

# 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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## ***Calendar***

September 9	Proclamation of National Voter Month, County Council Chambers, 6 p.m.
September 16	National Voter Registration Day
September 18	Lunch with a Leader, Unitarian Church, LAMC CEO Tracie Stratton, 11:45
September 25	Board Meeting, Unitarian Church, noon
October 6	Candidate Forum, 7 p.m. (6:30 p.m. for refreshments), Venue TBD
October 7	Early Voting Begins

## ***2025 Local Election***

The 2025 local election will be non-partisan. The candidates are running for School Board Districts 1 and 2, UNM-LA Advisory Board (vote for three), and Mirador PID (vote for three). The League will post information and responses to questions on [vote411.org](https://vote411.org) and will publish a Voter Guide in the *Los Alamos Daily Post* on October 2. We will also hold a candidate forum on Monday, October 6.

Candidates for LAPS School Board:

- District 1 Stephanie Ann Galvez, Margie Serrato
- District 2 Antonio Ray Jaurigue, Jasmine K. Stephens, Tamara L. Hinckley

Candidates for UNM-LA Advisory Board:

- Bryan Leo Fearey, Andrew Fischer Wright, Conner Tiffani Tharp, David E. Hampton

Candidates for Mirador PID:

- Katharine Allene Martin, Nicholas Qualick, Juan Manuel Galvez, Kenneth Joseph Summa, Elizabeth Anne Summa, Nicholas Michael Martin, Sandra Kay Brewer Jones, Megan L. Hesselink, Erik J. Pavlina

## ***Welcome, New Member!***

**David Reagor** writes: I've been a Los Alamos County Councilor since 2020 and was reelected in 2024. I'm the only Republican Councilor. I spent 32 years at LANL and retired in 2018.

### ***September Lunch with a Leader: Tracie Stratton***

Our September 21 Lunch with a Leader speaker will be Tracie Stratton, the Chief Executive Officer of the Los Alamos Medical Center. Stratton graduated from Casper College in Wyoming with an Associate's degree in nursing. Later she completed her Master's degree in Nursing Administration while working as the Chief Nursing Officer at Mountain View Hospital in Casper.

In 2012, Stratton and her family moved to Los Alamos, where she started her career with LifePoint Health as Chief Nursing Officer. She managed clinical operations at LAMC and received the Chief Nursing Officer of the Year Award and then was promoted to the Health Support Center, where she oversaw clinical initiatives for LifePoint's Western Division.

During her career Stratton says she has been blessed to serve in many different capacities, all focused on improving clinical care at each patient's bedside. It is her nursing experience that she credits for bringing a personal touch to her administrative duties; she is especially committed to offering "high quality care close to home."

Stratton will be addressing Think NM's legislative proposals from a different point of view than we have heard from Think NM or Rep. Christine Chandler. She will also address topics related to the Medical Center.



*Tracie Stratton, the Chief Executive Officer LAMC photo*

*Karyl Ann Armbruster*

## ***Suicide Prevention Training Opportunity***

Suicide is a devastating problem in New Mexico with more than 500 lives lost each year. There is a new program in Los Alamos to train people to be aware of those considering suicide and steer them with compassion, empathy, and referrals towards a mental health professional. This new training class was devised by Marvel Harrison, Ph.D., a psychologist who previously resided in Los Alamos. Liz Martineau, Executive Director of the Los Alamos Community Foundation (LACF), spoke to the League on July 17<sup>th</sup> at our monthly Lunch with a Leader gathering about this training. This Suicide Prevention Training uses the strategy called “ABC” –

- Ask
- Be Present
- Connect

“The ABC program goes beyond crisis intervention,” said Curriculum Creator Marvel Harrison, PhD. “It includes upstream prevention by building a culture where it’s safe to ask someone if they’re thinking about suicide. Talking about suicide saves lives.”

Martineau informed us that anyone can take this one-hour class for free!

The LWV/Los Alamos Board of Directors agreed that this class should be publicized and League members encouraged to sign up. If at least 10 people take the class at the same time, the state will cover the costs of the class. Otherwise LACF will do so. If you are interested in learning more, or would like to sign up, please contact Liz Martineau, Executive Director, or Brandi Weiss, Program Manager at the LACF. (505) 663-6113

The class is offered on the dates listed below. The Board hopes that a group of League members will attend together on one of these dates. Please let Leslie Wallstrom know if you have signed up for a class. (Email: [lestim.nm\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:lestim.nm(at)gmail.com)).

### **Upcoming ABC Suicide Prevention Partner Classes in Los Alamos:**

- Friday, Sept. 12 at 10:30 a.m. at Mesa Public Library in Los Alamos;
- Monday, Oct. 20 at noon at White Rock Branch Library;
- Friday, Nov. 14 at 10:30 a.m. at White Rock Branch Library;
- Monday, Dec. 15 at noon at Mesa Public Library in Los Alamos.

*Leslie Wallstrom*

## ***President’s Message: A Passion for Voting and Serving as Registrants***

First, a little history from our Centennial Suffrage Exhibit at Mesa Public Library in 2021, “Women’s Votes, Voters’ Voices”: The Los Alamos League of Women Voters has been registering voters since 1947, following passage of a bill by the New Mexico Legislature allowing people living on federal installations within the state to vote. Thus Los Alamos became Sandoval County’s Precinct 17, and League members promptly traveled to Bernalillo to register. In 1948, the *Santa Fe New Mexican* reported that 78 women from the League and the Business and Professional Women’s Club “provided six to eight typists each day of the registration period.”

