

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

### ***Calendar***

April 16	Lunch with a Leader, Celina Diaz, Unitarian Church, 11:45 a.m. <b>Annual Meeting</b> after Lunch with a Leader, 1:05-2:30 p.m.
April 23	Board Meeting, Unitarian Church, noon
April 25	LWVNM Council, 6739 Academy Rd. NE, Albuquerque, 11:30-2:30 p.m.
April 30	LWVLA Candidate Forum, Student Center, UNM-LA, 7-9 p.m., refreshments, 6:30 p.m.

## ***April Lunch with a Leader: Celina Diaz***

The monthly Lunch with a Leader program will be held in the Fellowship Hall of the Unitarian Church from 11:45-1 p.m. on Thursday, April 16. The speaker will be Marcela Diaz, founder and Executive Director of *Somos Un Pueblo Unido*, a statewide immigrant-based organization that works to promote racial and worker justice. After her presentation, the Annual Meeting for League members will take place from about 1:05-2:30 p.m.

Diaz's presentation will focus on the last legislative session, with an update on immigration legislation and its impact on New Mexico. Somos works to build a community that does not discriminate against people based on their national origin, that institutes humane migration politics, and that protects the human rights of everyone irrespective of where they are born or what documents they carry.

With an active membership of close to 3,000 people in eight counties, Somos offers community education about rights and remedies; forges leadership opportunities for immigrants and low-wage workers; provides legal services to wage theft victims; engages Latinos in the political and electoral process; and leads grassroots campaigns for local and national policies that strengthen communities.

*Karyl Ann Armbruster*



## ***President's Message: Communicating with the Future***

The Los Alamos Historical Society is placing a time capsule beneath the Oppenheimer House, which itself is a time capsule being renovated to endure into the future. The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos has been asked to contribute three Voter Guides to the box, which will be buried for at least 50 years.

This request honors the League's work since 1947 to educate local voters about elections, candidates, Constitutional amendments, and other ballot measures. The Voter Guide is delivered to every household in the County before each primary and general election, and we know that they are valued because, when we serve as poll workers, we see them marked up, rolled up, and carried for reference by voters.

The consistent excellence of the Voter Guide is due to the careful work of many League volunteers: longtime Voter Services Chair Lynn Jones and her team, which includes our new Voter Services Chair, Cynthia Biddlecomb, as well as Marianne Wilkerson and Susannah Rousculp. Also responsible for the Voter Guide are Jean Dewart, longtime Voter Guide Questions leader and her team, who participate in crafting and reviewing the final questions along with many Board members.

You can expect to receive the 2026 Primary Election Voter Guide on April 30. It will reflect a new sponsor, following our recent win in the 100 Men Who Care event, which garnered nearly \$4,000 in donations. Time capsules are often a way to communicate something about the present with those who will open it in the future. What does the inclusion of three Voter Guides convey? Ideally, future Los Alamosans will understand that the League persisted through challenging times to defend and advance democracy, and to share timely and truthful information. They will also understand that the community valued this work and supported it with their time and resources

*Felicia Orth*

## **Welcome, New Members!**

We are happy to welcome several new members. Anastasia Letaw and Richard Honsinger wrote for recent *Updates*, but here is a list of our most recent new members followed by three more with introductions.

### **New Members:**

Tyler Taylor  
Amy Chen  
Richard Honsinger

Anastasia Letaw  
Jennifer Young  
William Mead

Margaret Robey  
Richelle Fry

**Angie Bratton** writes: I grew up in the Midwest, mostly Illinois, where I was taught to stay informed and participate in every election. My relatives proudly archived a newspaper article reporting on my ancestor's meeting with Abraham Lincoln when they crossed paths in Indiana.

I have a B.S. from Iowa State and completed my M.D. and residency in ophthalmology at the University of Iowa. After moving to New Mexico to begin practice in Santa Fe and Española in 1993, I was hired to continue Dr. Dahlstrom's practice in Los Alamos in 1994.

