

UPDATE

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

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

Volume 78, Number 11, March 2026

President: Felicia Orth orthf@yahoo.com
Newsletter Editor: Barbara Calef bfcalf@gmail.com
Newsletter Publisher: Robert Williams rawbits2@gmail.com

FIRST CALL TO LWVLA ANNUAL MEETING ***April 16, 2026 at the Unitarian Church***

Calendar

March 19	Lunch with a Leader, Representative Christine Chandler, 11:45 a.m.
March 26	Board Meeting, Unitarian Church, noon
April 16	Annual Meeting: Lunch with a Leader; LWVLA annual business meeting, Fellowship Hall, Unitarian Church, 1738 N. Sage Loop, noon-2:30 p.m.

March Lunch with a Leader: Representative Christine Chandler

The next Lunch with a Leader will be on March 19 at 11:45 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall of the Unitarian Church. The speaker will be Rep. Christine Chandler, who will talk about the responsibilities of the County Council and the limitations of their role.

Rep. Chandler grew up in New England and graduated from Smith College and Boston College Law School. She is completing her fourth term in the NM Legislature. Prior to her service in the House, Rep. Chandler was a Los Alamos County Councilor, Council Chair, and Probate Judge. She has also volunteered on numerous local boards and commissions and is particularly proud of her long-term membership of the Los Alamos League of Women Voters.

Rep. Chandler is Chair of the House Judiciary Committee and serves on the House Taxation & Revenue Committee as well as House Rules and Order of Business. She is Vice Chair of the Interim Committee on Courts, Corrections, and Justice. During her tenure in the House, Rep. Chandler has successfully sponsored and co-sponsored a number of important pieces of legislation including the Healthy Workplace Act (earned sick leave), the Working Families Tax Credit, the Child Income Tax Credit, and, most recently, Medicare Malpractice Changes.



Christine Chandler, NM-43 Representative. Photo by Maire O'Neill.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

President's Message: Good Work on the State Environmental Front

As a hearing examiner serving a number of boards and commissions dedicated to environmental protection in New Mexico, I have the honor of working with some of the hardest-working volunteers and agency employees in the state. The past two years in particular have been more strenuous for them, and for me, than in any period since 1987.

Why now? In some cases, the agencies, Governor, and New Mexico Legislature have worked together to adopt new laws requiring new regulations for implementation. For example, in January, the Environmental Improvement Board (EIB) adopted the new Clean Transportation Fuels Program, a market-based program that incentivizes transportation fuels with a lower carbon lifecycle, including ethanol, biofuels, renewable diesel, renewable natural gas, and electricity. Addressing transportation, which is the second-largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in New Mexico, will result in both new economic development and improved air quality with related health benefits.

The EIB also adopted revisions to the State Implementation Plan for Regional Haze, thereby enhancing protection of air quality in national parks. The updated haze protections are not a new program, but they faced significant challenges from the oil and gas industry following certain discouraging signals by the Trump administration. Each of these hearings required multiple weeks.

Another example of new rules to implement a new statute is the hearing we completed last week, on phasing out PFAS (substances resistant to breakdown) in consumer products. Soon, the EIB will hold hearings to update air quality permitting fees, to phase out PFAS in aqueous foam, to update food service fees, and to require new worker health and safety measures in extreme heat.

The Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) will have a two-week hearing on state primacy (priority importance) and permitting for surface water in New Mexico—critical now that the Trump administration is rolling back clean water protections for rivers and streams, and long overdue. New Mexico is one of just two states that doesn't have primacy; most have had it for decades.

We will also have the Triennial Review of surface waters throughout the state. Following the adoption of the Water Security Planning Act, in the fall of 2025, I also assisted the Interstate Stream Commission with its first rulemaking in 40 years, relating to water security planning through regional councils. I also assisted the Oil Conservation Commission with a multi-week hearing on enhanced financial assurance for oil and gas wells to reduce the financial burden on the state when those wells are abandoned by an insolvent final owner.

My own role in these epic hearings looks a lot like promoting good government, consistent with the League's vision and advocacy: supporting access to decision makers with technical evidence and non-technical policy comment, providing opportunities for meaningful input before a decision is made, assuring transparency and inclusivity throughout the rulemaking process, and drafting a complete explanation of any decision that is made with reference to the substantial evidence in the record and applicable law. More information about any of these matters can be found on the relevant agency's docketed matters rulemaking webpage.

Felicia Orth

Legislative Action Report

The 2026 Legislative Session was short, but productive. League of Women Voters lobbyists met with legislators and spoke at countless committee hearings to support or oppose proposed legislation for which the League has positions.

Two joint resolutions supported by the League will be reflected in constitutional amendments on the 2026 ballot:

House Joint Resolution 5 asks whether the constitution should be amended to provide a salary for lawmakers. New Mexico has the only unsalaried Legislature in the country. The pay would be equal to the area median income, now estimated at around \$67,000.

Senate Joint Resolution 1 asks voters to decide on a constitutional amendment removing a provision that prevents nonpartisan school elections from being held at the same time as partisan elections.

These are some of the other bills supported by the League that passed:

- **SB40 Driver Privacy and Safety Act:** Prohibits transferring information from automated license plate readers if the information may be used for immigration enforcement, to investigate or prosecute protected health care activity, or to identify or impose liability based solely on activities protected by the U.S. Constitution or the Constitution of New Mexico.
- **SB264 Protect NM Elections from Federal Interference:** Prohibits persons acting under color of law or otherwise from ordering troops to a place where an election is held unless necessary to

repel armed enemies of the United States; prohibits interference with a person's right of suffrage at an election.