But there was a setback: After the 1948 primary election, the New Mexico Supreme Court ruled that the votes were invalid, because they had been cast on federal, not state land. Although Los Alamos was contributing the major share of taxes to the Sandoval County coffers, some politicians

there worried about new unpredictable voters, and the County Clerk was advised to stop registering people from the Hill. Taxation without representation!

So, Los Alamos had to become a county of its own. On March 4, 1949, President Truman signed an act of retrocession, and Governor Mabry welcomed Los Alamos as New Mexico's 32nd county. The Governor then tried to prevent Los Alamos voters from participating in the 1950 primary election. Los Alamos sued the Governor, and on our second trip to the New Mexico Supreme Court, the Court declared that Los Alamos voters had a constitutional right to participate in state elections. League voter education had never abated during the three years of legal drama, registering voters and conducting candidate forums throughout.

We find ourselves in another notable period of time around voting and voter registration. On the advice of Russian President Putin, the U.S. President is threatening to end mail-in voting. He does not have the legal authority to take this step, and there is no good reason to do it; elections around the country are more secure than ever before. Nearly a third of American voters have voted by mail in the last three national elections, including in the two elections President Trump won. He is also encouraging certain states to redistrict mid-cycle, and with the U.S. Supreme Court gutting much of the Voting Rights Act, these states may well lean into gerrymandering. The League opposes mid-cycle redistricting, and remains committed to protecting the votes of historically disenfranchised communities.

And this week the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) decided to bar nonpartisan nonprofits such as the League from providing voter registration services at naturalization ceremonies. The Los Alamos League has been present over many years at these joyful celebrations, held annually at the Bandelier Amphitheater, working to ensure that new Americans are able to participate fully in our democracy. The U.S. League has called on USCIS to reverse this policy. Regardless, Leagues at every level remain committed to registering eligible voters, and will continue to do this vital work. Los Alamos Board members will be assisting with voter registration at the high school and registering voters at the Farmers' Market.

Celebrate Voter Registration month with us in Council chambers on September 9, when we will join the County Clerk in accepting the Council Proclamation designating September as Voter Registration Month.

*Felicia Orth*



*1 Marching in the Rodeo Parade: Lynn Jones, Wendy Swanson, Barbara Calef, Catherine Taylor, Ellen Mills, Cynthia Biddlecomb, Leslie, Wallstrom . Photo by Karyl Ann Armbruster.*



# **Observer Corps Report — County Council – August 5**

## *LANL Quarterly Update, Valles Caldera Management Plan, LEDA Retail Program, Finch Street Extension*

The regular session was attended by Councilors Theresa Cull (Chair), Suzie Havemann (part of the meeting), Melanee Hand, Ryn Hermann, Beverly Neal-Clinton, David Reagor, and Randall Ryti.

### **LANL Quarterly Update**

Mark Davis, Deputy of Operations at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), presented a quarterly update of the Lab's status.

The LANL workforce currently stands at about 18,000, which is an increase of 6,000 workers over the past five years (FY19). Of these, 3,500 work remotely or are hybrid employees.

This past year, LANL had an operating budget of \$5.2B, compared to \$2.9B five years ago. Davis stressed the economic impact of LANL expenditures on the New Mexico economy:

- payroll spending of \$2B (39% to New Mexicans);
- procurement spending of \$2.2B, with \$1B spent in New Mexico and \$600M+ with New Mexico small businesses;
- gross receipts tax payments of \$138.3M; and
- 182 economic development projects creating or retaining 371 jobs.

Commenting on LANL's efforts to reduce vehicular traffic on the Hill, Davis reported that commuter buses at its Pojoaque and Buffalo Thunder staging locations are running at over 50% capacity.

## **Valles Caldera Long-Range Management Plan**

Dave Krueger, Chief of Interpretation, Education and Volunteers, and Public Information Officer at the Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP), presented the Preserve's long-range planning efforts.

Krueger explained the General Management Plan (GMP) and Development Concept Plan (DCP), emphasizing their long-term (20–30 years) nature and their focus on resource protection, visitor experience, and facilities operations. The DCP specifically addresses the Valle Grande District, which covers about 13% of the park but attracts the majority of visitors.

### *Zoning Divisions in the Plan*

For planning purposes, the park is divided into three major zones: visitor engagement, self-guided, and backcountry.

The visitor engagement zone includes access points and areas with high visitor density and extensive services. This zone includes the Valle Grande District in which the current welcome station, visitor contact center, Cabin District, and Historic Grove are located. It also includes access to Redondo Meadow and Sulphur Springs, a geothermal area on the west side of the park.

Krueger said, "We'll have the most visitor services park facilities there, such as our interpretive programs, parking areas, picnic areas, full service restrooms, administrative facilities, utilities, paved roads."

The self-guided zone overlaps the current backcountry vehicle route and offers a balance between infrastructure and natural experience. "What we're trying to do is to give people a chance to get away from the crowds, get into the park," explained Krueger.

The backcountry zone, covering over 60% of the park, prioritizes natural processes, ecosystem functions, and wildlife behavior, as well as spiritual practices from the park's associated tribes. This zone has the lowest visitor density and would have primitive trails

and minimal amounts of signage or other development.

## *Management Alternatives for Facilities*

The Development Concept Plan calls for establishing visitor services in the Valle Grande District to provide more amenities. Neither of the two current visitor service buildings is ADA-accessible, nor do they have basic services such as water and restrooms.

The proposed NPS Preferred Option involves building a new visitor facility in the Valle Grande District to provide more amenities. Right now, most visitor services are in the Cabin District. The plan calls for shifting the focus of that district back to being a historic ranch operation. A second option focuses on retrofitting the cabins for visitor services. The third option is No Action.