I moved to Los Alamos 14 years ago and have enjoyed attending a few Lunch with a Leader events and Candidate Forums over the years. I love the League's Voter Guide, and mark it up prior to each election. I have been active in advocacy and leadership with the New Mexico Medical Society and serve on the steering committee for our local 100 Women Who Care. My other interests include reading, hiking and travel.

**Rebecca Clark** writes: I grew up in Berkeley, CA and earned my BS in Chemical Engineering from UC Berkeley. I worked for Pacific Gas & Electric Co for 10 years doing environmental compliance work in geothermal and gas-fired power plants prior to moving to Los Alamos in 1992. My husband began his career at LANL, and I spent the next 13 years as a stay-at-home mom, volunteering in our daughters' classrooms, PTO, Girl Scouts, sports teams, Marching Band, etc. What a great place Los Alamos is to raise kids!

With our first daughter off to college, and the younger two in 12<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, I started a 10-year career at LANL, working in environmental compliance. I also started volunteering with the Jemez Mountain Trail Runs. After retiring from LANL, I started volunteering with LA Cares and Los Alamos Senior Center. My three daughters, spouses, and five grandkids all live in Los Alamos. In addition to volunteering, I enjoy hiking, camping, and spending time with family.

**Morrie Pongratz** writes: I recently joined the Los Alamos LWV although my wife Cheryl has been a member for years. We have two surviving children, Karin and Dan. I received a bachelor's degree from Creighton University with a triple major in math, physics, and philosophy. I came to Los Alamos 1973 to work at EG&G after finishing a post-doc at the University of Maryland. I went to LASL in 1975. I retired from the University of California in 2006. I ended my professional career in 2018.

Most of my scientific career involved rockets and satellites, especially active experiments in space. I was the Project Scientist for the SDI-sponsored B.E.A.R. experiment in 1989. After that I worked on instrumentation on GPS satellites.

Beginning in 1982 I served seven terms on the Los Alamos County Council. I served one term on the Los Alamos school board. During that term I helped found two nonprofits, the Los Alamos Public Schools Foundation and JJAB. I have been a member of the Kiwanis Club of Los Alamos since 1983. It provides me with a vehicle to champion our young people as I am the Kiwanis Advisor to the LAHS Key Club. I am also a founding member of the Los Alamos Faith and Science Forum. I am a co-president of the Los Alamos Retiree Group.

## **DOE proposes to reduce its payment for LAC's BPU-provided energy by almost 70%.**

Perhaps the most important report from the County came at an exhausted four-and-a-half hours into the meeting when County Utility Manager Milo Shelton discussed the new LANS/BPU DOE agreement for our electric coordination with the Lab. Since its inception, the County has provided utilities to the Lab that pays for the energy required for its tremendous energy-intensive operations. This year, however, DOE, with fixed-price utility agreements with other sites, wants a \$63M fixed-price agreement with LAC. The real contract value is \$425M. LAC is trying to work with the DOE contract consultant to work out terms and conditions. This reduction in payment is happening at the same time LANS is increasing energy-intensive pit production and building its energy devouring Data Center. The County is currently negotiating for investments in clean energy such as Foxtail Flats, and possibly for a small modular reactor or geothermal plant, some with the Western Area Power Administration. These are large investments. Shelton pointed out that BPU has done large-investment projects with LANL before (the hydro-electric plant.) We don't want to make these investments just to be cancelled later. We were protected in the old formal agreement and are looking to continue those forms of agreement as we go forward."

*Jody Benson*

## **League of Women Voters Candidate Forum on April 30**

The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos will host a candidate forum on Thursday, April 30 in the Student Center at UNM-LA. The forum begins at 7 p.m., but all are invited to enjoy refreshments and socialize with the candidates at 6:30.

We have invited the candidates who face opposition in the primary election. They are, for County Council: David Hampton, Joseph Granville, Theresa Cull, Steven Lynne, Melanee Hand, Eric Stromberg, Jason Chappel. Also invited are the candidates for County Sheriff: Antonio Maggiore and David Izraelevitz.

