

# **LWW** LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF LOS ALAMOS **UPDATE**

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

December 5	Board Meeting, Unitarian Church, noon
December 18	No Lunch with a Leader in December
January 8	Legislative Preview, Fuller Lodge, 7 p.m. (6:30 p.m. for refreshments)
January 15	Lunch with a Leader, Unitarian Church or Zoom, noon

## ***No December Lunch with a Leader***

Because of the holidays, there will be no Lunch with a Leader meeting in December. We will have a speaker on January 15, 2025.

*Karyl Ann Armbruster*

# ***LWVLA President Felicia Orth Honored as Public Lawyer of the Year***

A group of League members joined Felicia's relatives and colleagues on the Rotunda at the Roundhouse to witness her receipt of the award of Public Lawyer of the Year on November 14.



*League members celebrate with Felicia. From left: LWVNM President Hannah Burling, Felicia, Barbara Calef, Cecile Hemez, Jody Benson, Lynn Jones, Becky Shankland, Elizabeth Allen. Photo by Alex Rose.*



*NM State Bar President Aja Brooks addresses the crowd as Felicia looks on. Also present: Lt. Governor Howie Morales, Attorney Tracy Hughes, LA Municipal Judge Elizabeth Allen. Photo by Jody Benson.*

The program was inspiring. The remarks by Los Alamos Municipal Judge Elizabeth Allen and Tracy Hughes, a previous recipient of the award, were an impressive celebration of Felicia's character, dedication, and performance. Lieutenant Governor Howie Morales drove up from Silver City for the occasion since Governor Lujan Grisham was out of the country, attending COP 30. Aja Brooks, the President of the State Bar of New Mexico, also spoke.

*Barbara Calef*

# ***Community Health and Wellbeing Report***

The Los Alamos County Health Council (LACHC) currently has 13 members and can add two more to the Council. At the October 2 Health Council Meeting there was a presentation by Robert Vigil, Director of Eagle Village in Espanola; Jake Stockwell, Operations Director of Espanola Pathways Shelter; Reverend Tiffany Hollums, of McCurdy Ministries; and Dr. Tyler Taylor, who leads the Interfaith Coalition on Homelessness.

On October 21 the Health Council Chair and Social Services Manager presented the Health Council's annual update to County Council. Information was provided to County Councilors related to the recommendations of the Community Health Action Center (CHAC) Working Group as well as the status of implementation of Senate Bill 3 – Behavioral Health Reform and Investment Act.

At the November 6 Health Council meeting Leah Blackwell, a member of the Health Council, gave a presentation on Navigating and Managing Grief through the Holidays and provided some available resources. We are partnering with the Los Alamos Community Foundation's Los Alamos Uniting for Community Health (LAUNCH) Program to sponsor suicide prevention training and other mental health awareness initiatives. This will allow for more one-hour ABC Suicide Prevention Courses to be held within the County.

The Social Services Manager and the Health Council Chair attended the fourth meeting of the State Behavioral Health Executive Committee on November 12, overseen by the Administrative Office of the Courts. This committee will be managing the budget for the Senate Bill 3 – Behavioral Health Reform and Investment Act (which is \$291M this fiscal year).

The Health Council teamed with Social Services and other community partners to prepare emergency food bags for the "I Can Help" campaign and coordinate community donations for those in need at designated locations. They also participated in outreach activities at the Older Adult Wellness Summit at the Senior Center on Wednesday, September 24.

Health-related articles published in the local press monthly for the remainder of the year will relate to Navigating Grief During the Holidays and Grandparents and Kin Raising Children. The next Health Council meeting, which is open to the public, will be on Thursday, December 4 at noon at the County Municipal Building.

*Lisa Hampton, County Health Council Chair*

## ***Observer Corps Report — County Council – November 4 2026 Council Strategic Leadership Plan***

The session was attended by Councilors Theresa Cull (Chair), Melanee Hand, Suzie

Havemann, Ryn Herrmann, Beverly Neal-Clinton, David Reagor, and Randall Ryti.

### **2026 Council Strategic Leadership Plan**

Council approved its 2026 Council Strategic Leadership Plan by a 6–1 vote, with Councilor Reagor in opposition.