Responding to a question from Councilor Ryti, Krueger confirmed that there are no plans for a campground at the park. "We evaluated what the campground situation is within pretty much the whole Jemez Mountains and we found that, other than peak times, campgrounds are actually pretty saturated in the Jemez Mountains," said Krueger, referring to developed traditional campgrounds. "So, what we're looking at is, instead, the niche that Valles Caldera can serve as backcountry camping."

## *Road and Trail Networks*

Krueger discussed road network proposals, including rerouting the entrance road, extending the front country, and improving the backcountry vehicle route.

The plan proposes to reroute the park's main entrance road, moving it out of the Valle Grande to the base of South Mountain on the western edge of the Valle Grande, leading to the edge of the Cabin District. It would be paved for easier maintenance and year-round access.

The plan also calls for extending the front country, where visitors and their vehicles can go without needing a backcountry pass. "We want to do that because that gets people a chance to more or less get to the middle of the

park and get them out of their vehicles, and then they can go hiking, fishing, horseback riding, whatever, from that spot," said Krueger.

The plan calls for improvements to the backcountry vehicle route to provide an opportunity to make it a loop, instead of just one way in and one way out.

The road and utility projects for the proposed NPS preferred option would cost about \$50 million. That estimate includes internet, underground electricity, a water well and water lines, and the new road. The cost of a visitor center is murkier because the plan only describes the concept of a new facility, not a design. Krueger estimated that the cost might be \$10M–\$20M.

The plan includes a future trails management plan to address different demographics and trail user needs, including hikers, mountain bikers, horseback riders, and skiers. Last year's attendance was about 86,000 visitors.

## *What's Next?*

Councilor Ryti asked, "What is going to be a determining factor for which of the three options is actually selected?"

Krueger explained that they are now taking public comment, which will be presented, along with the plan, to the regional director in Denver. The regional director will make the decision about which option should be adopted. Public comment ends on August 31, 2025 with a decision expected in early 2026.

Plan documents and the comment form are available at

[https://parkplanning.nps.gov/VALL\\_GMP](https://parkplanning.nps.gov/VALL_GMP)

## **LEDA Retail Program**

Council supported moving forward with the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) Retail Program as presented by Dr. Shanna Sasser (Economic Development Administrator) and Anita Barela (Economic Development Program Manager). The vote was 6–1, with Councilor Reagor in opposition.

Reminding the Council that they had budgeted \$400K for this program, County

Manager Anne Laurent said that the goal of the County's Retail LEDA Program is to get the funds into the local business community to capture some of what local residents are spending outside of the community.

The program will provide flexible funding to eligible businesses in increments from \$20,000 up to \$100,000, said Sasser. The smaller amounts will generally be offered as grants and the larger amounts as loans, although the arrangement will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Sasser said that the smaller grants are a more tangible way for the small businesses to access growth and expansion. "It's more attainable than the larger LEDA grants and less intimidating to our small businesses."

Barela said that they would like to implement the program next month. She noted that two businesses have expressed their intent to apply. Tonight's presentation aimed to gather additional feedback from Council before launching the program.

### *Application Process*

The two-stage application process consists of a simple screening questionnaire, followed by a more in-depth application. Barela explained that the Economic Development Division or its designated agent will then review the application for completeness, assess the project's feasibility, and prepare a Security Agreement.

All projects that are recommended by the Review Committee will be forwarded to the County Council for consideration. If approved during a public hearing, a Project Participation Agreement (PPA) will be carried out.

### *Possible Program Hurdles*

Laurent noted that two possible hurdles for the program are the security agreement and the need for a design professional to provide a realistic cost estimate for proposed work.

Councilor Reagor was most concerned about the security agreement. "This is for landlords, not for small businesses, because the benefits accrue to the landlord in the form of increased property values," he said. "As the

property owner, the landlord has the security, not the business. What options does the business owner have to contribute to security?" He requested a delay in implementation.

Other councilors agreed with the presenters about the urgency of rolling out the LEDA program in the near future rather than waiting until it was "perfect."

Councilor Cull summarized the general feeling of Council, saying that, "I think we can imagine a bunch of different things but, until we really start implementing, I think we're not really going to know what we need and what direction we should go."

## **Finch Street Extension**

Council approved an amendment to an existing agreement with PHC-Los Alamos (Los Alamos Medical Center), for conveying real property along Trinity Drive so that the County can proceed with construction of the Finch Street Extension. The vote was 5–1 in favor, with Councilor Cull in opposition and Councilor Havemann absent.

The amendment increases the amount of the original contract with the Medical Center from \$264,450 to \$344,650.

The extension runs from 35th Street on Trinity, westward to another intersection on Trinity just beyond the Medical Center driveway. The relocated driveway is intended to provide safety improvements for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists while providing connectivity to the new Hills Apartments as well as to any other future developments along 35th Street.

Councilor Cull voted in opposition to the amendment because she opposed adding another entrance onto Trinity, with the exit also going out onto Trinity.

## **Local News Coverage**

August 10, 202, *LA Daily Post*. Video: Councilor Beverly Neal-Clinton On Aug. 5 Meeting:

<https://ladailypost.com/video-councilor-beverly-neal-clinton-on-aug-5-meeting/>

*Craig Martin and June Fabryka-Martin*

## **Observer Corps Report – Planning & Zoning Commission – August 13**

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

Commissioners absent: Katherine Bruell, Rebecca White

### **Replacement Fire Station No. 4**

Voting 6–0, the P&Z Commission approved a Major Site Plan Amendment for the redevelopment of Fire Station No. 4 at 4401 Diamond Drive.