- SB1 Interstate Medical Licensure Act: NM will join the Medical Licensure Compact, which facilitates doctors licensed in other Compact states to become licensed in states that are members of the Compact (or vice versa).
- HB111 Water Law Violation Maximum Penalty: Significantly raises the penalties for water law violations.
- HB9 Immigrant Safety Act: Prohibits New Mexico public bodies from participating in the federal civil immigration detention system.

Another important bill that passed was HB99 Medical Malpractice Changes: Clarifies definitions in the Medical Malpractice Act; limits punitive damages in medical malpractice cases; requires payments from the Patient Compensation Fund to be made as expenses are incurred.

Because the League did not have a position on the matter, there was no official support. However, many League members spoke or wrote in support as individuals and praised Rep. Chandler for sponsoring the bill.

Several pieces of legislation supported by the League failed to pass:

- SB18 Clear Horizons and Emissions Codification: Would have established statewide greenhouse gas emissions limits; required greenhouse gas emissions reporting; provided that state agencies apply climate equity principles to policy and rule development; and expanded the duties and powers of the Environmental Improvement Board.
- SB235 Microgrid Oversight Act: Would have made microgrids (power islands often used to fuel data centers) subject to PRC oversight and Renewable Portfolio Standards.

Eight of the interstate licensure compacts (for audiologists and speech-language pathologists, counselors, dentists and hygienists, emergency medical services (EMS) professionals, occupational therapists, physical therapists (PTs), physician assistants (PAs), and psychologists) were passed by the House, but did not reach the Senate floor. The League, Think New Mexico, and many other organizations have written to the governor asking her to convene a special session to approve those compacts.

Barbara Calef

Statement from the League of Women Voters on Reported Elections Executive Order

WASHINGTON, DC — The League of Women Voters of the United States issued the following statement on reports that the President is preparing an executive order to impose federal control over American elections:

Reports that the President is preparing a sweeping executive order to seize federal control over American elections are not only alarming, they are also dangerous.

This is another power grab from this Administration. This possible EO is not about election security. It is about political power and attempts to make it harder for eligible Americans to register, cast a ballot, and have their voices heard.

Court after court has already affirmed what the Constitution makes clear. The President's authority over the administration of elections is minimal to nonexistent. The power to run elections rests with Congress and the states, not the White House.

The League of Women Voters has successfully challenged unlawful executive overreach before. In case after case, and through multistate injunctions issued by federal courts nationwide, judges have blocked efforts to interfere in election administration, restrict voter access, and unlawfully expand presidential power.

Any effort to mandate restrictive voter ID requirements, limit mail-in voting, or impose national voting rules through executive action would be a direct attack on voters and an abuse of power that will not withstand legal scrutiny.

The conduct of our elections is not for any president to decide. And it must never be manipulated to serve a political agenda.

The League of Women Voters stands ready to return to court if necessary. We will challenge any executive action that suppresses voters, undermines free and fair elections, or violates the constitutional framework that protects our democracy.”

Health Care Forum

The well-attended health care forum, “Health Care in Northern New Mexico: Changing Landscape,” took place at SALA on February 24. It was sponsored by the League, the Los Alamos Community Foundation, and the Anchorum Health Foundation. Four health care experts: Lillian Montoya (CHRISTUS St. Vincent), Dr. Eric Ketcham (Presbyterian Healthcare System), Brenda Romero (Presbyterian Española Hospital), and Dr. Madhavi Garimella (Medical Associates of Northern New Mexico) spoke about the strengths and challenges of health providers in the region. The forum was recorded and the video will be posted on the League’s website when it is available.

Leslie Wallstrom



Health Care Forum. Photo by Blanca Ortiz.

Fund Drive Underway

The Fundraising Committee met on Monday, February 9th to prepare the donation request letters to be sent to the Friends of the League. This is an annual request and our Friends have traditionally been very responsive and generous with their donations. Letters to 51 households were mailed on February 11th.

Thank you to Addie Jacobson, Leslie Wallstrom, Wendy Swanson, and Barbara Calef for making this effort happen.

Welcome, New Members!

We are delighted to welcome four new members: Jennifer Young, Anastasia Letaw, Mari Jorgensen, and Amy Chen. We hope to see them at League events, especially at our Annual Meeting, and Candidate Forums.

Anastasia Letaw writes: My husband and I recently moved to Los Alamos and are both working at Los Alamos National Laboratory, myself specifically as a project manager. Before joining the Lab, I was a Project Manager with UL Standards & Engagement, and prior to that I spent many years as a USAID contractor supporting international development programs (again as a project manager!).

We moved here from North Carolina, though I'm originally from Denver, Colorado, so it feels wonderful to be back closer to home and the mountains. My husband served eight years on active duty in the Army, which took us all over the country before landing here in New Mexico.

I earned a B.S. in African Area Studies and Portuguese from the United States Military Academy and an M.S. in Environmental Planning and Management from Johns Hopkins University. We have three daughters (7, 5, and 3) and three cats who keep life busy and fun (read: chaotic).