## *Purpose*

The Council Strategic Leadership Plan is significant because it serves as a guiding framework that keeps County staff and the Council focused on the community's most important needs. According to County Manager Anne Laurent, the plan is important for several reasons:

- It helps shape budget guidance, ensuring that financial decisions align with the County's long-term goals and community priorities.
- The plan identifies key management action priorities, giving staff a focused set of objectives to work toward.
- It outlines metrics that allow the County to measure progress and demonstrate accountability to the public.

The related action plans and performance metrics are available on the County's Performance Metrics Dashboard, allowing the community to monitor how well goals are being met.

<https://www.losalamosnm.us/Home/Tabs/Whats-Happening/Performance-Metrics-Dashboard>

For the most part, the final 2026 Strategic Leadership Plan adopted by Council is substantially the same as its 2025 plan. However, three of the plan's objectives fostered substantive revisions and/or discussions.

## *Fiscal Stewardship Objective*

In the 2025 Strategic Leadership Plan, the fiscal stewardship objective is to:

- "Maintain fiscal sustainability, transparency, and compliance with applicable budgetary and financial regulatory standards."

During Council discussion, some members expressed concern that the term "fiscal stewardship" was too broad and did not clearly describe Council's expectations for decision-making.

Councilor Ryti suggested that a more useful and precise objective should emphasize the

Council's responsibility to make decisions based on discussion and evaluation of alternatives for any project or approach. He noted that this would better capture how Council intends to fulfill its fiscal responsibilities.

Councilor Havemann supported this view, observing that staff sometimes presented only a single recommended solution for a yes-or-no vote. For the Council to ensure efficient use of funding, she said, it is important that staff present multiple potential methods or approaches, along with their associated costs and benefits.

Councilor Cull added that even when alternatives are not presented in detail, staff should at least explain what options were considered, public comments received, and why certain possibilities were ruled out.

Councilor Neal-Clinton also noted that evaluating alternatives should include consideration of whether work should be contracted out or performed in-house.

After discussion, the Council agreed to revise the fiscal stewardship objective to make these expectations explicit. The updated objective now reads:

- "Evaluate alternative methods and approaches for expenditures and investments, ensure transparency, and comply with applicable budgetary and financial regulatory standards and fiscal sustainability."

## *Local Business Objective*

The 2025 Strategic Leadership Plan includes the following local business objectives:

- "Encourage the retention of existing businesses, facilitate the startup of new businesses, and assist in opportunities for business growth."

A Council working group proposed replacing this wording with:

- "Establish tools and processes that are clear and support businesses' navigation



through County regulatory and approval requirements.”

County Manager Anne Laurent asked Council to revisit the proposed revision, explaining that “I think there’s frustration from a staff perspective on the expectations that are coming at staff.” Staff had become concerned that expectations fell beyond the County’s actual authority. She emphasized the need to consider:

- What is truly within the County’s sphere of influence,
- What the County can meaningfully control, and
- Whether the County can realistically “encourage” business retention or further streamline permitting beyond steps already taken.

Laurent cautioned that the Council’s wording should reflect what is possible, not simply what is desired. “I just ask that you take that into consideration as to what you mean.... I think what’s possible and what’s expected may not match.”

The Council held an extended discussion on this issue.

Councilor Ryti pointed out the challenge of defining a measurable metric for the proposed replacement objective.

Councilor Havemann expressed concern that the revised language might set false expectations by implying that the County’s primary role is helping businesses “navigate bureaucracy,” when actual barriers may be unrelated to County processes.

In the end, the majority of Council members agreed that the existing objective should remain unchanged. Councilor Reagor, however, dissented, stating, “I think we need to say something stronger about small businesses.”

### *Environmental Stewardship Objectives*

The 2025 Strategic Plan includes separate objectives for “Greenhouse Gas Reduction” and “Carbon-Neutral Energy Supply.”

Councilor Ryti pointed out that the Climate Action Plan did not adequately address climate resilience because its original purpose focused more narrowly on emissions reduction and energy strategies. He advocated that the Strategic Plan should encompass a broader, more comprehensive approach to climate-related goals.

Council agreed with his recommendation to consolidate and expand the objectives by reframing them around the Climate Action Plan as a whole. This change also ensures that resilience is formally recognized.

The revised objective is:

- Climate Action and Resilience: Implement the roadmap for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, achieving a carbon-neutral energy supply, and increasing climate resilience.

This updated wording aligns the Strategic Leadership Plan more directly with the County’s long-term environmental goals and provides a clearer, more unified framework for future decision-making.