The LWVLA Voter Guide will be inserted in the *LA Daily Post* on the same day. The guide will also be available on the LWVLA website. You may also find voter information by entering your address on Vote411.

*Barbara Calef*

## **Understanding Homelessness**

### Understanding Homelessness

Join us for a compelling look at the complex causes, effects, and vicious cycles of this major national problem with knowledgeable and compassionate speakers.

**THURSDAY, APRIL 16<sup>TH</sup> | 6:30 - 8:00 PM**  
at SALA in Los Alamos

**TUESDAY, APRIL 28<sup>TH</sup> | 6:30 - 8:00 PM**  
at White Rock Methodist Church

*These events are FREE and include refreshments at intermission.*



Sponsored by the Interfaith Coalition on Homelessness  
Scan or visit [www.icohnm.org](http://www.icohnm.org) for more information.

Pictured above is an encampment in Española, New Mexico.

# **Observer Corps Report — County Council – March 3**

*LANL Activities; Final LANL Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement (SWEIS); 2026 Federal Priorities*

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

## **Update on LANL Activities**

Ted Wyka, Manager of NNSA's Los Alamos Field Office, updated the Council on operations at LANL. Topics included the Lab's mission, Rendija Canyon land transfer, and the electrical power capacity upgrade project.

### *Update on LANL Operations*

**Budget and Mission:** Wyka said that the Lab is operating under full budget authority after its annual appropriations bill was passed by Congress. He expects it to receive roughly \$5.3B in federal appropriations, with a significant portion going to support expanding nuclear weapons activities. The Lab will also continue maintaining its research and development capabilities, focusing on such issues as artificial intelligence, small modular reactors, the nuclear fuel cycle, and geothermal power generation.

**Hiring:** LANL expects to hire between 1,000 and 1,400 new employees. Wyka took care to clarify that about 900 of these employees would be replacements for attrition losses, with 100–500 additional staff. "Our workforce isn't going to increase all that much," he said. "We're mainly making up for attrition."

### *Rendija Canyon Land Transfer*

Wyka reported that the NNSA Los Alamos Office is finalizing a contract with the US Army Corps of Engineers to conduct two studies in Rendija Canyon. The first is a study that will focus on the feasibility of housing in the canyon. The second is a more comprehensive

unexploded ordnance scan, arising from earlier negotiations between NNSA and Los Alamos County. An initial scan had been done to a depth of three inches, and the new one will extend to more than four feet.

Wyka noted that, "The project experienced a significant delay due to the deferred resignation program in which more than 300,000 to 317,000 federal employees resigned or retired. Consequently, the Southwest Division of the US Corps of Engineers was unable to support the work, and it was reassigned to the Omaha Division."

### *Electrical Power Capacity Upgrade (EPCU) project*

Wyka reported that NNSA and Lab staff are actively negotiating and finalizing permits with the Bureau of Land Management, as well as with Santa Fe National Forest Service, for work to commence on the Caja del Rio Plateau, perhaps as early as this fall.

### *Council Discussion*

Councilor Ryti asked Wyka to expand on the scope of the Rendija Canyon studies since he wasn't aware that the scope included looking at its suitability for housing. Wyka said that the expanded scope was based on the input from county staff, looking at selected areas that might have uses other than light recreation if the land were cleaned down a little deeper. "Probably not housing," he said, "but maybe mobile homes or things like that, or trailers."

## **LANL Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement (SWEIS)**

Stephanie Stringer, Associate Deputy Field Office Manager for Mission, Security, and Landlord Stewardship, briefed the Council on the LANL SWEIS.

The NNSA-Los Alamos Field Office worked with DOE-EM-LA to prepare a new SWEIS that evaluates operations through 2038. The last SWEIS was published in 2008. The new SWEIS has now been finalized and awaits

signature by the NNSA administrator, Brandon Williams.

The SWEIS analyzes potential environmental impacts of future planned operations at LANL over the next 15 years (to 2038), and identifies best management practices and mitigation measures to eliminate or limit those impacts. Resource areas in the analysis included—but were not limited to—air, land and water resources, ecological resources, human health and safety, cultural and paleontological resources, socioeconomics, transportation and other infrastructure, waste management, and accidents and intentional destructive acts.