In my free time, I enjoy long-distance running, hiking, swimming, and cooking. I previously started a Moms Offering Moms Support (MOMS Club) chapter in El Paso (in 2019) and have volunteered with local soup kitchens and shelters over the years. I've been hoping to join a League of Women Voters chapter since 2020 but there wasn't one in my vicinity, so I am excited to finally be part of one here in Los Alamos!

Community Health and Wellbeing Report

The Los Alamos County Health Council (LACHC) reappointed 2 members in January and expects to have a full board of 15 County Health Councilors soon!

Health Council Meetings

At our December meeting we heard a presentation from Brandi Weiss, Program Manager and Anchorum Fellow with the Los Alamos Community Foundation. She spoke about the LAUNCH (Los Alamos Uniting for Community Health) initiative that sponsors suicide prevention training and supports many other mental health awareness activities.

At our January meeting we elected officers and had a lively discussion about Health Council Members' roles, responsibilities, and terms of service. We made recommendations to County Council about our suggestions for council term lengths and re-appointments.

In February Jessica Strong, Social Services Manager, presented to the County Council some of the history, organizational information, objectives, and roles of the two entities. If you'd like a copy of this presentation, please contact her at [Jessica.strong\(at\)losalamosnm.gov](mailto:Jessica.strong@losalamosnm.gov), phone: 505-709-5938.

Other Meetings and Activities

In January the Health Council Chair attended Regional Listening Sessions to learn about the mental health needs and priorities of tribes and counties within this region and how to gain appropriations from SB 1's (2025) Behavior HealthTrust Fund.

She also attended the State Behavioral Health Executive Committee meeting, overseen by the Administrative Office of the Courts. This committee will be managing the budget for the Senate Bill 3 (2025) – Behavioral Health Reform and Investment Act, which is \$291M this fiscal year.

With the Social Services Manager, the Health Council Chair attended the Alliance of Health Councils' Statewide Meeting. There was training on Leadership and Data Tracking. We heard about several Health Councils' initiatives: Hidalgo County HC & NM National Guard Joint Counter-Drug Task Force, Picuris Pueblo's new full-service Medical Center, and Catron County's Regional Transportation System. It was an opportunity to gain a regional/statewide perspective on health issues and challenges. If you'd like a copy of the slides from this meeting, please contact Lisa Hampton at [eightsenough\(at\)comcast.net](mailto:eightsenough@comcast.net), phone (505) 500-7154.

In February the Health Council worked with Think New Mexico and the Alliance of Health Councils to advocate for critical NM Legislation aimed at improving health care services and increasing the quantity and quality of health care providers in the state. Some of the 2026 bills include: HB 99 (reforms medical malpractice laws), HB 66 (increases student loan repayment for providers who stay in NM), HB 306 (protects patients from unnecessary medical fees), HB 104 (funds county and tribe health councils), and many of the interstate compact bills for health care workers.

"Taco-Bout It," featuring Jessica Strong, as well as the art therapist from JJAB, was held at SALA on February 6.

The next Health Council Meeting, which is open to the public, will be on Thursday, March 5, at noon at the County Municipal Building.

Lisa Hampton, County Health Council Chair

Observer Corps Report — County Council – February 3

Comprehensive Plan Update; Chapter 16 – Development Code Amendments

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

Comprehensive Plan Update

Council was briefed on the process and timeline for updating Los Alamos County's Comprehensive Plan. Council took no action.

What Is a Comprehensive Plan and Why Is It Important?

As described in the County's current Comprehensive Plan, the plan is a long-range policy document that establishes the County's overall direction, goals, and priorities for future growth and development. It guides the physical development of the County by articulating the County's vision for land use, housing, transportation, infrastructure, economic development, and environmental stewardship.

Pete Lombardi, co-manager of the County's Comprehensive Planning consultants (czb), presented details of the process and schedule for the Comprehensive Plan update. He emphasized that the goals and priorities outlined in the plan play a critical role in guiding County decisions—not only for long-term planning such as budgeting and capital investments, but also for day-to-day decision-making. "Notably, it is the foundation for zoning and development regulations," he said. Lombardi added that the updated Comprehensive Plan will make recommendations and identify where land use regulations might need to be updated to align with the County's visions and policy direction.

Why Update the Plan Now?

County Manager Anne Laurent explained the key drivers for updating the existing Los Alamos County Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted in 2016. "It's been 10 years, and best practice is to update it every five years."

Laurent noted that one of the primary reasons for the update is to incorporate plans adopted by the County Council over the past decade, including the master plans for Downtown Los Alamos and Downtown White Rock. Integrating these more recent policy documents will ensure the Comprehensive Plan reflects the County's current priorities and adopted strategies.

She also pointed to ongoing concerns related to Chapter 16, the County Development Code. "We have some lingering issues around Chapter 16 when we did that update several years ago, and we're continuing to make improvements in those areas where there's still some desire to have more conversation and more clarity."

Focus of Update

Community Development Director Elias Isaacson said that "one of the most central questions to a comprehensive planning process in any community is that question of growth, whether it's how much or where, or the sort of, "what is the trade off to that growth, whether it's community, character, or other sorts of important values? Those are the exact conversations we intend to have with the community through this process."

Isaacson identified three major focus areas for the Comprehensive Plan update:

- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs): Evaluate where ADUs are most appropriate within the community and identify ways staff can help facilitate their construction by streamlining processes and reducing barriers for residents.
- Parking standards, especially in downtown areas: Review parking requirements to ensure they are not unintentionally hindering commercial development in downtown areas. The

review includes exploring alternatives such as parking structures.

