain insight on changes to state legislation and federal policies/funding.

Our next several meetings will include updates from the Community Health Action Center Working Group and the initiative to publish a 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 State Legislature's Health Care Bills, and activities for grief support and suicide prevention. We are also involved in the Association of Nature & Forest Therapy training.

At the County's recent FY26 Budget Hearings, the Social Services Division received approval for an additional staff member to support training, outreach, and education. The Social Services Division also received approval to establish a College Intern in Social Work position to support the staff and gain clinical hours. Coming up are lots of health-related events that involve our LACHC members:

- Thursday, June 5 (10 am -2 pm): Wellness Resource Fair for Older Adults (LARSO)
- Saturday, June 7 (12 pm): ChamberFest
- Mondays and Wednesdays, June 4-30 (9:30-11:30 am): Matter of Balance Falls Prevention Classes White Rock Senior Center (LARSO)
- Friday June 13 (12 pm -1:30 pm): Lunch and Learn Scam Awareness for Elders (SCARE) "Imposter Scam" Betty Ehart Center (LARSO)
- Saturday, June 21 (9 am-2 pm): ScienceFest Discovery Day
- Wednesday, September 24: Older Adult Summit (LARSO)

The next County Health Council meeting is Thursday, June 5, at 12:00 noon at the Municipal Building.

*Lisa Hampton*

## **Observer Corps Report – County Council – March 25**

### *County Fleet Conversion and EV Charging Infrastructure; Fiber Optic Line in LA Canyon; Low Income Housing Agreement; LEDA Program for Retail; Middle Mile Fiber Optic Line*

The regular session was attended by Chair Theresa Cull, Councilors Melanee Hand, Suzie Havemann, Ryn Herrmann, Beverly Neal-Clinton, David Reagor, and 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. Trail improvement projects

### **County Fleet Conversion and Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Infrastructure**

Plans to transition the County's fleet to zero-emission vehicles and to expand the public EV charging infrastructure were presented by Sustainability Manager Angelica Gurule and Stantec consultants Eric Plapper and Analy Castillo. No action was taken.

"These studies were first recommended by the LARES Task Force," said Gurule, "and later reinforced as a priority in the County's Climate Action Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support EV adoption by expanding access to EV charging infrastructure." The goal is for the County to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, with intermediate goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030 and 80% by 2040.

### *County Fleet Conversion*

Castillo, who is Stantec's Associate Zero Emissions Technical Lead, said that the first task for developing the conversion plan will be "an industry review of all vehicles that are

commercially available, so that we can have a sense of where the market stands..."

The Conversion Plan will analyze the current County fleet, vehicle replacement policies, and requirements for the transition to zero-emission vehicles, Castillo said. Considerations include space constraints and the existing electric infrastructure. Specifications will then be developed for each County vehicle in terms of capacity and power requirements, which will determine how many rechargers will be required.

The plan will recommend a vehicle replacement phase-in schedule and estimate the effects of the transition on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

### *EV Charging Infrastructure*

The Public EV Charging Plan will analyze the projected demand for charging stations, determine suitable locations for chargers, and address implementation using business models and costs.

Plapper, Stantec's Principal Zero Emissions Infrastructure Lead, said that the major driver of this project is the NM Clean Car Rule, which has targets going into effect beginning next year with sales targets for zero emissions vehicles calling for 82% of light duty vehicles and 40% of trucks by 2032.

Stantec plans to hold its first public meeting on May 12 in the Municipal Building. The two plans should be completed by November 2025.

Councilor Hand asked, "Is there any Federal funding involved, and if so, how stable is that?" Gurule responded, "Everything is up in the air right now and it is not clear how the New Mexico Clean Car standards will be affected. If needed, we will seek grants and other funding options." Gurule emphasized that the planning effort uses only local funding.

Councilor Ryti asked if there were employers in town who were offering EV charging on site. Gurule answered, "We do know that the laboratory is offering EV charging on site" but added she was unaware of any other employers doing so.

## **Easement for a Fiber Optic Line in Los Alamos Canyon**

Voting 6–1, with Councilor Reagor in opposition, Council approved a contract in which DOE/NNSA grants an easement to Los Alamos for the purpose of installing a County owned fiber optic line in Los Alamos Canyon.

Installation of the new fiber optic line is part of Department of Public Utilities (DPU)'s effort to replace the microwave radio communication system it currently uses to manage the water production supervisory controls and data acquisition (SCADA) system for four existing wells in Los Alamos Canyon. Replacing the microwave radio system with fiber optics should improve reliability, security, and data transmission speeds for SCADA operations.

The new fiber optic line will be attached to existing LANL-owned overhead power poles in the canyon and will tie into the fiber optic line along State Road 4 between East Jemez Road (the "Truck Route") and NM-502 (the "Hill Road"). Completion is scheduled for summer 2025.

## **Low-Income Housing Agreement for the 9th Street Apartments Rehabilitation and Affordable Housing Project**

By a unanimous vote of 7–0, Council approved this project.

Dan Osborn, Housing and Special Projects Manager, revisited his presentation from the Council Session on March 11 (see Observer Report) and presented for approval an agreement to initiate the project.

