



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>
Volume 79, Number 5, September 2026

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Calendar

September 9	Deadline for draft Comprehensive Plan comments
September 15	National Voter Registration Day
September 16	McCurdy Ministries Tour, leave from Bethlehem Lutheran Church, noon
September 17	Lunch with a Leader, Erik Litzenberg, Unitarian Church, 11:45 a.m.
September 24	Board Meeting, Unitarian Church, noon
October 1	Candidate Forum, 7 p.m. (6:30 p.m. for refreshments), UNM-LA
October 6	Early Voting Begins

Lunch with a Leader: Fire Chief Erik Litzenberg

Erik Litzenberg, the Los Alamos County Fire Chief, will be the speaker for Lunch with a Leader on September 17. Litzenberg is a Wildland Fire Advisor for the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), serving as Chair of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group Executive Board. He also owns Liderazgo Consulting, which focuses on government, leadership, and team building.

Litzenberg has spent the majority of his career working for the City of Santa Fe, where he served as Fire Chief and then City Manager before returning to the Santa Fe County Fire Department where his career began. Through 25 years of service, he has also worked for New Mexico State Forestry and as part of multiple Incident Management Teams.

For many years Litzenberg owned Santa Fe Wildfire, which provided resources for large scale incident management and response. He holds a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of New Mexico (UNM), an MS in security studies from the Naval Postgraduate School, and a PhD in sports administration from UNM. His research focused on organizational culture and leadership, as well as physiology and performance. He lives in Santa Fe with his wife and kids and enjoys participating in triathlons as a route to maintain physical and emotional health.



*Fire Chief Erik Litzenberg.
Courtesy losalamos.gov*

Karyl Ann Armbruster

President's Message: Concern Heightens for Voting Rights

The temperatures are finally dropping, school has started, and the chamisa is turning yellow – all this means fall is here, which brings us to election season. Your League geared up for the season with a successful “Day of Action” on August 8th, when six volunteers marched in the Rodeo Parade and several others staffed a table by Ashley Pond to encourage civic participation and voter registration.

The Voter Guide committee is working hard now to assemble the information in time for the election. The Voter Guide will be ready on October 1st; the same day the League will hold its Candidate Forum. Please mark your calendar and attend this event, starting with refreshments at 6:30 p.m. at UNM-LA.



Preparing to march in the Rodeo Parade: Barbara Calef, Jody Benson, Jennifer Holmes. Photographer unknown.

Voting is a critical issue since the Federal administration is seeking to regulate mail-in ballots using the US Postal Service as a “gate keeper” of voter rolls. As of this writing, the courts have halted the restrictions on mail-in voting. This situation continues to evolve but rest assured, the national League is joining in lawsuits to fight against Federal interference like this. As one website said, “*We the People* deserve elections that are: Free, Fair, Secure, Accessible, Consistent, and Lawful.”

Want to be more involved in ensuring every citizen has a voice in this year’s election? September 15, 2026, is National Voter Registration Day and your League will visit Los Alamos High School to register those students old enough to vote. We will also table at the Farmers’ Market this month. Please contact Leslie Wallstrom at [president\(at\)lwvla.org](mailto:president(at)lwvla.org) if you can help with these efforts. Join with us to spread the word that voting in November is more important than ever!



Marching in the Rodeo Parade: Jody Benson, Wendy Swanson, Jennifer Holmes, Ellen Mills. Photo by Maire O'Neill.

Leslie Wallstrom

Read the Draft Comprehensive Plan

The first draft of the 2026 Comprehensive Plan was posted on August 19 at <https://czb.app.box.com/s/00hw4yzxbq3dhvjebrn15w4hxls1bt1f>. Comments will be accepted until September 9. Much of the Plan is in agreement with the League positions on Affordable Housing, Land Use and Transportation, and Environment. It supports infill development and revitalization of the Los Alamos and White Rock Town Centers and calls for the preservation of our neighborhoods and beautiful natural environment.

However, for more than two years the League has been asking the County to consider re-zoning the strip of land across from the airport, on the south side of Route 502, as POS-AO (Open Space-Active). It is currently zoned Industrial. The Canyon Rim Trail is on that parcel. The Future Land Use Map on page 41 of the draft Plan has labelled it “Mixed-Use.” That is the designation for multi-story commercial/residential construction. Should that strip of land be developed?

Furthermore, the Plan recommends that the community consider assigning several parcels of County-owned Open Space to a new zoning category, “Conservation Residential,” that would allow residential development. The Future Land Use Map on page 43 of the Plan identifies five parcels.

Parcels in the Los Alamos townsite include:

- the border of the Golf Course where it overlooks Walnut Canyon,
- the wooded Golf Course parcel southwest of the San Ildefonso roundabout,
- along Oliver Street (now degraded) in the canyon between the Denver Steels and Orange Street, including the site of the old wastewater treatment plant.