The project site is zoned Institutional (INS), consists of approximately ±2.24 acres, and is situated within the North Community No. 2 Subdivision. It is on the corner of Diamond Drive and Range Road and abuts land zoned Passive Open Space (OS-PO).

The proposed development will replace the existing fire station with a modernized facility that meets current public safety and operational standards. Located west of the existing fire station, the new station will improve emergency response capabilities, address infrastructure deficiencies, and support continued service delivery in the surrounding area.

The architect, David Grooms (VEGA Architects), pointed out that the proposed site plan does not interrupt the existing open space trail—the Woodland Trail—that runs to the north of the project. "We are proposing a new connector trail that comes into the site," he said. "We've provided two new parking spaces directly adjacent to that connection as well for public use."

*Craig Martin and June Fabryka-Martin*

## **Observer Corps Report – County Council – August 19**

### *Distribution System Electrification Study, Local/Small Business Engagement Working Group, Extension of Canyon Rim Trail*

The regular session was attended by Councilors Theresa Cull (Chair), Melanee Hand, Ryn Hermann, David Reagor, and Randall Ryti.

Absent: Commissioners Suzie Havemann and Beverly Neal-Clinton.

### **Distribution System Electrification Study**

Council heard a summary of the electrification study commissioned by the Board of Public Utilities to analyze the impact of conversions of gas appliances and gasoline cars to all electric appliances and electric vehicles. The analysis quantified the impacts these conversions will have on the electrical demand in Los Alamos County and costs associated with the necessary system improvements.

The Electrification Study results were presented by Stephen Marez (Deputy Utility Manager--Electric Distribution) and Dennis Astley (Electrical Engineering Manager). The study highlighted the need for costly upgrades to the County's system due to aging infrastructure and increased electric loading from electric vehicles, solar panels, heating and cooling, and new residential developments, including new apartment complexes that are all electric. The study forecasted a potential 44 MW load growth, nearly tripling the current load.

"A lot of our facilities are starting to show their age," said Astley. He cited as an example the previous week's electrical outage in part of the town due to a switch failure. He also pointed out that almost half of the underground electric cables in White Rock are well past their 30-year lifespans.



The report listed upgrades needed over the next 15 and 30 years to keep power reliable within the county, based on the rate of conversions and the growth in electrical demand on the system. Costs were evaluated along with recommended options to minimize their impact on the utility and consumers.

### *Growth Scenarios and Infrastructure Needs*

Astley defined three scenarios for electrification growth: rapid, moderate, and slow adoption of electrification in the County.

Rapid growth would be the case if the community were to follow the County's Climate Action Plan. However, that scenario does not presently seem probable, said Astley. "When this [study] was initiated, there was a lot more political pressure from the state and federal government for electrification of automobiles specifically. And there was a lot more anticipation that rapid adoption could be very realistic. The political climate in the country has changed."

Astley noted that consumers who presently use gas appliances may also be reluctant to adopt electrification in the near term, not only because of the cost of new appliances, but also because some homes may require associated electrical work such as running new wiring and replacing panels. Astley estimated such retrofit work could cost as much as \$20,000.

Most of the cost anticipated over the next 30 years will be due to aging infrastructure, said Astley, as opposed to load growth from anticipated electrification. Assuming that electrification is only gradually adopted, he emphasized that the increase in kilowatt hour sales of electricity will not produce enough revenue to pay for the substation work needed for expansion. "The only way you're going to get the revenue you need to cover the capital cost is with rates," he said.

### *Strategies for Managing Electrification*

Several strategies recommended by the study for managing electrification:

- The new rate design proposed by the Board of Public Utilities will encourage a shift of electrical usage to off-peak hours (evenings and nighttime), which would ease the daytime loading on the system. The new rates are proposed to be rolled out no sooner than 2026.
- Battery energy storage systems could be used to minimize peak loads and control wholesale power costs. A new battery design being developed by Sandia National Laboratories does not have the environmental disposal problems of lead-acid batteries or lithium-ion.
- Implementation of a control for new photovoltaic consumers that will mitigate voltage issues that can arise from these systems back-feeding into the County's distribution system.

### *Recommendations for Increasing Future Power Supplies*

To meet its future load growth, the study recommended that the County investigate constructing the East Gate Substation in Los Alamos.

DPU currently owns a substation in White Rock. However, in Los Alamos DPU contracts with LANL to use the Lab's transformers to supply the Los Alamos Town Site with a load cap of 20 MVA. It would be difficult to increase this cap because LANL is increasing their demand quite rapidly. Although the planned third transmission line could supplement LANL's ability to provide more power to the County, LANL would need to upsize its transformers to do so. That raises a question for the County, Astley said. "Do we build one ourselves, or do we ask them to build one? From experience, everything with LANL is magnitudes more in cost. And, timeline-wise, it's difficult working with LANL."

The study also recommended that DPU perform a new Integrated Resource Plan to determine the optimal resource selection of power generation based on the market.

## **Local/Small Business Engagement Working Group**

The Small Business Working Group, comprising Councilors Hermann, Reagor, and Ryti, presented findings on local business climates and LEDA (Local Economic Development Act) programs. The mission of this working group was to engage local small businesses and related community organizations and report to Council on any issues and/or recommendations for consideration of future actions. No immediate action was taken.

### *Retail LEDA Program in Clovis*

Councilor Reagor detailed the Clovis Retail LEDA program, where four LEDA projects have been completed. Under a unique financial format, the city established an Economic Incentive Board that recommends retail projects to address the gap analysis that has been adopted by the Clovis City Council. Participating businesses are then reimbursed by the city proportionally to the GRT they pay; no upfront money is provided by the City.