The agreement outlines the terms of a public/private partnership between the County and a private developer, the 9th Street, LLC. The developer is purchasing the Aspen Studio and Thunderbird Apartments located at 1027 and 1203 9th Street and 1211 11th Street, which comprise 87 studio apartments. The goal of the partnership is to rehabilitate some of the units and ensure long-term affordability for residents with County participation through the Low-Income Housing Agreement.

During public comment, neighborhood residents expressed concerns about the potential subdivision of the property, focusing on increased neighborhood density and the possible lack of available parking. They also raised the possibility of rent increases for some of the current apartment residents and evictions for some residents in two years if their income exceeds the threshold for eligibility in the housing program.

Representing the property owner, Amber Cash stated that there are currently no plans for additional development on the property.

Resident and developer Phil Gursky commented, "What has not been made clear is that preservation of existing, low-cost housing stock for affordability is absolutely imperative. The proposed acquisition cost is approximately a third of what it would cost to build new." Gursky added that there is no formula that would possibly make new construction truly affordable housing.

During discussion, Councilor Reagor said, "We haven't tried this approach before and we'd like to see how it goes."

Acknowledging that it wasn't an easy decision, Councilor Ryti voted to approve the agreement, concluding that, "I come on the side that we need to preserve housing."

## **Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) Program for Retail**

Economic Development Coordinator Shanna Sasser and County Manager Anne Laurent provided an update on the County's progress on developing a Retail LEDA program.

Laurent explained that the purposes of exploring LEDA for retail in Los Alamos are to revitalize commercial areas, reduce spending leakage to nearby communities, and fill market gaps identified in the community. According to an analysis using data from 2024, top retail gaps in Los Alamos are in food services, clothing, and health/personal care stores. "We want to be able to shop locally, and not have to shop off the Hill," Laurent said. She added that by-products would hopefully include business

expansion, job creation, infrastructure, and accessibility improvements.

Sasser then presented a detailed proposal to initiate a new LEDA for Retail Program. It would solicit applications for funding assistance in the form of a LEDA loan or grant. Then eligible applicants would be instructed to complete second applications within 90 days.

Sasser said that the County would establish a working group of County staff and community partners to review second phase applications. The County would then issue award letters for participation agreements. When these terms are satisfied, the County would issue the funding.

The timeline includes a public information meeting in May, a website launch, and call for applications in the fall.

## **Middle Mile Fiber Optic Line**

Jerry Smith, the County Broadband Manager, presented the County's Grant Match Agreement, which involves a \$2 million matching grant for San Ildefonso Service's Connect New Mexico project to construct a new Middle Mile fiber optic line connecting White Rock to Pojoaque.

Smith explained that the agreement outlines the responsibilities of the parties involved, particularly focusing on the payment disbursement process. The initial disbursement will be \$500,000, with additional funds requested as needed.

Councilor Reagor inquired about the difference between this vote and a previous approval made about a year ago. Smith clarified that the earlier vote allowed San Ildefonso to apply for the grant. The current agreement formalizes the matching funds following the evaluation and approval process for the grant.

Smith noted that, while tonight's vote was an important step, there will be another vote in May for a long-term agreement regarding the use of the fiber line, as the current focus is only on providing the grant match.

## *Local news coverage*

*Randall Ryti, Los Alamos Daily Post, March 28, 2025*

<https://ladailypost.com/video-councilor-ryti-shares-highlights-of-march-25-meeting/>

*Kirsten Laskey, Los Alamos Daily Post, April 3, 2025*

<https://ladailypost.com/council-oks-affordable-housing-project/>

*Kirsten Laskey, Los Alamos Daily Post, April 24, 2025*

<https://ladailypost.com/county-flips-the-switch-on-community-wide-ev-charging-study/>

*June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin*

## **Observer Corps Report – County Council – April 8**

### *Distracted Driving, Speed Cameras, Downtown MRA, Pedestrian Master Plan*

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

## **Ban on Distracted Driving**

Voting 6–1, with Councilor Reagor in opposition, Council approved an amendment to a proposed ordinance to implement a ban on distracted driving. The amended ordinance will return to Council for a vote on May 6.

The proposed ordinance focuses on the use of handheld cell phones while driving. State law already prohibits texting while driving but, as County Attorney Alvin Leaphart

explained, the intent of this ordinance is to expand the prohibition well beyond texting and to include any activity that interferes with safe vehicle operation, such as talking on a handheld phone.

During his presentation, Police Chief Dino Sgambellone reported that, in the first quarter of 2025, 48% of accidents (21 of 44) in the County were related to driver inattention. "The use of the phone while driving has clearly been demonstrated as risky and unsafe behavior," he said.

During public comment, local resident James Wernicke spoke in favor of the proposed ordinance. "Speaking for myself, my biggest fear here isn't wildfires or radiation sickness or Acid Canyon or high-density housing. It's biking down the road and somebody being distracted, drifting off into the shoulder and creaming me."

## **Automated Speed Cameras**

With a 4–3 vote, Council narrowly approved an ordinance to implement automated speed cameras on roads in the county. Councilors Hand, Neal-Clinton, and Reagor voted in opposition.