- Zoning of open space parcels: Ensure that the County’s Future Land Use Map (FLUM)—developed as part of the comprehensive planning process—clearly supports any necessary rezonings and eliminates ambiguity related to open space designations.

Stakeholder Involvement

Isaacson described two committees that will help guide the planning process:

- The Technical Advisory Committee is an internal working group made up of County staff from departments whose operations are directly impacted by land use decisions. This committee will provide subject-matter expertise and ensure coordination across functional areas such as infrastructure, housing, transportation, and public services.
- The Steering Committee is composed of community members, business leaders, and representatives from County Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, and local institutions and organizations. This committee will help shape policy direction and provide community-level perspective throughout the process.

Isaacson emphasized that public participation will extend well beyond the steering committee. Community engagement will be extensive and include open houses, public workshops, and a project website where residents can submit comments. In addition, a community-wide survey will be launched in March to gather input during the early phase of the planning process.

Plan Development Phases and Timeline

Lombardi explained that the Comprehensive Plan update is divided into three phases, with December 2026 being the target date for completion. Together, these phases are designed to move from analysis and engagement, to vision-setting, to formal

plan adoption within a structured one-year timeline.

- Phase 1: Patterns and Priorities (Jan–Mar 2026). During this phase the project team will review recent County plans, demographic and economic analyses, and initial public engagement results. The goal is to identify key issues, trends, and community priorities that will shape the direction of the update.
- Phase 2: Vision and Path Forward (Apr–Jul 2026). During this phase, the project team will develop and evaluate scenarios for achieving the County’s long-term vision. Isaacson elaborated: “We’ll be trying to identify several scenarios—tradeoff scenarios—looking at opportunities for growth, where that growth may happen, where it shouldn’t happen, really identifying a future for the community.” The goal is to help clarify choices and tradeoffs before selecting a preferred path forward.
- Phase 3: Plan Development (Aug–Dec 2026). The final phase will focus on drafting and refining the new Comprehensive Plan. The team will incorporate community and stakeholder feedback, prepare the final document, and support the County Council through the review and adoption process.

Rezoning of Open Space Parcels

The County also plans to address mis-designated open space parcels during the planning process, including amendments to the FLUM. Regarding the relationship between the Comprehensive Plan and amendments to the Chapter 16 Development Code, Isaacson noted: “When it comes to these open space parcels, they’re actually related. We’ll need to make sure that the FLUM, which gets updated through the comprehensive planning process, aligns with the eventual zoning designation of those parcels.”

Councilor Reagor asked for clarification regarding the community's concern about specific parcels. “We've had some correspondence with people in the County who

are saying that a number of the pieces of open space were mis-zoned in the last transition," he said. "Is that being addressed in this revision?"

Isaacson confirmed that the issue will be reviewed as part of the Comprehensive Plan update. "We'll be looking at these open space parcels that you referenced and making sure that our FLUM supports and allows for any rezonings that may be necessary to clear up any confusion around those open space parcels in various locations around the County."

Laurent elaborated on some of the specific parcels that had been identified by the Los Alamos League of Women Voters. She noted that the current zonings of these parcels date back to the last Comprehensive Plan update in 2016, and that resolving concerns may in some cases depend on which growth and land use scenarios are ultimately selected.

- Piñon Park (White Rock). At Piñon Park near the White Rock Branch Library, some open space is located on the same parcel as developed land. Residents have expressed concern that, because it is a single parcel, the remaining open space could eventually be developed. Laurent explained that resolving the issue would likely require splitting the parcel and rezoning the open space portion. I have assured the folks that I've spoken to, there are no County plans to develop the parcels that they're concerned about at Piñon Park," she said.
- Woodland Trail / Golf Course. Along the north edge of the Golf Course, residents have asked for protection of the Woodland Trail and Woodland drainage area, which serves as a buffer between homes and the golf course. Community members have suggested splitting the parcel and applying a different open space zoning designation to ensure long-term protection.
- Canyon Rim Trail / NM 502 Corridor. Along Canyon Rim Trail near NM 502 south of the airport, some land is currently zoned light industrial. Laurent

noted that some residents have requested rezoning. However, she indicated that the area may present other potential opportunities the County would like to explore, making it a topic for discussion during the Comprehensive Plan process.

Laurent concluded the discussion by emphasizing that while these three parcels will require careful discussion, there are no projects or developments pending on any of the parcels in question that will happen before we go through this process. She underscored that any changes will occur through the public planning process.

Chapter 16 – Development Code Amendments

Council received a briefing from Danyelle Valdez of the Community Development Department regarding upcoming amendments to Chapter 16, the Development Code.

What Is Being Updated?

Valdez said that two major sections of the Development Code are slated for update. Article II regulates zoning districts and allowable uses. Article IV establishes requirements for lot and building standards, parking, landscaping, signage, lighting, screening, open space, and infrastructure.

Isaacson said that these code amendments are interdependent with the Comprehensive Plan update and should not be viewed as separate efforts. He said that a coordinated approach is necessary to ensure that policy direction and regulatory tools are aligned as the County moves forward with both the Comprehensive Plan update and Development Code revisions.