*Craig Martin and June Fabryka-Martin*

## **Observer Corps Report — Planning & Zoning Commission – November 12**

The Commission heard two requests for variances, neither of which were relevant to Los Alamos League positions.

*Craig Martin and June Fabryka-Martin*

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

*Bond to Fund Broadband  
Communications System, Artificial*

## *Turf and Site Improvements Feasibility Study, FY2027 Budget Guidance*

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

### **\$40M GRT Revenue Bonds for Broadband Communications System**

Voting 7–0, Council unanimously approved an ordinance authorizing the County to issue \$40M in GRT Revenue Bonds.

#### *Proposed Bonds*

The County adopted a Community Broadband and other Capital Improvement Projects budget beginning with its FY2025 annual budget and planned for the issuance of GRT Revenue Bonds as the primary funding source.

County staff proposed to issue \$40 million in GRT Revenue Bonds to fund broadband construction and related public facility needs. The bonds are slated to be marketed in mid-February 2026. Ordinance No. 750 authorizes the preparation of an official statement to be presented to the Council for approval in late January or early February, prior to distribution to investors.

#### *Broadband Project Status*

The Community Broadband Network (CBN) Project includes a county-wide fiber-to-the-home broadband network. Council awarded the design/build contract for the broadband construction project to Bonfire. Design is in progress. The GRT bond sales will fund the construction scheduled to start next summer. The phased buildout is scheduled to reach all homes and businesses in 3-4 years.

#### *What about Outages?*

In addition to building a local fiber network within Los Alamos County, the County partnered with the Pueblo of San Ildefonso to construct about 11 miles of new fiber infrastructure, known as the "Middle Mile," from White Rock to Pojoaque.

County Broadband Manager Jerry Smith said that the Middle Mile will provide the local network with redundant internet feeds to minimize or eliminate outages. This second fiber line should be ready for use sometime in the spring of 2026. Along with the existing line from Lumen, the new line will provide the CBN with two live connections to the internet.

Smith cautioned that, although the CBN has been designed with as much fault tolerance as is feasible, not all outages can be prevented.

Councilor Ryti asked what additional options might be considered to provide a third redundancy. He requested more information about the possibility of the County having access to the fiber line planned to accompany LANL's proposed new power line. Smith said he was not familiar with the scope of that project but that, assuming the County could negotiate an agreement with LANL, it would still need to find funding to extend that fiber line beyond the boundary of the power line project.

Smith said that the State Office of Broadband may ask for input on a new three-year broadband plan, which would provide the County and other entities with an opportunity to advocate for the importance of bolstering the reliability of the Middle Mile.

### **Artificial Turf and Site Improvements Feasibility Study**

Voting 6–1 (Councilor Reagor in opposition), Council accepted the Los Alamos County Artificial Turf and Site Improvements Feasibility Study.

#### *Background*

In the fall of 2024, the Community Services Department (CSD) contracted with NV5 to evaluate the feasibility of installing synthetic turf at North Mesa Sports Complex and Overlook Park in response to community requests for improved year-round playability and reduced maintenance.

The study assessed field suitability, design alternatives, sustainability, and costs. It also identified several needs that CSD felt will require attention regardless of timing, including upgraded parking areas, improved field

accessibility, grandstand improvements, and upcoming lighting needs. The NV5 consulting team presented the draft study to the County Council at its October 28, 2025, meeting.

### *Request for Study Acceptance*

CSD Director Cory Styron said that the Feasibility Study is intended as a planning tool to illustrate potential improvements and benefits to the community and visitors. He emphasized that Council's acceptance of the study would not authorize design, construction, or funding but rather just acknowledge its value as a guiding document for future planning and decision-making related to the County's outdated athletic fields.

### *Discussion on Implementation and Timing*

Councilor Havemann expressed concern about the lack of plans to pursue any of the recommendations in the feasibility study until FY2028 at the earliest. She asked, "I don't see why we really have to constrain ourselves. Why don't we just say we're going to adopt this plan and we'll do things when budget guidance dictates that that's feasible?"

County Manager Anne Laurent replied that the County is not prohibited from moving forward with elements of the plan sooner. However, the upcoming budget hearings in April will highlight significant fiscal constraints and existing commitments that must be completed before taking on new initiatives. Laurent also noted that the County has recently made substantial investments in turf improvements, and the timing of any major changes should consider the useful life of those investments.