In White Rock, the Plan identifies

- Grand Canyon Park between Grand Canyon Drive and Pajarito Canyon, and
- the former Cinderella Park next to Chamisa Elementary School.

The authors of the Plan do not seem to appreciate the value we place on our Open Space. “The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos believes that our natural environment is integral to our community's unique sense of place and to our well-being and prosperity.”

Barbara Calef and June Fabryka-Martin

Tour McCurdy Ministries

Join fellow League members in a tour of the McCurdy Ministries site in the Española Valley! On September 16th at 12:00 noon we will depart from the Bethlehem Lutheran Church parking lot and travel to see this crucial nonprofit. We will return between 4 and 5 p.m. McCurdy Ministries has served the Española population for over 100 years. Their current emphasis is assisting children with reading, providing a food pantry and clothing closet, supplying diapers, running a Pre-K for 20 young children, and offering therapy services for students and families, as well as afterschool tutoring. The high school on their campus is now a public N.M. Charter School with over 500 students. McCurdy also partners with other nonprofits and offers space for some in the village of Casitas, including the Northern New Mexico United Way. Please contact Leslie Wallstrom at [president\(at\)lwvla.org](mailto:president(at)lwvla.org) if you are interested in joining this tour. Leslie will be driving a minivan, so carpooling may not be necessary.

Leslie Wallstrom

League of Women Voters Candidate Forum on October 1

The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos will host a candidate forum on Thursday, October 1 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 for the County Council and County Assessor. The Council candidates are Chris Luchini, David Hampton, Theresa Cull, Steven Lynne, Melanee Hand, Eric Stromberg, and Jason Chappel. The Assessor candidates are James Wernicke and Jeff Casalina. Also invited are the unopposed candidates: Christine Chandler for NM House District 43, Catherine Taylor for Magistrate Judge, Antonio Maggiore for County Sheriff, Perry Klare for Probate Judge, and Elizabeth Allen for Municipal Judge.

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

Observer Corps Report — County Council – August 4

Quarterly Climate Action Plan Implementation Update, Bond for Workforce Housing, Plastic Bag Ban

This session was attended by Chair Randall Rytty, Vice Chair Ryn Herrmann, and Councilors Theresa Cull, David Reagor, Suzie Havemann, Beverly Neal-Clinton. Councilor Melanee Hand was absent.

Quarterly Climate Action Plan Implementation Update

Angelica Gurule, LAC Sustainability Manager, presented the update on the Climate Action Plan (CAP). She reviewed Council's goal to

- Achieve carbon neutrality by 2050
- Become a carbon-neutral electric provider by 2040
- Phase out natural gas for County operations by 2050 and for the community by 2070.

Gurule summarized the progress achieved so far, which includes 13 climate actions. Completed actions include completing the Fleet Conversion Plan and the Community-Wide EV Charging Plan. The County has transitioned to five EVs and one hybrid vehicle in FY 2026 and plans transition to four more in FY 2027.

Ongoing actions include expanding community partnerships and encouraging community energy efficiency and electrification retrofits through education. They have also conducted recycling and composting outreach and education programs such as the collaboration with PEEC on a rain barrel workshop using old trash roll carts.

Construction is underway at Foxtail Flats, which has an estimated completion date of June 2027. When completed, the solar array and battery should have the capacity to supply over half of the electrical needs of Los Alamos

County, LANL, Sandia Laboratory, and Kirtland Airforce Base with clean, low-cost energy.

Fast chargers for electric vehicles are being installed at Mesa Public Library. Gurule announced that the chargers in use at the Municipal Building since December are operating at a loss, but she hopes that will change as usage increases. Also, the County is evaluating commercial battery-powered lawn equipment (blowers, weed eaters, mowers, chainsaws, and trimmers) that initially cost \$300-\$500. The savings on annual operating and maintenance should result in a payback period of less than two years. However, the batteries do not last long enough for day-long use.

Gurule also said that the County is working on other plans, including establishing a food composting service and offering residential energy audits.

Green Building Standards

Community Development Director Eli Isaacson presented the update on the implementation of the part of the CAP concerned with buildings. The CAP proposes that the County adopt a green building performance standard, referred to as a "Reach Code," for new residential and commercial construction in order to reduce fossil fuel use and improve energy performance in new buildings. Isaacson argued that a Reach Code would

- increase hard construction costs, resulting in increased home prices and rents;
- disproportionately burden smaller projects that couldn't absorb added costs for only marginal gains in efficiency;
- confuse contractors;
- be inconsistently enforced; and
- only apply to new construction while existing buildings, which are the largest source of building energy consumption, are unaffected.