Laurent reiterated the major issues that will be discussed with the public as part of the Comprehensive Plan process, with the results informing the code amendments: ADUs, parking standards, and the FLUM.

Craig Martin and June Fabryka-Martin

Observer Corps Report – County Council – February 10

Wildfire Preparedness; Potential Changes to County Charter, Brewer Arena Improvements

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

Wildfire Preparedness

Council was briefed on wildfire preparedness in Los Alamos County. They took no action.

The meeting centered on wildfire preparedness in Los Alamos County. Presenters from the Fire Department discussed the Ready, Set, Go program, highlighted recent mitigation efforts, and stressed the importance of home assessments, defensible space, evacuation plans, and emergency kits.

Mitigation Efforts

Fire Battalion Chief Van Leimer summarized the mitigation efforts taken by the Fire Department on County-owned land. Mitigation is a primary factor for being in a ready state for wildfire. "The County has to set an example, so that's why we've done all the mitigation that we've done. I think ultimately, in the last three to five years, we've done about 200 acres, with a grant that we got in 2020."

One treated area was situated on steep canyon slopes below the stables. Stable members and other people with livestock there expressed concern about the potential for fire to come up out of the canyon. Leimer said, "speaking with the people at the stables, they're very happy with the work that was done. The work needs to continue because we have a lot more areas that we can cover, especially around the stables." He cited the Sheriff's Lodge (Posse Shack) as an example.

More recently, the Fire Department mitigated about 32 acres in open space in Cañada del Buey in White Rock and between NM 4 and the Canyon Rim Trail in Los Alamos across from the airport, in part because the latter road is a critical evacuation route.

Areas under consideration for mitigation in the future include County-owned open space behind homes on the western edge of town. The Fire Department is also considering a partnership with Santa Fe National Forest to treat places where Forest Service property lies directly behind homes in Los Alamos County.

Councilor Ryti asked how the fire risk in White Rock differs from that in Los Alamos and why the entire County is classified as high fire risk. Leimer answered that the pinon-juniper fuel that characterizes vegetation in White Rock spreads fast and burns like firecrackers, making it more dangerous than the ponderosa fuel in Los Alamos.

Low-income Residents

Local resident James Wernicke brought up the issue of potential funding for low-income residents and others who lack the financial means to undertake some of the expensive modifications mentioned by Leimer for fireproofing a home. Noting that the County has some assistance for low-income individuals doing home efficiency upgrades, Wernicke asked whether there are any programs for helping individuals do fire mitigation.

Fire Chief Erik Litzenberg answered that, although he wasn't aware of State grants available for individuals, the State Fire Marshal is trying to coordinate a grant that would allocate funding to communities that are both high risk and low income.

Laurent added that some energy-efficiency projects, such as a new roof with insulation or double-paned windows, could harden buildings. So, there is some overlap in benefits if one is income-qualified for the County's energy-efficiency program.

Potential Changes to County Charter

Council discussed potential charter changes, focusing on clarifying the roles of the County Manager and Utilities Managers, updating non-discrimination policies to align with the New Mexico Human Rights Act, and considering term limits for board and commission members. Other potential changes could address minor inconsistencies and wording.

Council agreed to form a working group to review and prioritize changes, with public outreach and a resolution to propose potential changes that would be put on the ballot for the November election. The working group will provide a status update on its progress at a Council meeting in March.

During public comment, Los Alamos resident Phil Gursky suggested that the charter review process should be handled by a public group, not the Council, to ensure public decision-making and transparency.

Brewer Arena Improvements

Voting unanimously, Council approved the task order with All-Rite Construction Inc. in the amount of \$2.1M for Brewer Arena Improvements.

Russell Naranjo, Project Manager, said that the purposes of the project were to improve these community facilities to meet ADA requirements and to address safety issues at the grandstand, pavilion, and announcer's box (crow's nest).

Naranjo said that construction on the new grandstand is scheduled to begin in May 2026. The site work and restroom renovations are expected to be completed in time for the 2026 County Fair and Rodeo. However, due to long lead times for the metal work associated with the facilities, substantial completion for the project is not anticipated until July 2027, in time for the 2027 County Fair and Rodeo. For the 2026 Rodeo, temporary bleachers will be installed.

Councilor Cull noted that, because Council had not approved the project at its October 2025 meeting, the four-month delay ultimately

resulted in roughly a year-and-a-half difference in completion time. Public Works Director Martinez agreed with that assessment.

Linda Matteson stressed that the redesign process significantly improved the final plan despite the extended timeline. She credited both the Equestrian and Livestock Working Group and the Los Alamos Stable Owners Association for their persistence and constructive input, saying their collaboration strengthened the project. Although the timeline was lengthened, Matteson concluded that the additional time and effort ultimately produced a better outcome for the community.

Craig Martin and June Fabryka-Martin

Observer Corps Report — County Council – February 17

Climate Action Plan Implementation

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

Climate Action Plan Implementation

Angelica Gurule, County Sustainability Manager, briefed Council on quarterly progress on implementing the County's Climate Action Plan, which sets a goal of achieving 100% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Council took no action.

Sustainability Actions Completed or In Progress:

- Climate marketing: The County has contracted with Firebrand to help build climate marketing and public engagement campaigns. Focus areas include alternative transportation, energy efficiency, EV adoption, recycling, and composting. The campaign will start in late February, with a big launch planned for Earth Day.
- Electrification plans: The final Fleet Conversion Plan and Community-Wide

EV Charging Plan will be presented to Council at a meeting in March.