The program aims to address the widely acknowledged problem of speeding, which has led to an increase in traffic-related injuries. Police Chief Dino Sgambellone noted that 43% of 7,134 citations issued since 2022 were for speeding. The Police Department proposes using automated speed cameras to detect violations and automatically issue fines, aiming to reduce excessive speeding and its risks. Such programs already exist in Rio Rancho, Albuquerque, and Las Cruces.

As outlined in state law, every potential citation has to be reviewed by an officer.

Sgambellone detailed the project's feasibility, including state law compliance, community engagement, vendor selection, and budget implications. Estimated annual program costs would be \$300,000 to deploy three cameras, including administrative and maintenance costs, in addition to additional costs for police staff time and appeals. He said that a combination of fixed and mobile cameras

would be used to address community concerns about speeding in neighborhoods and specific areas. The requirement that an officer must review each potential citation would require an additional staff member to implement.

Sgambellone explained that the \$100 citation amount is set by state law, and there is an option for offenders to perform community service instead of paying the fine.

## *Public Comment*

Three members of the public spoke in opposition to the speed camera program. They all proposed that having more officer presence on the streets would be more effective and less costly than a speed camera program, as well as making it possible to address other traffic safety violations.

Andrea Determan also expressed concerns about program costs and elaborated on other drawbacks of using speed cameras. "We have a plethora of cameras all around this town and in White Rock. This feels like an invasion of our personal space. All we need is our police officers or vehicles strategically placed in obvious areas for two hours in the morning, lunchtime, and dinner." Continuing, Determan cited the potential for false readings, an increased risk for rear end collisions when motorists notice a camera and suddenly reduce their speed, and the potential for inequitable outcomes if they are deployed disproportionately in different areas and neighborhoods. She further expressed a need for education as people feel that the speed cameras are a revenue-generating tool rather than a safety tool.

## *Council Discussion and Decision*

Councilor Ryti observed that, in the Pedestrian Master Plan [*discussed later in this report*], the question was posed, "What are barriers to people walking?" Ryti said, "And 56% of the people identified speeding as a barrier."

Echoing comments from the public and other councilors, Councilor Hand said that, while she fully supported that the community wants Los Alamos to be a safer place, "I'm

questioning whether or not this is the best use of our investment dollars."

Councilor Reagor was also opposed but for different reasons. "I don't think that we should support this because we don't really know how much it's going to cost.... But also, I'm not sure we know where to put it that's really effective." Reagor concluded, "I think it's a very complicated thing to make effective use of, and pretty expensive. So, I'll be opposing this measure."

Councilor Havemann, who was one of the councilors in support of the ordinance, said, "I feel like the costs are really just society's costs for safety, and we need to do something. I feel like we all have the right to feel safe and unafraid when we're on the roads, whether we're driving, whether we're on a bike in the bike lane or crossing in a crosswalk."

With the passage of the ordinance, the Council will discuss its implementation during the budget hearings in April. [See *the observer report for the budget hearings held on April 21-23, in this issue.*]

## **MRA Downtown East Los Alamos**

By unanimous vote (7-0), Council approved completion of the MRA Plan by the end of the summer.

According to the County staff report, the MRA Downtown East Los Alamos plan has been under development for almost a year. Hearing from County Manager Anne Laurent that the plan was 85% complete, Council approved continuation of this work.

Details about this meeting agenda item were well covered by Kirsten Laskey's article in *The Daily Post* on April 10 –

<https://ladailypost.com/council-oks-completing-plan-for-eastern-downtown-mra/>

## **Pedestrian Master Plan**

Eric Ulibarri, County Engineer, and Noah Burke of Wilson and Company presented an update on the County's Pedestrian Master Plan. No action was requested or taken.

Ulibarri explained that in 2023 staff was awarded \$100K in grant funding through the

Transportation Alternatives Grant program managed by the NM Department of Transportation. The grant funded the preparation of an update to the County's 1998 Pedestrian Master Plan.

The updated Pedestrian Master Plan focuses on improving the road network infrastructure within the Los Alamos townsite and White Rock. Updates include an evaluation of the existing pedestrian system, identification of gaps and barriers in existing infrastructure, analysis of connectivity of pedestrian infrastructure, and promotion of increased safety within pedestrian facilities. The plan also analyzes crash data and provides a priority list of recommended pedestrian projects.

The plan received input via community outreach, including a survey conducted in 2024, public meetings held in conjunction with Transportation Board meetings, and engagement with the local walking group, LA Walks.

## *Next Steps*

Staff is currently working with Wilson and Company to address comments received from the public and Transportation Board. The final draft of the plan is scheduled for recommendation by the Transportation Board on June 5, followed by a request for adoption from County Council in late June or early July.