### *Alternatives Evaluated in the SWEIS*

Stringer summarized the three different alternatives evaluated for environmental impacts: No Action, Modernized Operations, and Expanded Operations.

The No Action alternative includes ongoing operations plus previously approved projects (with separate completed NEPA documents). The projects include:

- Infrastructure upgrades, including the Electric Power Capacity Upgrade as well as roads, parking, and institutional laydown areas;
- Operational changes to implement the pit production mission;
- Decontamination, decommissioning, and demolition of 186 excess facilities; and
- Continued remediation in compliance with the 2016 Compliance Order on Consent.

The Modernized Operations alternative includes all No Action projects plus new projects for which NEPA analyses are provided in this SWEIS. New projects in this alternative include:

- New facility construction projects to replace facilities approaching their end of life, upgrade facilities to extend their lifetimes, and improve work

environments to enable NNSA to meet operational requirements;

- Infrastructure upgrades including Solar Photovoltaic Arrays (up to 795 acres and 158 MW), LANSCE Accelerator Modernization Project, Sanitary Wastewater System Replacement, DARHT Capability Expansion, Los Alamos Canyon Bridge Replacement, and TA-72 Remote Parking Area (~25 acres);
- Decontamination, decommissioning, and demolition of 156 additional excess facilities.

The Expanded Operations alternative includes all No Action and Modernized projects, plus additional new facilities and infrastructure improvements (NEPA analyses are provided in this SWEIS). New projects in this third alternative include:

- New facility construction projects to expand operations and missions;
- Infrastructure upgrades include pumped hydropower and LANSCE cooling tower;
- Operational changes include feral cattle management and additional wildland fire risk reduction treatments.

Stringer said “Our preferred alternative is the Expanded Operations Alternative, which is the one we recommended for approval.”

Stringer noted that not all of the new projects listed for the Modernized or Expanded Operations alternatives are approved, nor would they all be implemented. She said that the SWEIS analyses were comprehensive in order to ensure that projects would be ready to proceed if the decision was made to move forward on any of them. “A lot of it just depends on getting funding for them and evaluating the need as we go,” she said.

### *Changes from the Draft to the Final SWEIS*

Stringer noted that the Final SWEIS has several notable changes from the Draft SWEIS released on January 10, 2025. Changes that occurred in the past year include the following:

- Rescission of Executive Orders related to environmental justice and climate change impacts from greenhouse gas emissions.
- Rescission of the Council on Environmental Quality NEPA regulations, and their replacement by new DOE NEPA implementing procedures (June 30, 2025).
- Updates to analytical parameters for total workforce, estimated worker dose in PF-4, and projected waste generation during PF-4 refurbishment and pit production.
- Removal of the Surplus Plutonium Disposition Program from the Expanded Operations alternative (per Executive Order 14302) and its replacement with limited enhancement of the ARIES Program (Advanced Recovery and Integrated Extraction System) for plutonium disposition.

### *Council Discussion*

Councilor Hand asked what the next steps were once the SWEIS is approved. Wyka answered that the Record of Decisions (RODs) will be issued soon after approval of the final SWEIS for projects that NNSA intends to implement in the near term.

Councilor Havemann expressed concern about the apparently lower priority of wildfire mitigation given in all but the Expanded Operations alternative. Ted Wyka reassured her that fire mitigation remains a high priority, regardless of which SWEIS alternative is selected. He reiterated the importance of proactive wildfire mitigation efforts and the ongoing work being done by LANL to minimize fire risks.

Councilor Havemann commented that, "I'm really disappointed about the rescission of the executive orders regarding environmental justice and climate change, and LANL caring about the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions." Wyka replied that environmental justice impacts and cultural impacts were included in appendices covered and under different titles.