- EV charging infrastructure expansion: Six new EV chargers were installed at the Municipal Building. Design and procurement are underway for two DC fast chargers at Mesa Public Library.
- Foxtail Flats Solar Project: After some delay, the project is under construction, targeting the end of June 2027 for full commercial operation.

Upcoming Sustainability Initiatives

- Energy audit services for residential customers;
- Climate vulnerability assessment covering wildfire, drought, water resources, and community resiliency;
- Commuter trip reduction program to reduce single-occupancy vehicles on the roads;
- Building-code review and opportunities to raise green building standards;
- Educational brochure on low-impact development.

Waste Recycling Program

An audit by Barco, the company that manages the County's recycling waste, found that the County has a 17% waste contamination rate. Gurule said that contamination primarily comes from plastic bags, yard waste, Styrofoam, and just plain trash.

County staff have implemented initiatives to reduce contamination, such as adding tic-tac-toe rebar across the top of recycling bins to prevent entry of large ineligible materials. Loads are also dumped on the ground at the Eco Station where staff remove contaminated material, if possible. Gurule noted that, although the contamination rate is low compared to the state average, "what it does demonstrate is that we need continuous education. We need to constantly reiterate the message of how to recycle correctly."

Other Highlights

Gurule reported on other activities that are happening outside of the Climate Action Plan:

- Evaluation of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation, a state-wide initiative that would make manufacturers of hard-to-recycle materials such as mattresses and batteries responsible for disposal instead of product users. Seven states have passed EPR legislation and three other states, including New Mexico, have introduced it.
- Research on a Tariff-Based On-Bill Financing (TOBF) program, which would provide a way for the County to offer low-interest rate loans for energy-efficiency upgrades to homes. Examples of eligible upgrades include electrification, HVAC systems, solar panels, and EV chargers.

Craig Martin and June Fabryka-Martin

Observer Corps Report – County Council Joint Meeting with Los Alamos Public School Board – February 26

Update on North Mesa Housing

The County Council and Los Alamos Public School Board held a joint meeting for an update and discussion of North Mesa Housing. Dan Osborn, Housing and Special Project Manager, presented.

This meeting was not recorded, and the following meeting summary is from information provided in the meeting agenda packet.

Background

The 30-acre North Mesa tract, located between Los Alamos Middle School and the North Mesa Sports Complex, was acquired by Los Alamos Public Schools (LAPS) in 1967 from the U. S. Department of Energy.

Originally reserved for future school facilities, the site was re-envisioned in 2019 to help address the community's need for affordable workforce housing.

A conceptual housing study completed by Dekker (2019–2022) determined the site could support approximately 210–360 mixed-density housing units. A subsequent feasibility analysis by Economic & Planning Systems (2022–2023) recommended prioritizing housing affordable to LAPS teachers and other local workforce members. In December 2023, LAPS and Los Alamos County formalized roles and responsibilities through a Memorandum of Agreement.

Key Study Findings

In 2024, the County retained Wilson & Company to conduct a Transportation and Utilities Study, completed in August 2025. The study considered the cumulative infrastructure needs of three proposed residential development sites: North Mesa site (210–360 housing units), Arbolada Subdivision (137 single-family and multifamily residences) and Ponderosa Estates Subdivision Phase III (49 detached, single-family dwelling units). Together with the development on the North Mesa Site, these projects may potentially impact traffic volumes and utility demand in the area.

Key findings include:

Transportation & Transit

- Traffic along the Diamond Drive corridor is projected to remain within acceptable Levels of Service through 2045.
- Multi-modal improvements are recommended, including buffered bike lanes, a shared-use trail along North Mesa Road, and safety enhancements to the San Ildefonso Road underpass.
- Development must integrate bus stops for Atomic City Transit to maintain connectivity to the Los Alamos Transit Center.

Utilities & Infrastructure

- Wastewater: System capacity is generally adequate. However, to accommodate wastewater from the Arbolada Subdivision, the sewer drop from the south side of Broadview Subdivision into Pueblo Canyon needs replacement. The preliminary cost estimate is about \$1.35M.
- Water: Approximately 11,600 ft of water line must be upsized to meet fire flow and pressure requirements. The preliminary cost estimate is about \$1.0M.

These offsite water and sewer improvements total about \$2.8M (including 20% contingency for potential costs escalation) and may be considered within the County's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Onsite infrastructure costs are estimated as \$7.3M for North Mesa site and \$4.5M for the Arbolada Subdivision site. These costs are typically developer-funded, with potential cost-sharing opportunities under the affordable housing ordinance.

Next Steps

The proposed development aims to alleviate local housing shortages by adding significant inventory to the County's constrained market, specifically through targeted options for LAPS and County employees, as well as for the local "missing middle" workforce.

Beyond addressing housing needs, a potential land sale or lease of the North Mesa site would also generate direct proceeds for LAPS.

To move the North Mesa project forward:

- The LAPS Board and County Council should discuss desired outcomes and formalize their commitment to specific development objectives and housing targets.
- Define commitments from the Board/Council to provide the necessary utility infrastructure and support under the County's affordable housing plan.

- Leverage previous planning studies to draft a new agreement that defines roles, responsibilities, and commitments.
- Consider a solicitation for a private development partner for the development of the site.