## *Local news coverage*

County News Release, *Los Alamos Daily Post*, April 1, 2025

<https://ladailypost.com/los-alamos-county-council-to-hold-public-hearing-on-two-code-ordinances-encouraging-driver-safety/>

Kirsten Laskey, *Los Alamos Daily Post*, April 10, 2025

<https://ladailypost.com/council-oks-completing-plan-for-eastern-downtown-mra/>

Theresa Cull, *Los Alamos Daily Post*, April 13, 2025. Video:

<https://ladailypost.com/video-council-chair-theresa-cull-discusses-april-8-meeting/>

*June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin*

## **Observer Corps Report – Planning & Zoning Commission – April 9**

Commissioners present: Rachel Adler, Marlon Brown, Karen Easton (Chair), Benjamin Hill, Ronald Nelson, Rebecca White

Commissioners absent: Katherine Bruell, Stephanie Nakhleh

### **Site Plan Approval to Renovate the Manhattan Project Era Dormitory Building**

By unanimous vote of the Commissioners present, the Planning & Zoning Commission approved a site plan for the County-owned property where the building commonly known as the Women’s Dorm Building is located. The site plan proposes that the building and grounds serve as a visitor center with historical and educational exhibits, related office space, and a caretaker unit, as well as construction of a detached restroom facility with a picnic pavilion.

Los Alamos County Project Manager Russell Naranjo explained that the County purchased the property six years ago and received approval for the proper zoning change to INS (Institutional) last year. From the beginning, the plan was to create a space for the National Park Service to operate a museum and visitor center and to provide a living space for a caretaker. Naranjo explained that the Manhattan Project National Historical Park has outgrown its current visitor center in the Community Building at Ashley Pond and currently locates its staff and exhibits in two separate locations. After being assured the mechanical equipment for the structure would be adequately shielded to provide noise protection for the nearby residents, the Commission approved the site plan.

*June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin*

## **Observer Corps Report – County Council – April 21, 22, 23**

### *FY26 Budget Hearings*

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

Our observer report is based on discussion during the meeting, documentation provided in the County's 2026–2027 Biennial Budget document, Council meeting minutes, and reports in *The Los Alamos Daily Post*.

### **Adopted FY26 County Budget**

At the end of three days of public hearings, Council adopted a FY26 budget totaling \$368.0M, including \$3.1M in budget options. The vote was 6–1, with Councilor Reagor in opposition. The adopted FY26 budget is about \$10M less than the FY25 adopted budget (\$377.5M) and about \$14M less than that adopted in FY24 (\$382.1M).

### **Projected County Revenues**

County Manager Anne Laurent explained that a driving force in developing the County budget each year is the estimate of County revenues. The Gross Receipts Tax (GRT) accounts for 72% of the total General Fund budgeted revenues, primarily from the community’s largest employer, LANL. Property taxes account for 8% of the budgeted revenues. The remaining revenues are comprised of user fees, interdepartmental charges, investment income, and state and federal grants.

Overall, anticipated total revenues in the General Fund for FY26 are \$121.9M, down from \$124.8M in FY25.

### **Proposed GRT Rate Increase**

Separately, Council voted 6–1, with Councilor Reagor opposed, to approve a motion directing staff to return to Council in October with a proposal for a 1/2-cent GRT

increase that would be effective starting July 1, 2026.

Laurent and Helen Perraglio, Administrative Services Director, emphasized that such an increase was needed for FY27 to support the County's Long Range Financial Projection by offsetting a projected decline in GRT revenues from LANL while maintaining at least a 20% unassigned fund balance target in accordance with financial policy.

Without an increased GRT, said Perraglio, the proposed FY26 budget faces a \$18M deficit. A 1/2-cent GRT could generate \$14.2 million annually with the potential to use half of the increased revenue to provide funds for affordable housing.

Laurent and Perraglio reminded Council that the budget it had approved for FY25 included a proposed new GRT increment of 1/4-cent starting in FY27 because of the projected decrease in GRT revenues.

## **General Process for FY26 Budget Hearing**

Laurent and Perraglio outlined the budget review process, which began with the adopted FY25 budget, less one-time items. County guidance to departments in preparation of their proposed budgets was to allow for an average 6% adjustment in salaries (3% structure, 2% merit, 1% other cost of labor) for non-collective bargaining employees, a 5% increase to benefits, which includes an anticipated increase in medical premiums and retirement expenditures (PERA), and a non-labor expenditure target of 3%.

Council reviewed each department's base budget and any budget options for one-time or recurring expenses and voted on motions to tentatively approve each of these. Items in need of further discussion were placed in a "parking lot" for additional evaluation after all of the budgets had been tentatively approved.

At the end of the hearings and resolution of outstanding issues, Council voted on a final motion to approve the total budget, including any amendments and associated fund transfers.

## **Community Development Department (CDD) (presented by Acting CDD Director Dan Osborn)**

Council voted 6–1, with Councilor Reagor in opposition, to tentatively approve the proposed CDD budget of \$18.0M, which is 7% less than the FY25 adopted budget of \$19.3M.

Programs managed by CDD in its FY26 budget include expenditures for Administration (\$1.2M), Housing (\$0.6M), Building (\$0.6M), Planning (\$0.8M), Lodger's Tax (\$0.5M), Economic Development General Fund and CIP projects (\$1.6M), and the Economic Development Fund (\$12.7M).