Councilor Reagor emphasized the ease with which the city's Retail LEDA agreement can be executed due to the absence of any security requirement in the post payment system. Examples of Clovis LEDA projects include a mall redevelopment, Zia Motorsports, and a convenience store, all of which received financial assistance through the program.

### *Commercial Vacancy Rates in Los Alamos*

Councilor Ryti discussed his research on commercial vacancy rates in the County, noting a significant loss of commercial space over six years. As a caveat, he noted that the change in numbers, particularly in White Rock, was due in part to demolition of some vacant commercial buildings. In addition to the loss in built commercial spaces, Ryti said that there

are only about 13 acres of County-owned vacant commercial land in Los Alamos.

## *Recommended Action Items*

The working group recommended two actions to address the loss of vacant commercial land:

- Gather more information about the Smith's Marketplace property and its development status.
- Explore the development potential of land owned by the County in Santa Fe County, east of East Gate. The land there is relatively flat, and some infrastructure is already available.

Other actions proposed by the group to improve the local business climate included transit bus advertising, engaging with local economic groups, improving the speed of the change-of-use process, and providing clear business startup information.

## *What's Next?*

Council decided not to accept the working group report at this meeting but rather to wait until it had been tweaked to incorporate additional input from the community, particularly from the local business coalition, which is in the process of issuing its own report.

## **Feasibility of Extending the Canyon Rim Trail to LAMC/Omega Bridge**

As a result of requests by Council, County Engineer Eric Ulibarri and Public Works Director Eric Martinez discussed the feasibility of extending the Canyon Rim Trail from 20th Street westward towards Diamond Drive and the Los Alamos Medical Center. They recapped the previous feasibility analysis conducted in 2016 and then outlined other potential options for extending the trail further west past 20th Street.

No action was taken. The project is not currently budgeted and would require funding for further feasibility studies.

## Challenges

The Canyon Rim Trail is a ten-foot-wide paved multi-use trail on the edge of Los Alamos Canyon that currently connects the Townsite (at Knecht Street) to the Entrada area development at the east entrance to town. Extension of the trail from Knecht Street west towards 20th Street is in progress.

Over the years, requests have been made to explore the feasibility of extending the Canyon Rim Trail beyond 20th Street to the Los Alamos Medical Center Area, and from there to Diamond Drive at Omega Bridge.

Ulibarri explained the land ownership along alternative trail alignments, highlighting the significant involvement of DOE and the need for easements for each scenario. DOE has areas of environmental and cultural concern in some areas as well as security requirements for construction in some cases. Some options also involve the need to seek easements from private owners.

"A lot of the required construction would be potential pedestrian bridges, retaining walls, drainage structures, all the tree removal, and then rock excavation, just to remove some of the unsuitable areas for construction," said Ulibarri.

## Alternatives

Because of the aforementioned constraints, possible trail alignments continuing west along the canyon rim or canyon bottom to reach the Medical Center were considered infeasible. Ulibarri presented two other alternatives that both involve routing the trail to Trinity Drive from the trail's planned terminus at 20th Street:

- Alternative One would create a new 10-foot multi-use path on the south side of Trinity Drive. It would maintain the existing curb and gutter, as well as bike lanes, on both sides. A rough planning estimate is about \$8.5M.
- Alternative Two would eliminate the bike lane on the eastbound lane, instead moving the curb and gutter line inward and then adding the 10-foot bike lane to the multi-use path. This plan would reduce some of the

obstacles encountered along the south side of Trinity Drive, such as the large number of tree removals and the potential to reduce right-of-way takes and required easements. The planning estimate is about \$9.5M.

At the point where the trail reaches the eastern edge of the Medical Center property, Ulibarri said there were two alternatives considered:

- One alternative continues the multi-use path on the south side of Trinity, ending at Diamond Drive.
- The other alternative cuts behind the Medical Center, proceeding along the edge of the canyon but below the Center's property. This route would require an easement through the area bordering DOE land. DOE recommended that, if the County were considering this, that it should move on to a feasibility study that could be presented to DOE for review.

## What's Next?

The project is not currently budgeted and would require funding for further feasibility studies and public engagement.

*Craig Martin and June Fabryka-Martin*

## **Observer Corps Report – County Council – August 26**

### *20th Street Redevelopment, Workforce Housing on DP Road, Pedestrian Master Plan*

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

## 20th Street Redevelopment

By unanimous vote, Council passed an ordinance authorizing the sale of undeveloped County property on 20th Street to RBMM Development LLC, a real estate developer.

### *Conceptual Development Plan*

Dan Osborn, Housing and Special Projects Manager, outlined the development plan and terms of the agreement between the County and RBMM.

The developer's conceptual plan calls for mixed-use development that incorporates a high-density mix of 285 market-rate rental apartments comprised of 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units, with 25,000 square feet of small retail/commercial spaces at ground level. Parking will be accommodated by two interior four-level structured parking garages with approximately 335 spaces.

The 3.1-acre property is located at the intersection of 20th Street and Trinity Drive, just south of Ashley Pond. Previously used for temporary office trailers and the decommissioned Smart House, the property is being sold to RBMM at its appraised value of \$1.77M.

### *Pedestrian Connections*

Pedestrian connections are a prominent component of the project, aiming to transform the area into a welcoming, dynamic public space, said Russell Brott, a Managing Member of RBMM. The developer will be required to extend the adjacent Canyon Rim Trail across the property to connect it to the Urban Trail, Ashley Pond, and downtown. "One of Los Alamos's great treasures is the Rim Trail, and Ashley Pond is the community's heart. Right now, the two feel separate," said Brott. "This project bridges them through new pathways, trail linkages, public gathering areas and amenities like a park, a playground, and small amphitheater. The result is a downtown network that invites people to explore, linger and enjoy, whether for a weekday walk, a family event, or a community festival."