Councilor Neal-Clinton asked what key operational impacts were identified in the SWEIS. Wyka said that the mission increase would have on-site impacts, but that he didn't think Los Alamos County or the community would be significantly impacted other than traffic, which he said will probably remain the same as it is now. He summarized the programs that were already in place to try to reduce traffic impacts by reducing the number of people driving to Los Alamos.

### **2026 Federal Priorities**

Council unanimously approved the County's federal priorities for 2026 (FY2027), as amended during Council discussion. This document is used as a guide for the County's intergovernmental efforts at the federal level.

Danielle Duran, Intergovernmental Affairs Manager, provided an overview of the County's federal priorities for 2026. The list expresses the County's support for federal appropriations and legislative actions related to the following:

- LANL missions;
- NNSA clean-up of the hexavalent chromium plume;
- replacement for water well PM3;
- ongoing mutual agreements, e.g., the Electric Coordination Agreement;
- additional land conveyance;
- cleanup of TA-21/MDA-T and Rendija Canyon to levels compatible with transfer to Los Alamos County;
- the program to assist host and neighboring DOE communities with infrastructure to fulfill the missions;
- legislation to address wildfire mitigation, wildland firefighting, post-fire assistance, and wildfire insurance initiatives;
- funding of new nuclear research, including SMRs (Small Modular Reactors) and fusion technology;
- funding of County projects that serve the County and Northern New Mexico, such as the Community Health Action Center;

- support for efforts by NACo (National Association of Counties) and NLC (National League of Cities) to maintain county and city authorities and oppose any efforts at preemption or reduction in local government authorities. Voting and zoning were highlighted as possible areas for federal preemption.

### *Reform of Federal Permitting*

After discussion, Council amended the list of federal priorities to include support for the positions of the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National League of Cities (NLC) regarding federal permitting reform.

The NACo website provides background information about federal permitting reform. Federal laws requiring permits are intended to protect environmental, cultural, and public resources. However, the current permitting process often involves multiple agencies, overlapping reviews, and unclear timelines, which can delay projects and increase costs. Permitting reform has become a top congressional priority, particularly for energy and infrastructure projects. Several related bills are currently under consideration.

The NACo and NLC positions support reforms that respect local siting authority, ensure local governments are involved throughout the permitting process, reduce unnecessary delays, and maintain strong environmental protections.

*Craig Martin and June Fabryka-Martin*

## **Observer Corps Report - County Council - March 17**

*Draft Electric Coordination Agreement; Parks and Recreation Board Report; Inclusivity Task Force; EV Charging and Fleet Conversion Plans*

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

### **Draft Electric Coordination Agreement with LANL for 2026 – 2036**

Perhaps the most important report came four-and-a-half hours into the meeting when County Utility Manager Philo Shelton discussed the new LANS/LAC DOE agreement for our electric coordination with the Lab.

Since its inception, the County has provided utilities to the Lab. However, this year DOE, which has fixed-price utility agreements with other sites, wants a \$63m fixed-price agreement with the County. The real contract value is \$425m. The Utilities Department is trying to work with the DOE contract consultant to work out terms and conditions. This approximately 70% reduction in payment is happening at the same time LANL is increasing energy-intensive pit production and building an energy-devouring Data Center.

The County is currently negotiating for investments in clean energy such as Foxtail Flats, and possibly for a small modular reactor or geothermal plant. These are large investments. Shelton pointed out that BPU has done large-investment projects with LANL before, e.g., the hydro-electric plant. “We don’t want to make these investments just to be cancelled later. We were protected in the old formal agreement and are looking to continue those forms of agreement as we go forward.,” he said.

## Parks and Recreation Board Report

Jerry Cowan, Vice Chair of the Parks and Recreation Board (PRB), briefed the Council on the efforts and accomplishments of the Parks and Recreation Board in 2025 and their goals for 2026. The PRB is a central point of communication for the parks and recreation interests of the County and is an advisory body to the County Council.