Osborn explained that the Economic Development Fund supports multiple initiatives, including Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) loans, Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) projects, collaborations with the School District and UNM-LA, broadband expansion, and housing support. Specific housing projects include, but are not limited to, the 20th Street Project, the North Mesa Development Project, and the Ninth Street Affordable Housing Project.

The adopted budget also includes contractual services to update the County's Master Plan and Chapter 10, the County's Building Code.

Although Councilor Reagor did not provide a reason for his objection, he expressed frustration about the explanation provided for management of economic development funds, such as the transfer of MRA funds into the Economic Development Fund.

## **Community Services Department (CSD) (presented by CSD Director Cory Styron)**

Council voted 7–0 to tentatively approve the proposed CSD budget of \$33.2M, which is 2% less than the FY25 adopted budget of \$33.7M. The FY26 budget included budget options of \$0.4M for additional FTEs:

- program specialist to help the Social Services Department comply with the

recommendations in the Comprehensive Health Plan;

- assistant golf course/ice rink professional to provide regular, stable support at the golf course outdoor operations and provide a level of succession planning;
- parks and maintenance construction specialist to assist with implementation and maintenance of the Trails and Open Space Management Plan; and
- two parks and maintenance construction specialists to work primarily at the cemetery and assist at the stables, thereby freeing up other staff to focus on field maintenance.

CSD programs in FY26 include expenditures for Centralized Services (\$0.9M), the Library (\$3.8M), Parks (\$12.2M), Guaje Cemetery (\$46K), Open Space (\$0.6M), the Aquatic Center (\$2.0M), the Golf Course (\$1.6M), the Ice Rink (\$0.3M), Recreation Programming (\$1.3M), Social Services (\$9.6M), and Cultural Services (\$0.8M).

The bulk of the FY26 expenditures (97%) are provided by the General Fund (\$19.0M), Health Care Assistance (\$4.7M), and the Capital Improvement Fund (\$8.5M).

Laurent provided additional justification for CSD's request for additional full-time staff. She reminded Council that, compared to the other departments, CSD had held back such requests in previous years, choosing to focus on finalizing plans and identifying needs before proposing hiring additional staff.

## **Fire Department** (presented by Deputy Fire Chief Wendy Servey)

Council voted 7–0 to tentatively approve the proposed Fire Department budget of \$56.5M, which is 1% greater than the FY25 adopted budget of \$55.9M.

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

Council voted unanimously to tentatively approve the \$17.2M budget, which is 8% greater than the FY25 adopted budget of

\$15.9M. The FY26 budget included three budget options:

- one sergeant and one officer for the traffic and speed unit, at a recurring cost of \$260K;
- two outfitted patrol vehicles designated for traffic and speed camera duties, a one-time cost of \$200K; and
- speed cameras at a recurring cost of \$300K.

Chief Sgambellone strongly requested Council to approve the budget options, saying that "The budget options represent what I feel is necessary to implement and manage a speed camera program and at the same time provide focused resources with a traffic unit to better address traffic safety and education as a whole."

Sgambellone presented results from a speed study in April of cars going uphill near LANSCE. Of 23,938 vehicles, 580 exceeded the speed limit, including 10 going 81 to 85 mph, and 4 going 86 to 90 mph. These numbers underestimate real speeds since most vehicles slow down when they see the cameras.

During public comment, Ted Wyka, National Nuclear Security Administration (NSSA) Field Manager for LANL, expressed the support of the Department of Energy (DOE) and NSSA for the Los Alamos Police Department and its efforts to improve traffic safety across the County.

The budget option items were added to the "parking lot" for additional discussion, and Council debated the option for speed cameras at length.

Councilor Neal-Clinton made a motion to drop the budget option for the speed cameras. "I mentioned previously that I was in support of having additional officers," she said, "but that the money for the cameras, I'm not on board with. I see where the cameras could be effective, but I also think that the human engagement, having additional bodies, is really what's going to change that behavior."

Councilor Reagor likewise opposed funding the speed camera program, but for a different

reason. "The Lab didn't meet their responsibilities when they hired all these people," he said, "and now we have a lot of crowding on the roads, and it turns into this proposal. We need better roads and things of that type.... And if they didn't do that, then I hate to turn this into something that's aimed at our citizens, and especially since I'll probably be the first one caught going up the Hill."

Councilor Herrmann added that she agreed with Councilor Reagor's statement that the roads were not meant to handle the current traffic load. "But it is what it is at this point," she said, "and I'm in favor of the cameras."

The motion to remove the budget option for the speed cameras failed by a vote of 2–5, with Councilors Ryti, Havemann, Cull, Hand, and Herrmann opposed.

### **Public Works Department (presented by Public Works Manager Eric Martinez)**

Council voted 7–0 to tentatively approve the Public Works budget of \$69.3M, which is 2% less than the FY25 adopted budget of \$68.3M. The FY26 budget includes a budget option to hire a consultant to develop a draft storm water management plan (\$250K).

Public Works Department programs in FY26 include expenditures for the Airport (\$1.1M), the County Fleet (\$8.5M), Transit (\$7.2M), Traffic & Streets (\$6.3M), Environmental Services (\$7.2M), Facilities Maintenance (\$6.2M), Custodial Maintenance (\$1.9M), Engineering & Project Management (\$1.8M), Major Facilities Maintenance Projects (\$3.3M), and Capital Projects (\$25.0M).