## *Public Improvements*

Osborn said that the agreement also calls for RBMM to construct several public improvements for which reasonable construction costs will be reimbursed by the County, up to \$3.63M. Roadway improvements include a traffic signal (if warranted) and pedestrian crosswalk at the intersection of 20th Street and Trinity Drive, and expanded on-street parallel parking in support of the ground-floor retail businesses. "It's actually much cheaper for them to do it," said Osborn, "because it relieves us of the duty of having to have separate mobilization costs, separate contracting costs.... Given its proximity to community amenities, an increased full-time residential population will benefit local downtown businesses," he added.

### *What's Next?*

RBMM will pursue final site plan approval from the Planning & Zoning Commission. Osborn said that the best-case scenario for construction to start is 2028, with a worst-case scenario of 2033.

## Local News Coverage

Kisten Laskey, August 28, 2025, *Los Alamos Daily Post*. Los Alamos County Council Approves Selling 20th Street Land ... Paving Way For Multi-Use Development. <https://ladailypost.com/los-alamos-county-council-approves-selling-20th-street-land-paving-way-for-multi-use-development/>

## Multi-Income Workforce Housing on DP Road

Council heard a presentation on the proposed sale of undeveloped County property known as Parcel A-8-A (on DP Road) to Servitas for redevelopment as mixed-density, mixed-income residential development. No action was requested or taken.

### *Summary*

Dan Osborn provided an overview of the proposed mixed-income housing project on the A-8-A parcel, located at the intersection of



Trinity and DP Road. He said that the project's goal is to increase housing supply and broaden the variety of housing types available to support a growing population, paying special attention to the missing middle housing.

Osborn added that the project will deliver 380 one-, two-, and three-bedroom residential units. Of these, 260 units will be rented at market rate and 120 will be deed-restricted for households earning between 60% and 100% AMI (Area Median Income). The development will include amenities like a playground, dog park, trail connections, canyon overlooks and gathering spaces.

The project is expected to be completed within two-and-a-half years.

### *Property Location and Zoning*

The 22-acre parcel is south of The Bluffs Senior Apartments. The property is proposed to be sold to Servitas at its appraised value of \$5.5M, said Osborn.

He noted that the A8 parcel was identified as appropriate for high-density residential developments in the Future Land Use Map from the Comprehensive Land Use Plan as well as in the Housing Market Needs Analysis and Affordable Housing Plan, with a recommendation for mixed-income development.

The parcel is zoned mixed use. The Development Code allows zero lot line setbacks to maximize site development in mixed use zoning. The maximum building height is 54 feet, and the maximum lot coverage is 70% of the site.

### *Proposed Development Project*

Osborn introduced Garrett Scharton, Senior Vice President of Servitas. Scharton described the design concept as including a mix of one-, two-, and three-bedroom units, community amenities, trail connections, and outdoor spaces. The plan connects the new residential neighborhood to downtown and local businesses via the Canyon Rim Trail and sidewalks along DP Road. Approximately 84% of the property is developable, with the

remaining areas reserved for open and recreational spaces.

On the western portion of the site, the proposed site plan includes a four-story apartment building with a large internal-structure garage to provide off-street parking for residents.

The eastern portion of the mesa will feature lower-density residential units adapted to the site's topography. There will be ten smaller, two- and three-story walk-up flat buildings with 12-15 units each, comprising a mix of one-, two-, and three-bedroom units. Parking will be provided in small lots between buildings and as on-street parallel parking. Additionally, there will be 12 two-story, 2- or 3-bedroom connected townhomes at the eastern-most end of the parcel.

Councilor Ryti asked about the distribution of the rent-controlled units. Osborn said they would be throughout the development, which would be specified in the development agreement. Scharton added, "We want to make sure it's truly a mixed income community. We don't think it's wise or right to have concentrations of any certain income within the project."

### *Deed Restrictions and Affordability*

To advance the County's objective of affordable housing, Osborn said that it will invest \$7.5 million in deed restrictions, with 88 units costing \$5.5 million and 32 units costing \$2 million. The rent restrictions on these units will become permanent once the full reimbursement has been paid.

Osborn explained how the County's investments would increase the supply of affordable housing. The County will acquire 22 one-bedroom units, 44 two-bedroom units, and 22 three-bedroom units for a total of 120 units. To achieve the required 80% average AMI across all 120 deed restricted units, one-third of the units or 40 of the units will be 60% AMI, 40 of the units will be 80% AMI, and 40 of the units will be 100% AMI.

Osborn cited estimated rental rates to illustrate how County acquisitions of these rent-restricted units would address the need for

more affordable housing. He said that 40 units would rent at about \$1,800 per month, 40 at about \$2,500 and 40 at about \$3,100. These rates are scaled to the one-, two- and three-bedroom units. Osborn compared those rates to those at The Hills Apartments, where a one-bedroom unit would start at about \$2,500 per month, and a three-bedroom unit would rent for about \$4,200.

In line with the industry term "rent-to-income ratio," none of the rent-restricted units will rent for more than 30% of someone's income, said Scharton.

### *Public Trail Access*

Councilor Ryti noted that the conceptual plan included a direct connection between the property trails and the Canyon Rim Trail. He asked for clarification as to whether or not the trails would be accessible to the general public or just to the people who live in this development.

Osborn replied that public access would be up to the developer to decide. Scharton followed up saying that, if the County wanted to include provisions for public access to trails and amenities in the development agreement, "it would be well received."