CSD Director Cory Styron added that several interim decisions will need guidance from both the community and the Council before moving forward with any of the study's recommendations. As one example, he noted that community feedback on turf options was almost evenly divided; "about 50/50... just a

little bit in favor of artificial turf; it's not a community landslide." Another decision would be whether to maintain the current field configuration while completing ADA and amenity upgrades, or to pursue a full reconfiguration. Styron pointed out that, if reconfiguration is selected, it would need to be phased over several years to minimize impacts on participants and user groups.

### **FY2027 Budget Guidance**

Voting 6–0, with Councilor Havemann absent, Council endorsed the recommended FY2027 budget guidance.

The FY2027 budget guidance was developed by County Manager Anne Laurent, working with the budget staff led by Helen Perraglio, Administrative Services Director, and Erika Thomas, Budget and Performance Manager.

The guidance emphasizes a conservative fiscal approach because of continued volatility in gross receipts tax (GRT) revenues. It calls for departmental budgets to remain as close to flat as possible. Increased expenditures for necessary personnel and contractual services are to be balanced by a 10% reduction target for non-labor operating categories. The budget focuses on continuing existing programs and implementing already-funded initiatives and projects, rather than requesting new initiatives.

Staff asked for Council's concurrence to continue developing the FY2027 budget based on this guidance, ensuring that the budget remains consistent with the County's long-range financial planning principles.

Laurent clarified that capital projects are not included in the non-labor expenses. Although the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) fund will be reviewed to prioritize projects for bond issuance, there is no reason to move anything out of the CIP fund at this point.

*Craig Martin and June Fabryka-Martin*



## ***November Lunch with a Leader: Española Pathways Shelter Executive Director Dena Moscola and Dr. Tyler Taylor of ICOH***

Dena Moscola, Executive Director of the Española Pathways Shelter, drove home the point that homelessness is a complex problem that must be addressed with multiple strategies. Homelessness in northern New Mexico can be traced back to land displacement and cultural trauma in colonial times and the ensuing generational poverty. More recently it is driven by rising rental rates without a comparable increase in wages; sparse housing development and aging infrastructure; and addiction.

New Mexico, with a poverty rate of 18-19%, is the third poorest state in the US. Rio Arriba has a poverty rate of 23-25%. There were 3,850 homeless people in the state in 2024. The situation worsened between 2022 and 2024 due to Covid and the explosion of the fentanyl crisis and was exacerbated by the closing of two apartment complexes in Española.

When Moscola arrived in New Mexico nearly 11 years ago, she met an individual desperately seeking assistance to recover from heroin addiction. She said, "When someone makes a request to go to rehab, you have about a minute to say yes." Moscola, however, could not immediately find assistance for that person.

Four years later she saw an ad for a director of a new shelter. She was hired at the end of December, 2019, to direct the Española Pathways Shelter, which was scheduled to open the following April. However, the facility opened much earlier, on January 6, 2020, to house ten people whose home had just burned down. The shelter was still under construction and had no heat, no hot water, and limited electricity. Moscola said the experience was like "learning how to fly the plane and flying it at the same time." Three months later, with the arrival of Covid, the shelter switched to providing services in the parking lot.



*Dr. Tyler Taylor and Dena Moscola. Photo by Leslie Wallstrom.*



The organization has grown by leaps and bounds in response to the great need. In the first year, they purchased a motel. In the second year they renovated the motel, now called Eagle Village, to use as transitional housing for people coming out of the justice system or drug treatment programs. Tenants can stay up to 18 months, giving them the opportunity to find a job and a permanent home. The success rate is 73%.

In the third year they were able to purchase the shelter building and become landlords, and in the fourth year, 2023, they launched emergency day services to provide essential services. In 2024 they launched a rental assistance program for drug addicts. And this year they closed the encampment, putting a fence around the property so they would no longer need to focus on safety.

Española Pathways Shelter is the first low-barrier facility in Española, meaning a person can be admitted as long as he or she agrees to follow the rules: appropriate behavior, no drugs, no weapons, no violence. (In a medium-barrier facility addicts are not admitted.) The shelter can house ten men and ten women. When the temperature falls to 20° or lower, capacity can be doubled. The staff, which includes formerly homeless people, has been trained in de-escalation.

The shelter offers day services: showers, meals, IDs, medical services, a place to charge phones, and a detox center. Moscola remarked that on average addicts go into rehab seven times before they stay clean. Also available are rental assistance, eviction protection, support to reassure landlords, and peer support.