The budget option to develop a storm water management plan resulted from a draft ruling from the Environmental Protection Agency designating the County as a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) community. A requirement from that designation is to develop a storm water management program to minimize the discharge of pollutants from the storm sewer system.

In response to a question from Councilor Hand about the status of the MS4 designation, Laurent said that the County has not received

a final notification with a timeline. She pointed out that, nonetheless, the County has implemented best practices with storm water management, such as cleaning streets and maintaining drains. "But I think it would be good to look at our storm water management and document all that we do and get some recommendations."

Martinez noted that "there's been lots of questions about federal funding and how that's affecting local governments. Currently, we've been given reassurances that anything that's been awarded and obligated is still okay."

Councilor Ryti asked how much of the proposed budget of \$69M would be funded by federal grants. Budget and Performance Manager Erika Thomas said that, in FY26, \$5.1M of federal grant funds were included in the Transit Fund and the Airport Fund. Capital Improvement Project Funds also include federal grants, such as those for multimodal transportation projects under the purview of Engineering & Project Management.

At the request of Councilor Hand, Martinez agreed to provide Council with updates in the future regarding the effects of tariffs on expenses and the budget for FY26 and beyond.

### **Department of Public Utilities (DPU) (presented by Utilities Manager Philo Shelton and Karen Kendall, Deputy Utilities Manager for Finance and Administration)**

Council voted unanimously to tentatively approve the DPU proposed budget of \$107.3M, a 7% increase to the FY25 adopted budget of \$100.7M. The FY26 budget includes budget options for replacement of a gas line (\$0.35M) and water line (\$1.1M) on Trinity Drive.

DPU programs in FY26 include expenditures for Electric Production (\$61.0M), Electric Distribution (\$10.8M), Gas (\$7.4M), Water Production (\$10.2M), Water Distribution (\$7.2M), and Wastewater (\$10.7M).

The FY26 budget includes the effect of planned rate changes previously approved by

the Board of Public Utilities and Council: 6% increase in retail water rates and 5% increase in wholesale water rates, and 5.5% increase in gas rates. It also includes proposed increases in wastewater and electric rates, for which DPU will return for Council's approval in June. The proposals will be for a 7% increase in wastewater rates and 9% increase in electric rates.

## **County Manager's Office (CMO)** (presented by Deputy County Manager Linda Matteson)

Voting 6–1, with Councilor Reagor in opposition, Council tentatively approved the CMO proposed budget of \$25.4M, compared to the FY25 adopted budget of \$58.9M. The FY26 budget includes three budget options:

- Legistar update to comply with ADA requirements (\$50K);
- Supplements to the Wildlife Management Plan (\$25K); and
- Limited-term Broadband Project Manager. This option only creates the position, which will be funded by a bond.

CMO programs in FY26 include expenditures for Regional Strategic Partnering (\$2.5M), Broadband (no additional funds in FY26), Sustainability (\$1.1M), Communications & Public Relations (\$0.8M), Human Resources (\$2.9M), Risk Management (\$15.1M), and CIP CMO Projects (\$0.9M). CMO expenditures are drawn from the Risk Management Fund (\$15.1M), the General Fund (\$9.4M), and CIP Fund (\$0.9M).

In FY26, the Regional Development Fund (\$2.5M) provides support for the North Central Regional Transit System (\$350K), the Regional Development Corporation (\$175K), and regional strategic partnerships with the City of Espanola (\$2.4M), Rio Arriba County (\$1.5M), and the Pueblo of San Ildefonso (\$2.0M). Councilor Reagor asked that regional funding programs be set aside as a "parking lot" item for clarification and more details about programs funded by the Risk Management Fund.

## **Elected Officials and Other Departments**

Council tentatively approved other proposed FY26 budgets not discussed above.

- Administrative Services Department (presented by Helen Perraglio, Administrative Services Director) —\$22.4M, a 51% increase relative to the FY25 adopted budget of \$14.8M. The increase relative to FY25 is primarily attributable to adding funds to existing Capital Improvements Project (CIP) funds for Information Technology projects (\$6.6M). Tentatively approved unanimously.
- County Assessor (presented by Lucas Fresquez, Chief Deputy Assessor)—\$1.04M, which is 7% higher than the FY25 adopted budget of \$0.97M. Tentatively approved unanimously.
- County Attorney (presented by Alvin Leaphart)—\$1.5M, a 4% increase to the FY25 adopted budget of \$1.4M. Tentatively approved 6-1, with Councilor Reagor in dissent. Councilor Reagor asked several questions about risk management, which Leaphart explained was under the purview of the County Manager's Office. Reagor requested that this item be placed in the "parking lot" for later discussion.
- County Council (presented by Linda Matteson, Deputy County Manager)—\$445K, a 4% increase to the FY25 adopted budget of \$429K in FY25. Tentatively approved 6–1, with Councilor Reagor in opposition. The bulk of the FY26 budget is designated for professional and contractual services (\$320K).
- County Clerk (presented by Michael Redondo, County Clerk)—\$1.3M, a 16% increase to the FY25 adopted budget of \$1.1M. Budgeting for two elections in FY26—the 2025 Regular Local Election and the 2026 Primary Election—accounts for some of the proposed increase. Following discussion with Council, Redondo withdrew his budget request for \$250K to hire an outside company to index and redact 144,000 digitized records, saying he

preferred to continue working on it in house while he investigated the potential of using artificial intelligence (AI) to help with the task. Tentatively approved 6–1, with Councilor Hand in opposition.