Craig Martin and June Fabryka-Martin

February Lunch with a Leader: Garrett VeneKlasen



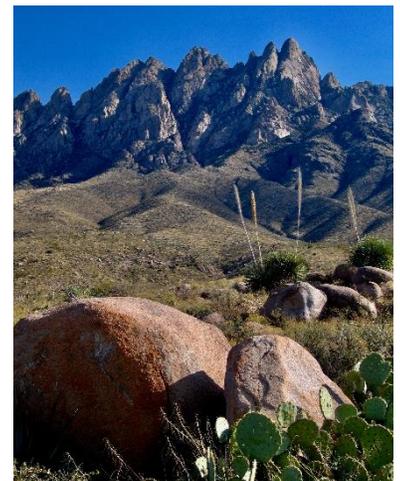
Garrett VeneKlasen, New Mexico Wild's Northern Conservation Director

Garrett VeneKlasen introduced himself by saying that he was born and raised in New Mexico and had spent most of his childhood and his adult life in the Jemez Mountains. He described himself as a hunter, a fisherman, “a tree-hugging outdoorsman.” He now lives in Taos and works as the Northern Conservation Director for the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, or NM Wild, a state-based organization with a staff of about 30. He “does all things north of I-40, but, like the Mexican gray wolf, keeps coming and going.”

NM Wild works on land, water, and wildlife policy issues at both the state and federal levels. In 2025 the organization helped pass SB5, legislation that will transform the Department of Game and Fish into the Department of Wildlife, making it an agency that “stewards wildlife in a very holistic manner.” (The League also lobbied for that bill.)

NM Wild is not the same as the NM Wildlife Federation, which he described as focused on wildlife rather than the environment in general. NM Wild was involved in the creation of the Rio Grande and Organ Mountain-Desert Peaks National Monuments and in making the Valles Caldera a National Preserve.

VeneKlasen said that, on the environmental level, the current administration is the most destructive he has seen in his lifetime in its pursuit of the privatization and exploitation of our natural resources. Following the Project 2025 policy initiative, the administration has radically cut the staffs and budgets of the federal agencies responsible for managing our public lands: the Bureau of Land Management, the US Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service (which manages primarily migratory and endangered species), and the National Park Service. Hundreds of people have lost their jobs; “the agencies are running on fumes right now.”



Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Nat'l Monument. Photo by Barbara Calef.



Valles Caldera Nat'l Preserve looking south from La Garita. Photo by Barbara Calef.

Defunded, the agencies have no money to study hydrology, wildlife, the response to climate change. VeneKlasen warned that the next step will be to argue that, since the agencies cannot manage our resources, they should be privatized. He pointed out that environmentalism was once a Republican value. Republican President Theodore Roosevelt was “the grandfather of public lands.” (He recommended reading [The Big Burn](#) by Timothy Egan for the story of Roosevelt and the Montana wildfire.) He pointed out that the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Endangered Species Act were all bipartisan bills.

VeneKlasen said that, “New Mexico is at the epicenter of climate change.” Our state has a congressional delegation that supports protecting our land and culture. We should all interact with them as well as with local and state officials. We are all co-owners of this 600 million-acre federal ranch.”

“As individuals we don’t have a lot of power, but collectively, we are ferocious. Staying home is not an option, it’s a moral obligation.” It’s important to show up at public events, join an organization. There are many opportunities to help: pick up trash, take fences down, do trail work, write op-eds. Volunteerism is good for mental health and the community.

VeneKlasen is currently focused on a campaign to create the Caja del Rio National Conservation Area. He offered to lead a tour to show undeveloped land that will be impacted by the new power line to the Lab. He also offered to help our community with our environmental problems, namely the deer population in town and feral cattle.

On Wednesday, March 18, NM Wild is hosting the screening of *Journey Down the Gila* at SALA from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Barbara Calef

An Insider's View of the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z)

The P&Z is a nine-member commission that hosts quasi-judicial hearings for requested variances against our Chapter 16 Development Code, minor zoning changes, and approval of site plans for new developments. Quasi-judicial means a non-judicial entity empowered with interpreting certain elements of the law, such as land use codes, that follow judicial-like processes in their proceedings. Our Staff Liaison is Danyelle Valdez.

In 2026, the P&Z will also support the Comprehensive Plan Update, which is a high-level County development plan, for the next 10 years.

Terms are three years long. We meet on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month at 5:30 in Council Chambers, although many meetings are cancelled if there are no cases to be heard.

I'm currently serving my second term on the Commission. Unlike most other boards, we are quasi-judicial and not advisory, although we frequently have the opportunity to serve in other capacities because of our familiarity with the Development Code. These tasks include Development Code revisions and updates, Short Term Rental Steering Committee, and the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.

It is also an excellent position to advocate for necessary zoning and other code changes that the community would like staff to engage in, such as housing density, open space protection, parking minimums, accessory dwelling units, etc.