In 2025, the PRB supported the development of the Community Services Integrated Master Plan, park and facility enhancements, and public engagement on projects like the North Mesa Recreation Plan and Open Space & Trails Management Plan. Key accomplishments included recommendations for the Ice Rink Shade Structure and Guaje Pines Master Plans. Lessons learned emphasized the need for clear communication, timely public input, and inclusive engagement. In 2026, PRB will assist in implementing the Integrated Master Plan, ADA Transition Plan, and CIP projects. The board strives to promote equity, enhance community involvement, and recruit members for continued participation and outreach. No action was taken.

*At this point the Council suspended their procedural rules for the work session so that formal action could be taken.*

## Inclusivity Task Force (ITF) Final Presentation

Inclusivity Task Force Member Rachel Cazier made the final presentation of the Inclusivity Task Force, which was established by the Council in August 2024. The ITF has been active in exploring community inclusivity through various methods, including focus groups, surveys, and presentations. The Task Force has identified significant needs, such as education about Native American culture, improved access to affordable housing, and better coordination of social services.

### Key Findings:

- **Near-term Solutions:** Enhance County communications, improve accessibility

in public spaces, and establish emergency solutions for unhoused individuals.

- **Long-term Solutions:** Develop a standing board for ongoing inclusivity efforts, create a Native American Cultural Center, and improve service coordination.

### Lessons Learned:

- The broad scope of inclusivity challenges requires dedicated staff support for effective change.
- Balancing urgent community needs with long-term solutions is essential.

Overall, the Task Force emphasized the need for continued collaboration and community engagement to address inclusivity issues in Los Alamos.

The Council recognized the extent of the work done by the Inclusivity Task Force. Much of the discussion following the report was about whether the current ITF should become a County board. Councilor Havemann stated that if there isn't a body to keep reminding us of the issues, work might not continue. However, the list of needs could be addressed by other boards so long as staff, other board members, and Council agree that these are important enough to fund. Councilor Havemann asked, "Do we proceed with a new board or drive some of these core values and objectives in other ways?"

Councilor Cull suggested that the ITF would better serve in a liaising role rather than as a Board, with a way to measure success and status of inclusivity in the community. The Council agreed that the work done by ITF should inform all other Boards and services.

When the discussion turned to the need to budget for a new board, Councilor Havemann stated that the County has other boards without budgets. She pointed out that having an ITF board will keep us aware of these issues. "When implementing any activity, customer service is a guiding principle for every department and employee of the County.

This board informs future Councils and management to keep this on the radar.”

Councilor Cull moved to accept the ITF Final Report and to ask staff to draft an ordinance and a cost estimate for an ongoing board or commission to address inclusivity issues. Councilor Neal-Clinton seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

## Summary of the Community-Wide EV Charging and Fleet Conversion Plans

Sustainability Manager Angelica Gurule presented the Community-Wide EV Charging Plan with Stantec consultants Josh Schact and Analy Castillo. This Plan aims to enhance equity in the placement of charging stations, focusing on the needs of residents rather than just housing types. Key considerations include:

- **Target Areas:** Charging stations will be strategically placed in commercial spaces, multifamily dwellings, high-traffic areas like Smith’s, urban parks, and shopping centers.
- **Community Input:** Strong community requests have influenced the selection of charging locations, emphasizing the need for accessibility in areas with multifamily housing.
- **Phase 1 Implementation:** The initial phase includes six charging stations in Los Alamos and two in White Rock, with a focus on density and locations for likely charging. This phase is designed to ensure equitable access across different community segments.

## Fleet Conversion Plan

The Fleet Conversion Plan aims for carbon neutrality by 2050, establishing a roadmap for transitioning the county’s fleet to electric vehicles (EVs).

- **Goals:** The plan targets a maximum of 31% EVs by 2050, with a more ambitious target of 86% under the Climate Action Plan (CAP).

- **Financial Implications:** Initial costs for EVs and infrastructure are higher, but long-term savings are expected through reduced dependence on gas, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and lower maintenance costs. However, the plan acknowledges potential challenges in achieving the desired targets due to fluctuating vehicle costs and market conditions.
- **Community Engagement:** Ongoing community input is essential for executing the plan, which is intended to be a living document reviewed every five years.