- County Sheriff (presented by Police Chief Sgambellone)—\$17.8K, a 1% increase to the FY25 adopted budget of \$17.5K. Tentatively approved unanimously.
- Municipal Court (presented by Elizabeth Allen, Municipal Judge)—\$909K, a 10% increase to the FY25 adopted budget of \$873K. Tentatively approved unanimously.
- Probate Court (presented by Michael Redondo)—\$8.5K, an 8% decrease to the FY25 adopted budget of \$9.3K. Tentatively approved unanimously.
- Non-departmental budgets (presented by Melissa Dadzie, Chief Financial Officer)—\$10.4M, predominantly for proposed new GRT revenue bonds debt service of \$9.8M for broadband and other CIP projects totaling \$75M. Tentatively approved 6–1, with Councilor Reagor in opposition.

## Capital Improvement Program (presented by Melissa Dadzie)

Council received a report of CIP projects included in the FY26 budget. Several department budgets included Capital Improvement projects:

- Administrative Services and County Manager's Office—\$7.4M, primarily for Information Technology projects and CIO-CMO Projects.
- Public Works projects—\$11.3M, primarily for Fire Station 4 replacement, major improvements to Betty Ehart Senior Center, Sustainability enhancements and food truck pads for the White Rock Visitors' Center
- Transportation—\$12.7M, primarily for Street CIP projects, the Canyon Rim Trail Phase 3, Trinity Drive Safety & ADA improvements, NM4 Crossing & Multi-use Trail improvements, Denver Steels Phase 3, and a Traffic Safety Project.
- Community Services—\$8.5M, for Integrated Master Plan and ADA projects, Ice Rink

Flooring & Shade Structure, Athletic Court Renovations, and Small Capital Projects. Small Capital Projects include the East Park Mesa Canyon Trail, Canyon & Mesa Trail Restoration, the Rose Garden Fence, Community Garden Redesign, and an RV Park Improvement Plan.

- Council took no action on these budget items because it had previously approved them.

## Final Discussion and Motion to Approve

At the end of the 3-day public hearing, Council voted 6–1 to approve the complete FY26 budget of \$368.0M, with Councilor Reagor in opposition.

Councilor Reagor was unequivocal in raising his objections to the proposed budget. "This is just rubber stamping everything that comes out of staff and is just not a useful Council. We don't even need to be here." He supported delaying or cutting many of the capital improvement projects, other than those for the broadband and housing.

Councilor Havemann countered Councilor Reagor's comments. "I think it's a solid budget that does include Council input," she said, "because it supports the priorities that we have thought through and talked about and modified year after year... So, I think it does reflect Council's wishes and guidance, and I think staff has been very thoughtful with their restraint and planning and taking care of the assets that we already enjoy as a community."

### *Local news coverage*

Kirsten Laskey, *Los Alamos Daily Post*, April 24, 2025

<https://ladailypost.com/council-approves-368-million-budget-for-fy2026/>

Staff report, *Los Alamos Daily Post*, April 22, 2025

<https://ladailypost.com/council-tentatively-approves-fy-2026-budgets-for-first-seven-county-departments-reviewed-on-first-night-of-hearings/>

Staff report, *Los Alamos Daily Post*, April 23, 2025

<https://ladailypost.com/council-tentatively-approves-remaining-department-budgets-tuesday-night/>

*June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin*

## ***April Lunch with a Leader: Rep. Christine Chandler Reports on the 2025 Legislative Session***

Christine Chandler has represented NM House District 43 since 2019. The district encompasses the communities of Ponderosa and Jemez Springs in Sandoval County, all of Los Alamos County, and the part of Santa Fe County including the airport, the village of La Cienega, and the racetrack, which has been acquired by Pojoaque Pueblo and is currently being demolished.

Chandler has chaired the House Judiciary Committee (HJC) for three years. Of the 1,182 bills filed during the recent session, 384 were referred to her committee. She also serves on the Taxation and Revenue Committee in the House; she noted that she is very interested in tax policy. During the interim she chairs the Courts, Corrections, and Justice Committee (CCJ).

Chandler spoke briefly about some of the achievements of the legislature, including a 4% average salary increase for state employees, a 4% average salary increase for public school and higher education staff, and a \$5,000 raise in minimum teacher salaries per license level. The legislature also created the Office of the Child Advocate, which will investigate complaints related to child services at the CYFD.

In addition, the legislature passed a joint resolution (HJR2) to abolish the pocket veto. If the ballot measure passes in the 2026 election, the governor will be required to explain all vetoes.