The shelter was granted a 5-year Special Use Permit in 2019. They have been trying to get a new one since Oct. 2024, but the request was initially rejected because they are not open seven nights a week year-round. Contrary to rumor, they have not been shut down, but have been allowed to stay open while waiting for the permit. Meanwhile, they will be open all week starting in December.

Moscola concluded with some data: in FY 2025 the shelter served over 1,000 people, 85% of whom were local residents. They served over 28,000 meals, 58 people were helped into drug treatment, and 20 were found permanent housing. They have established over 40 community partnerships. It is truly the “community hub for crisis management and triage in the Española area.”

Dr. Tyler Taylor reported on the progress of the Interfaith Coalition on Homelessness (ICOH), which was founded sixteen months ago to help the homeless in Española. Thirteen congregations have joined so far, ten in Los Alamos and three in Española, but all interested individuals are welcome to join. Their purpose is to connect and facilitate compassionate support, advocacy, and essential services to individuals experiencing homelessness in Española.

Dr. Taylor said that continuous learning is important, but the group asks, “How can we be impactful with what we know?” They work with partners like the Pathways Shelter as supporters, catalysts, and advocates. Other partners include McCurdy Ministries, Porch Light Health, and El Centro.

Presbyterian Española Hospital is converting an old emergency room into a clinic to treat up to 1900 people a year for substance abuse disorders. ICOH plans to assist in the creation of the clinic. They also envision a healthcare transport system running seven days a week to get people to the services they need with a support person on each bus. They hope within the next two years to expand the coalition to 19 congregations. In the immediate future they are planning a collection drive to run from November 29 to February 1, during which the congregations will set out boxes for clothing, food, and toiletries.

To donate or sign up to volunteer for either of these organizations, please visit:

<https://www.icohnm.org/Volunteer/>

*Barbara Calef*

# Tickler Reports – Council Agenda Items and BCC Vacancies

## Tickler Report

### Tentative Council Agenda Items as of November 26, 2025

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

[The new format below allows for more items.]

- **2026 Los Alamos County State Legislative Agenda**
  - 12/02/25 meeting. Action requested.
- **Council Local/Small Business Engagement Working Group and Los Alamos Local Business Coalition Recommendations**
  - 12/02/25 meeting. Follow-up discussion. Action requested.
- **Draft Fleet Conversion Plan and Community-Wide EV Charging Plan**
  - 12/02/25 meeting. Presentation. No action requested.
- **Electric Coordination (ECA) Extension**
  - 12/16/25 meeting. Action requested.
- **Green Los Alamos Certification**
  - 12/16/25 meeting. Discussion and possible action.
- **DOE Environmental Management, Los Alamos Field Office**
  - 12/16/25 meeting. Presentation. No action requested.
- **North Mesa Recreation Master Plan**
  - 12/16/25 meeting. Presentation. No action requested.

#### eComment Tool for Council meetings:

You can submit online public comments for selected upcoming meetings at:

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

Locate the meeting (in the List View) and look for “eComment” in the “eComment” column in the far-right, indicating that the meeting is open for public comment.

See details at:

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

## County BCC Vacancies as of November 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.

▪ <b>Art in Public Places Board</b>	0
○ 3 terms ending March 25 & 27, 2026	
▪ <b>Board of Public Utilities</b>	0
○ No terms ending soon	
▪ <b>County Health Council</b>	1
○ 5 terms ending January 6, 2026	
▪ <b>Environmental Sustainability Board</b>	0
○ No terms ending soon	
▪ <b>Historic Preservation Advisory Board</b>	0
○ No terms ending soon	
▪ <b>Library Board</b>	0
○ No terms ending soon	
▪ <b>Lodgers' Tax Advisory Board</b>	1
○ No terms ending soon	
▪ <b>Parks and Recreation Board</b>	2
○ No terms ending soon	
▪ <b>Personnel Board</b>	0
○ No terms ending soon	
▪ <b>Planning and Zoning Commission</b>	0
○ No terms ending soon	
▪ <b>Transportation Board</b>	0
○ 4 terms ending February 28, 2026	

Totals: 4 vacancies, 12 terms ending soon

Interested Los Alamos County residents may submit an online application by visiting the County's Boards and Commissions webpage and selecting “apply” 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): \_\_\_\_\_

\* Optional – another LWVLA member in the same household.

Rev. 11/5/25



*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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