Overall, both the EV Charging and the Fleet Conversion Plan prioritize equity and environmental sustainability, addressing the immediate needs of the community while preparing for future developments in EV technology and infrastructure. Continued monitoring and adjustment will be critical to ensure successful implementation.

No action was taken.

*Jody Benson*

## Observer Corps Report – Planning and Zoning Commission – March 25

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

Commissioners present: Karen Easton (Chair), Rachel Adler, Marlon Brown, Katherine Bruell, Robert Chrien, David Hampton, Stephanie Nakhleh, Rebecca White, and Ronald Nelson.

## Coyote Mesa Neighborhood Site Plan

The Planning and Zoning Commission received an updated presentation on parcel A-8-A. Norris Design, on behalf of property owner Servitas, requested approval of a site plan adoption for a development on the 21.9 acre property at 125 DP Road. The plan is to build residential dwelling units of which 120 will be affordable. The plan calls for:

- a four-story multi-family building with 237 units and an internal parking structure;
- ten garden flat buildings two to three stories tall containing 131 units;

- three two-story townhouse buildings containing 12 units;
- a 6,200 square foot amenity building.

The plan also includes internal roads, sidewalks, landscaping, a fenced dog park, and an extension of the Canyon Rim Trail.

Approval of the plan by the P&Z Commission was unanimous. They were told that the developer might break ground in October.

*Barbara Calef*

## March Lunch with a Leader: Representative Christine Chandler



*Rep. Christine Chandler, Barbara Calef, Morris Pongratz. Photo by Maire O'Neill.*

counties have a population of 100,000 or more and an assessed valuation of \$75 million or more. There are five Class A counties in New Mexico: Bernalillo, Doña Ana, Sandoval, San Juan, and Santa Fe. Besides the Class A counties and Los Alamos, the other counties in the state are all Class B.)

Los Alamos County adopted a home rule charter in 1968. Chandler explained that home rule allows greater latitude to exercise all legitimate powers. However, state law can pre-empt local ordinances. For instance, the County cannot regulate abortion health care or firearms. She pointed out that the New Mexico Association of Counties often opposes pre-emption laws on the ground that local government has a better understanding of the needs of the community.

There are three major constraints on the powers of the Council. The Anti-Donation Clause decrees that a county may not “directly or indirectly ... make a donation to or aid any person,

The LWVLA Board asked Rep. Chandler, a former member of the County Council and a long-time member of the League, to give a presentation about Council authority prior to the primary election, when voters will be asked to elect four candidates to the Council.

Chandler began her talk by noting that the authority of our local government is constrained by the state and federal constitutions, state law, and the County charter and ordinances. Los Alamos is the state's only Class H County, meaning that it is less than 200 square miles in size. This classification allows the County to operate as an incorporated city-county government, avoiding duplication of offices. (Class A

association, or public or private corporations...” except for those exceptions specified in the New Mexico Constitution. Examples of the exceptions are affordable housing and assistance for the sick and indigent. For example, the County financed the construction of the Pajarito Environmental Education Center and therefore retains ownership of it. The center is run by a private company (PEEC) by contract. There is also a lot of collaboration between the County and Los Alamos Public Schools, but the Council cannot give money directly to the schools. They have been able to pay for “shared recreation spaces” in the recently reconstructed Piñon and Chamisa Elementary Schools.

The second constraint is the Due Process Clause. Land-owners have a property interest in the use of their land. They must be given notice and a fair hearing process (known as quasi-judicial) before significant land use decisions are made. This applies to both the owner of the land at issue and those nearby who may be affected.

The third constraint is the Takings Clause. When regulations are so restrictive as to eliminate or nearly eliminate a property’s value, they are considered a “taking,” requiring compensation. Due to that clause, the Lab cannot be banned from renting offices downtown, because that would devalue the commercial property.

Chandler pointed out that attorneys can take different approaches in interpreting the law. It’s easy for the County attorneys to say no to the Council. Council should push them to tell “how it can be done,” in order to reach a desired outcome.