In March 2026, two of our members will term out and need to be replaced. If you are interested, please apply through the County website:

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

To get a feel for our meetings, you can watch the video recordings (recommended!) at

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

David Hampton

List of all LWVLA Members, as of 3/3/26 —

Esta Lee	Albright	Jeffrey	Howell	Sandy	Tobin
Marv	Alme	David	Izraelevitz	Leslie	Wallstrom
Rosemary	Alme	Terry	Izraelevitz	Betsy	Weisbrod
Gregory	Archbold	Addie	Jacobson	Alahna	Weller
Monique	Archbold	Lynn	Jones	James	Wernicke
Karyl Ann	Armbruster	Mark	Jones	Kyle	Wheeler
Zack	Baker	Anne	Laurent	Helena	Whyte
John	Bartlit	Barbara	Lemmick	Chuck	Wilkerson
Nancy	Bartlit	Ann	LePage	Marianne	Wilkerson
Bettie	Bedell	Anastasia	Letaw	Bob	Williams
Jody	Benson	Mary Ann	Lindahl	Julie	Williams-Hill
Cynthia	Biddlecomb	Judy	Machen	Patricia	Wing
Laura	Bohn	Wendy	Marcus	Mickey	Wright
Roy	Bohn	Craig	Martin	Jennifer	Young
Paul	Bradley	Cas	Mason	Mari	Jorgensen
Judy	Buckingham	Sara	Mason		
Barbara	Calef	Marguerite	McClay		
Helen	Carpenter	Tracy	McFarland		
Brenna	Cashman	William	Mead		
Christine	Chandler	Susan	Mendel		
George	Chandler	Coleen	Meyer		
Amy	Chen	Ellen	Mills		
David	Collins	Don	Morris		
Julie	Collins	JJ	Mortensen		
Linn	Collins	Stephanie	Nakhleh		
Beverly	Cooper	Beverly	Neal-Clinton		
Theresa	Cull	Joyce	Nickols		
Catherine	D'Anna	Anne	Nobile		
Jyl	DeHaven	Dave	North		
Denise	Derkacs	Cristina	Olds		
Elaine	Deschamp	Maire	O'Neill		
Andrea	Determan	Felicia	Orth		
John	Determan	Nereida	Ortiz-Moss		
Jean	Dewart	Akkana	Peck		
Marilyn	Doolen	Bill	Priedhorsky		
Susan	Dryja	Judy	Prono		
Hedy	Dunn	Heather	Quinn		
June	Fabryka-Martin	David	Reagor		
Andy	Fraser	Margaret	Robey		
Rosmarie	Frederickson	Warren	Rockwell		
Richelle	Fry	Evan	Rose		
Gwendolyn	Gallagher	Susannah	Rousculp		
Madhavi	Garimella	Randall	Ryti		
Galen	Gisler	Mary	Sanders		
Susan	Gisler	Eduardo	Santiago		
Michael	Grimler	Charlie	Sartor		
David	Hampton	Katie	Sayre		
Lisa	Hampton	Richard	Sayre		
Lyn	Haval	Becky	Shankland		
Suzie	Havemann	Beverly	Shlachter		
Cecile	Hemez	Richard	Skolnik		
Ryn	Herrmann	Ellen	Specter		
Jeri	Hertzman	Margie	Stockton		
Jennifer	Holmes	Mary Ann	Stroud		
Richard	Honsinger	Wendy	Swanson		
John	Hopkins	Jess	Taylor		
Rebecca	Howard	Tyler	Taylor		

Tickler Report – Upcoming Council Agenda Items

Tickler Report

Tentative Council Agenda Items, as of February 27, 2026

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

- **NNSA Los Alamos Office activities and LANL Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement (SWEIS)**
 - 3/3/26 meeting. No action requested.
- **Granting easement in Bayo Canyon to DOE**
 - 3/3/26 meeting. Action requested.
- **2026 Los Alamos Federal Priorities**
 - 3/3/26 meeting. Action requested.
- **Community-Wide Electric Vehicle Charging Plan**
 - 3/17/26 meeting. Action requested.
- **Inclusivity Task Force Final Report**
 - 3/17/26 meeting. Action requested.
- **Fleet Conversion Plan**
 - 3/17/26 meeting. Action requested.
- **Energy Coordination Agreement and Extensions**
 - 3/17/26 meeting. No action requested.
- **Small/Local Business Action Items**
 - 3/31/26 meeting. No action requested.
- **Trinity Drive Safety and ADA Improvements (construction management and public outreach services)**
 - 3/31/26 meeting. Action requested.
- **Lease of restaurant space at the Golf Course Community Building**
 - 3/31/26 meeting. Public Hearing. Action requested.

eComment Tool for Council meetings:

You can submit online public comments for selected upcoming meetings at:
<https://losalamos.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

Select List View and This Year. Locate the meeting and look for Comment” 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/>

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.

<i>In this issue</i>	<i>Page</i>
<i>FIRST CALL TO LWVLA ANNUAL MEETING</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Calendar</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>March Lunch with a Leader: Representative Christine Chandler</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>President’s Message: Good Work on the State Environmental Front.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Legislative Action Report.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Statement from the League of Women Voters on Reported Elections Executive Order</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Health Care Forum.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Fund Drive Underway.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Welcome, New Members!</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Community Health and Wellbeing Report.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Observer Corps Report — County Council – February 3.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Observer Corps Report – County Council – February 10.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Observer Corps Report — County Council – February 17.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Observer Corps Report – County Council Joint Meeting with Los Alamos Public School Board – February 26.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>February Lunch with a Leader: Garrett VeneKlasen</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>An Insider's View of the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z).....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>List of all LWVLA Members, as of 3/3/26 —.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Tickler Report – Upcoming Council Agenda Items.....</i>	<i>18</i>