### *What's Next?*

Osborn plans to bring the draft development agreement and ordinance to Council for formal introduction on September 9, with a public hearing and consideration for adoption to follow on September 30.

### **Pedestrian Master Plan**

Council unanimously approved the adoption of the 2025 Los Alamos County Pedestrian Master Plan.

County Engineer Eric Ulibarri detailed how the revised Pedestrian Master Plan evaluated the existing pedestrian system, identified gaps and barriers in existing pedestrian infrastructure, and analyzed connectivity of pedestrian infrastructure.

Ulibarri emphasized that the plan aligns with other County documents such as the Mid-Block Crossing Policy, Open Space and Trails

Management Plan, Public Works Design Standards, Traffic and Streets Division operations, Landscaping Code, and Neighborhood Traffic Management Program.

The new plan supercedes the 1998 plan and includes tools and recommendations to ensure that it is kept up-to-date as a "living document" to address changing needs such as those arising from new housing or redeveloped property. Periodic crash analyses will also be used to help identify new problem areas and adjust priorities.

Councilor Ryti asked about coordination of the pedestrian and bicycle master plans, commenting on safety measures to separate users on multi-use trails. Public Works Director Eric Martinez responded that a lot of communities are combining those two plans into a single integrated document, so the County will be looking into that in the future.

*Craig Martin and June Fabryka-Martin*

## ***Observer Corps Report – Planning & Zoning Commission – August 27***

Commissioners present: Rachel Adler, Katherine Bruell, Karen Easton (Chair), Benjamin Hill, Ronald Nelson

Commissioners absent: Marlon Brown, Stephanie Nakhleh, Rebecca White

### **Subdivision Plat Approval for Arbolada Subdivision on North Mesa**

Voting unanimously (5–0), the P&Z Commission approved a proposal to replat the 85-lot Arbolada Subdivision on North Mesa into 23 single-family lots and four tracts, three of which are to be used for drainage and open space.

## *Replat Proposal*

The property is located on North Mesa along San Ildefonso Road, sandwiched between the Broadview Estates community to the east and open space to the west. To the south is Pueblo Canyon. The property is zoned single-family residential (SFR-5).

Representing the property owners, Sonja Donaldson and Sande Cremer, Consensus Planning and Titan Development, sought Final Subdivision Plat approval for the previously approved 85-lot Arbolada Subdivision.

The plat divides the 17.07-acre property into two developments: the 23-lot Arbolada Subdivision to the west and Tract 4, a rectangular-shaped tract of approximately 9.51 acres, to the east. Note that Tract 4 was the subject of a separate request for a Conditional Use Permit to develop a 114-unit cottage development (see below). This separate request could not be granted unless the replat request was first approved.

The Commission found that the replat proposal met all Development Code criteria, including conformity with county plans, minimal traffic impact, and adequate public utilities. The staff report noted that the request supported providing a variety of housing types, sizes, and densities, and that developing infill lots makes efficient use of infrastructure and utilities.

A local resident raised a concern about the impact of growth on local school capacity. Chair Easton ruled this issue as being outside the Commission's purview. Although agreeing with this decision, Commissioner Bruell noted that school capacity was a valid concern. "It's not the first time that we've run into issues with other parts of county planning that are not part of our decision-making process," she said, citing traffic and transportation as other examples. She urged better communication between decision making-bodies. "Our decisions don't happen in a vacuum," she concluded.

## **Cottage Development on North Mesa**

Voting unanimously (5–0), the P&Z Commission also approved a request for a Conditional Use Permit to build a 114-unit cottage development on 9.51 acres on North Mesa along San Ildefonso Road.

### *Development proposal*

Consensus Planning and Titan Development was also the applicant for the proposed cottage development.

The property is zoned Single-Family Residential (SFR-4), which allows cottage development subject to conditional use approval.

The staff report described the proposed project as "a build-to-rent community of 114 attached and detached cottage dwellings organized around shared access drives, parking areas, and common open spaces." The development concept emphasizes a neighborhood-scale design that combines individual living units with shared amenities and managed open space, which will provide an alternative housing option for the Los Alamos community.

"This is our first cottage development in Los Alamos County," said County Planning Manager, Danyelle Valdez. "This will set precedent." She said the department worked on the design with the developer to ensure that it would be a cottage development and not a multi-family neighborhood.

Commissioner Nelson asked the applicant why they had not sought a zoning category that would have allowed higher density development. Josh Rogers from Titan Development replied that the problem with the multi-family zoning category was that it would have permitted a developer to put in 45-ft high, three-story buildings at 25 dwelling units per acre. Rogers said that it was not the applicant's intention to densify this area. "We wanted to do this very appropriate cottage development with town homes that had much lower density than multi-family," he said. "I believe it's about 12 or 13 units per acre, whereas a typical garden-style apartment complex would be 24–25 units an acre."

Commissioner Nelson asked Rogers what he anticipated the monthly rent would be for a cottage unit. "I think it'll vary between \$3400 and \$3800, if they were built today," said Rogers. "Our goal is somewhere in the mid \$3000s."

The Commission approved the permit, noting its alignment with county policies for housing affordability and infill growth and the need for responsible growth. Chair Easton expressed her appreciation for a design that

was very thoughtful in creating additional housing without significant density.

The replat of Arbolada and approval of the cottage development ultimately increases the total number of dwelling units in this development from 85, which had been approved in 2023, to 137.

*Craig Martin and June Fabryka-Martin*

## ***August Lunch with a Leader: Judge Catherine Taylor***

Los Alamos County Magistrate Judge Catherine Taylor presented "Anatomy of a Court Case" at the August Lunch with a Leader. She began by explaining that there are two paths for a case to reach the courts. Either a police officer observes the incident, or it is reported by the victim or a witness. Either way, in New Mexico the case is filed by the police department, not the district attorney.