Finally, she noted that there is sometimes tension between the Council and the County Manager. The role of the County Manager is to oversee operations. Council cannot direct or discipline staff. The Council Code of Conduct, which is part of the Los Alamos County Council Procedural Rules, should address what the Council does and what the manager does. Chandler suggested that Councilors should be more proactive in order to influence operations.



*Hedy Dunn, Joyce Nichols, Rep. Christine Chandler, Laurel Minter, Wendy Swanson, Karyl Ann Armbruster. Photo by Jody Benson.*

The County Charter established the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) as an independent entity managed by the DPU Board. The Council has no power over the DPU.

In response to applause for her sponsorship of HB99, Medical Malpractice Changes, Chandler noted that she also sponsored HB66, which creates a loan repayment program for health care professionals living in New Mexico or relocating to the state. She said she looks forward to the expansion of the UNM Medical School and to creating additional incentives for doctors to practice here.

*Barbara Calef*

## ***An Insider's View of the Library Board***

The Los Alamos Library was started in 1943 by 70 couples who donated \$5 each to buy books. It was located in a small room in the Big House (Boys Ranch School). Today the library is a public institution primarily funded by the County. The Library Board consists of five members; length of term is 24 months; with a two-term limit. We meet 10 times a year with two meetings held at the White Rock Library. I'm completing my first term. There is one current opening on the Library Board.

The Los Alamos County Library Board gathers and provides public input on the development of library services objectives and the library's long-range plan; promotes library services and initiatives; and receives library staff updates on a range of topics. Some topics the Board has advised on include the development of the new website, the proposed outdoor classroom, a building sound study, and the installation of EV charging stations. Outreach events have included the Farmers' Market, Chamberfest, Atomicon, and Seed Library. To learn about the library's wealth of resources and programs for all ages, sign up for the Off the Shelf monthly newsletter at <https://www.losalamoslibrary.org/SERVICES-SPACES/About-the-Library/Newsletters>. Updates can also be found on the library website (<https://www.losalamoslibrary.org>), Facebook and Instagram pages.

I am also the Library Board's liaison to FLACL (Friends of Los Alamos County Library). The FLACL's used bookstore, located just inside the entrance of Mesa Public Library, is celebrating its 50th year. FLACL uses the funds from customer purchases and donations to provide an annual block grant to the library, LAHS senior scholarships, and smaller projects. FLACL has a vacancy on their board. <https://www.friends-los-amos-county-libraries.org/>

National Library Week is April 19th - 25th. Say thank you to your favorite librarian!

*Michele Altherr*



*LWVLA Board: Jody Benson, Lynn Jones, Karyl Ann Armbruster, Felicia Orth, Akkana Peck, Barbara Calef, Leslie Wallstrom, Addie Jacobson, Wendy Swanson, Lisa Hampton, Bob Williams. Photo by Evan Rose.*



**LWV** LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF LOS ALAMOS

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

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

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

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

Phone 1: \_\_\_\_\_ (cellular phone) Phone 2: \_\_\_\_\_ (other phone)

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

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

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

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

Check here to receive occasional Friendly Reminders of upcoming events by e-mail.

**Ways to help the League if you wish to be an active member** (check as many as apply)

Advocate for League positions: communicate with local, state, and federal leaders.

Serve on the LWV-Los Alamos Board

Observer Corps: Watch Council, DPU, P&Z meetings etc. and write a summary to publish in our newsletter. (All meetings are recorded, so you can watch them later.)

Fundraising – Assist in raising money for LWVLA.

Voter Guide – Assist in developing the Guide – edit, develop questions, work with news publications, etc

Lunch with a Leader – order/deliver lunches when we meet in person; help set up tables.

Newsletter – Write newsletter articles on a local issue or League activity for the *Update*.

Organize/provide refreshments for forums and other in-person meetings.

Publicity – Submit press releases to local media.

Voter registration – Register voters at events such as the Farmers Market (with training by the County Clerk's office).

Website / Social Media – Provide technical assistance and develop content.

Another area (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

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

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*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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