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

Community safety was a major issue. Last year the governor called a special session to resolve problems with criminals deemed incompetent. The problem was that when a person accused of a violent felony was determined not to be mentally competent to participate in their defense, they received treatment. However, if the crime was a misdemeanor and the person was not mentally competent, the case was simply dismissed.

During the 2024 special session the legislators objected that they needed more time to craft a successful approach, and they committed to finding a resolution to the problem. As chair of the CCJ, Chandler felt it was her responsibility. She is pleased that they were able to create a structure allowing the DA to get treatment for low-level criminals (HB8 Criminal Competency and Treatment). The system provides multiple pathways to address various situations. It's not perfect, Chandler said, but the problem is complicated and she is proud of the accomplishment. UNM has already recruited 19 forensic psychologists to work on these programs.

In addition the legislature also created the Behavioral Health Trust Fund for the treatment of patients with mental health/addiction problems with appropriations to provide facilities and housing.

Chandler also succeeded in amending the Extreme Risk Firearm Protection Orders Act (Red Flag Law HB12) to improve enforcement capability by the police, and helped pass a bill to improve the state's regulatory authority over PFAS waste (HB140). [PFAS are substances with long-lasting health and environmental risks.]

She noted that the budget includes \$45 million to expand affordable housing. The bill directed the funds to the three largest counties, Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Doña Ana. However, the governor vetoed the specific destinations. (Chandler said that working with the governor is frustrating.) There was also an effort to improve tenant rights. A bill to limit "junk fees" in rental applications passed, but other housing-related legislation stalled. Chandler commented, "I spend a lot of time on low-income stuff, guys... It helps everybody when we don't have poverty."

In response to questions, Chandler said that the health-care worker compacts went through the House but stalled in the Senate. She believes the potential benefits have been exaggerated, noting that nurses' compacts have been in place for 20 years, but we still have a shortage of nurses. Instead of a compact, she favors helping to reduce physicians' debt load in exchange for a commitment to work in the state for a number of years as one approach to reducing the shortage. She also believes there should be a limit on punitive damages to reduce the cost of malpractice insurance, but she opposes a cap on attorney fees.

Chandler is working on a privacy bill to regulate the sale of the information that is being gathered with the proliferation of AI (artificial intelligence). She remarked that the world is more complex than it was in 1912 when New Mexico became a state. To keep up with changing times, we also need a paid legislature and longer sessions.

*Barbara Calef*

# LWVLA Board 2025-2026



From left: Addie Jacobson, Wendy Swanson, Leslie Wallstrom, June Fabryka-Martin, Felicia Orth, Barbara Calef, Cecile Hemez, Becky Shankland, Jody Benson, Lisa Hampton, Karyl Ann Armbruster, Bob Williams. Photo by Maire O'Neill.

## Officers

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1st VP / Pres. Elect: Leslie Wallstrom  
2nd VP: June Fabryka-Martin  
Secretary: Cecile Hemez  
Treasurer: Addie Jacobson  
Past President: Barbara Calef

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Lunch with a Leader: Karyl Ann Armbruster  
Membership: Bob Williams  
Publicity: Jody Benson  
Voter Service/Voter Guide: Lynn Jones  
Community Health and Wellbeing: Lisa Hampton  
Reservations and Refreshments: Wendy Swanson  
Director at Large (Technology): Akkana Peck  
Communications Director: Rebecca Shankland

## Off-Board Directors

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Observer Corps: June Fabryka-Martin, Craig Martin  
Fundraising: Ellen Mills  
Video: Ed Santiago  
Newsletter: Barbara Calef, Bob Williams, Rebecca Shankland  
Nominating Committee: Ellen Mills, Ed Santiago

# Tickler Reports – Council Agenda Items and BCC Vacancies

## Tickler Report

### Tentative Council Agenda Items as of April 29, 2025

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

- Proposed Electric Rate Schedules, Electric Customer Service Charges and Electric Energy Charges
  - 5/06/25 meeting. Introduction of code ordinance. No action requested.
- Proposed Sewage Service Rates
  - 5/06/25 meeting. Introduction of code ordinance. No action requested.
- Proposed amendments of County building and fire codes to incorporate best practices for managing the Wild Land-Urban Interface
  - 5/06/25 meeting. Public hearing. Action requested.
- Remembrance of Cerro Grande Fire – 25 years later
  - 5/06/25 meeting. Presentation. No action requested.
- Proposed code ordinance on distracted driving
  - 5/06/25 meeting. Public hearing. Action requested.
- Council’s Local/Small Business Engagement Working Group
  - 05/13/25. Briefing. No action requested.
- Overview of 2025 State Legislative Session
  - 05/13/25. Briefing by Representative Chris Chandler. No action requested.
- High Level Design of Community Broadband Network
  - 5/20/25 meeting. Briefing. 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 April 30, 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 0
  - 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 1
  - No terms ending soon
- Planning and Zoning Commission 1
  - No terms ending soon
- Transportation Board 0
  - No terms ending soon

Totals: 7 vacancies, 6 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> .

# LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS' OF LOS ALAMOS

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

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): \_\_\_\_\_

*The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.*

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