The suspect may be either arrested or cited. If arrested without a warrant, a judge must issue a probable cause determination within 48 hours. Otherwise, the defendant must be released from custody.

Judge Taylor explained the municipal judge hears municipal code violations; the magistrate judge hears only state code violations. When the codes overlap, the police department can choose the court. However, if the damages are over \$1,000, it is a fourth-degree felony and the case must go to the magistrate court.

The first court date is called an "arraignment" for traffic and misdemeanor charges or "felony first appearance" for a felony case. For a felony first appearance the district attorney (DA) and an attorney from the LOPD (law office of the public defender) will be present. Judge Taylor remarked that the offices of both the DA and LOPD are notoriously short-handed.

If the judge determines that the defendant is not competent, the case is sent to district court. She does not have the authority to refer someone for competency. She cannot refer defendants to behavioral health. That must be done by a family or household member or doctor, not the court.





She advises the defendant of their rights, tells them the charges and penalties, and asks if they want an attorney. They almost always say yes. If not, the judge must explain the potential consequences and establish their ability to represent themselves. If they want an attorney but cannot afford one, the judge refers them to LOPD, which must do a financial assessment before providing the service. Judge Taylor said that 75% of defendants in Los Alamos opt for a public defender. In most New Mexico counties the request is nearly universal.

Judge Taylor spoke at length about detainment in New Mexico, explaining why it is called a “a catch and release state.” Prior to 2016, people had a right to bail and there was a schedule to determine how large the bond would be. The schedule was set by the court and could differ from county to county. People who could not afford the bail were stuck in jail; they could lose their home, job, parental rights, etc.

Constitutional Amendment 1 on the 2016 ballot was intended to create a more equitable solution. **“Proposing an amendment to article 2, section 13 of the constitution of New Mexico to protect community safety by granting courts new authority to deny release on bail pending trial for dangerous defendants in felony cases while retaining the right to pretrial release for non-dangerous defendants who do not pose a flight risk.”** The amendment was approved by 87.23% of the voters.

However, as Judge Taylor pointed out, the Constitution now says, **“Bail may be denied by a court of record pending trial for a defendant charged with a felony if the prosecuting authority requests a hearing and proves by clear and convincing evidence that no release conditions will reasonably protect the safety of any other persons or community.”** But a magistrate court is not a “court of record,” there is no court reporter. Furthermore, if the DA does not initiate the detention motion, the court is required to release the person.

Defendants who are not detained because they are considered to be dangerous or a flight risk may file a motion requesting that they not be required to post bond. If the person fails to appear in court, the judge can set a bond, but it can be appealed to district court.

Prior to release from detention, the defendant must agree to restrictions set by the court. They are then entered into the pre-trial supervision program, which is run out of Santa Fe. Judge Taylor commented that “Los Alamos County has an amazing pre-trial program,” set up by Judge Allen, the LAC Municipal Judge. It can fill in the gaps when defendants need assistance, but they must participate in the state-run program.

Following the pre-trial period, which can be lengthy, the steps in the case before going to trial are:

1. Discovery, when the DA must present all of the evidence.
2. Motions, probably filed by defendant.
3. Defense Continuance – when the attorneys can work out a deal. If the deal is successful, at the end of 6 months, the state will file a dismissal.
4. Settlement Negotiation: The DA and defense attorney attempt to arrive at a negotiated plea agreement. Trials are expensive; most criminal cases are settled by plea, but sometimes a trial cannot be avoided.

Judge Taylor noted that jury duty is required by three courts: magistrate court, district, and federal. The names of potential jurors are taken from three databases: MVD, Taxation and Revenue, and voter registration.

*Barbara Calef*

# Tickler Reports – Council Agenda Items and BCC Vacancies

## Tickler Report

### Tentative Council Agenda Items as of August 28, 2025

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

- Approval of Downtown East Los Alamos Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plan
  - 9/09/25 meeting. Resolution. Action requested.
- Grant Agreement to Expand EV Charging Infrastructure [placeholder]
  - 9/09/25 Acceptance of grant. On Consent Agenda. Action requested.
- NNSA Los Alamos Field Office Presentation
  - 9/16/25 meeting. No action requested.
- FY2025 Gross Receipts Tax (GRT) Overview
  - 9/30/25. Briefing. No action requested.
- Process for GRT Increase
  - 9/30/25. Briefing. No action requested.
- Ordinance Prohibiting Feeding of Wild Animals
  - 9/30/25. Public hearing. Action requested.
- Ordinance for Sale and Development Agreement for Affordable and Market-rate Housing on Parcel A8A (DP Road)
  - 9/30/25. Public hearing. 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 August 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	0
○ No terms ending soon	
• Board of Public Utilities	0
○ No terms ending soon	
• County Health Council	2
○ 5 terms ending January 6, 2026	
• Environmental Sustainability Board	0
○ No terms ending soon	
• Historic Preservation Advisory Board	0
○ No terms ending soon	
• Library Board	2
○ No terms ending soon	
• Lodgers' Tax Advisory Board	0
○ 1 term ending December 1, 2025	
• Parks and Recreation Board	0
○ 4 terms ending November 30, 2025	
• Personnel Board	1
○ No terms ending soon	
• Planning and Zoning Commission	1
○ No terms ending soon	
• Transportation Board	0
○ 4 terms ending February 28, 2026	

Totals: 5 vacancies, 14 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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The following link takes you to a concise set of instructions for generating the standard set of files for this update. Some useful TOC notes are found at.