He said that the performance gains above the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC), which Council has adopted, are minimal and diminish as the IECC is updated every few years. Instead of adopting a new code, he recommends educating the community, contractors, and applicants with a plain-language guide because “compliance is driven by understanding rather than just plan check.” He recommends incentives rather than mandates that would add additional costs and complexity.

Isaacson also supports promoting green stormwater infrastructure and low-impact development, expanding mixed-use, transit-oriented development policies, and a local food system.

Council Discussion of Updates

The Council discussion primarily emphasized the need to balance environmental objectives with costs, community concerns, practical implementation, and the long-term consequences of doing nothing.

Reagor questioned the feasibility and cost of long-term energy storage for solar energy from Foxtail Flats. He wondered about a blended-resource approach rather than relying exclusively on batteries and suggested geothermal energy. Philo Shelton, Department of Public Utilities Manager, recognized there is currently nothing readily available to provide all of the long-term battery storage that may be needed. He said that pilot geothermal wells have been drilled in Beaver, Utah, although the cost would depend on the technology selected. The larger point was that the County should consider a range of energy resources as it works toward long-term energy goals.

Neal-Clinton questioned when the EV program would become financially positive. Chris Luchini noted that he pays approximately 23 cents per hour for charging compared with about 11 cents at home. He suggested that the County should locate chargers where people already spend time so that charging becomes more convenient. Lower costs could also encourage greater use.

Havemann emphasized the importance of the long-term plan because the costs of doing nothing are borne by society as a whole. She stressed patience, behavioral change, and steady progress. She emphasized the importance of a long-term composting procurement, potentially anchored by a seven-year contract, while allowing the County to learn what works and what does not. She also pointed out that the trip-reduction program was currently at zero percent.

Ryti focused on the societal cost of failing to make energy-efficient investments. He suggested the County might help facilitate financing when improvements produce long-term savings, particularly when lifecycle benefits could justify the initial expense. County Manager Anne Laurent noted that energy-efficient upgrades may be available to income-qualified residents, but the larger challenge remains the cost of construction. The discussion also touched on the possibility of turning commuters into residents as another way of reducing emissions. The question of local authority to restrict natural gas hookups was raised as well, but County Attorney Alvin Leaphart expressed uncertainty about the legal limits of local government authority and the possibility that the issue could ultimately require resolution by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Public Hearing

The Council approved the issuance of \$230M worth of Workforce Housing Revenue Bonds for the construction of 380 workforce housing units in a higher-density residential neighborhood adjacent to downtown (Coyote Mesa, also known as the A-8-A parcel). The vote was unanimous 6-0 with Councilor Hand absent.

Vote on a Resolution to Ban the Single-Use Plastic Shopping Bag

The most extensive discussion during the meeting concerned a proposed plastic carry-out bag ban. David Hampton, speaking for the Environmental Sustainability Board (ESB), reported on the creation of the ordinance and the public meeting held by the ESB.

Comments received before the meeting revealed substantial opposition. The ESB felt that the potential benefit appeared too small to justify the division it was causing in the community. For that reason, they voted unanimously not to recommend the ban to the Council at this time.

Some on the board felt that the issue could become a distraction from completing the broader Climate Action Plan. Some felt a mandate was not appropriate. Others wanted to support a ban but felt that they had to represent the community, which was strongly opposed to the ban.

Opponents of the ban emphasized that plastic bags represent only a small portion of overall plastic pollution and raised concerns about household budgets and business costs. Ryti had believed the issue should be brought forward again to complete the discussion, suggesting that residents wanted to reduce plastic bag use but did not necessarily want a ban. Hampton said the ESB supported doing more to reduce the use of plastic in the County. Joyce Anderson noted that the Council had unanimously declined a bag ban in 2015 and that this was the third time the issue had been raised. She emphasized that there is no perfect bag solution and that every choice involves tradeoffs.

Sue Barns raised concerns about the life-cycle impacts of alternatives to single-use bags, arguing that shifting the community toward another type of bag could potentially create additional environmental harm. Lisa Shin focused on the cost of living, particularly for middle-class residents, people on fixed incomes, and local businesses. She argued that a ban could increase checkout costs and potentially encourage more online shopping, which could negatively affect the local economy.

Linda Daly commented that much has changed since the issue was first considered and that many communities are now moving toward bag bans. She pointed to the large number of bags used each year and argued that plastic bags are difficult and costly to recycle and can break down into smaller plastic particles. For Daly, reducing their use was a

relatively simple action that demonstrated the County's commitment to environmental sustainability.

Havemann ultimately moved, seconded by Herrmann, that the Council direct the County Manager to use the ordinance as amended, and introduce it on August 25th. The proposed amendments would replace the broader reference to "single-use" with plastic carry-out bags, allow store owners and managers to decide whether to charge a fee, establish penalties for violations, and change a compliance period from a day to a week to give businesses additional time. Reagor argued that a law was not necessary for every environmental issue and that education and persuasion could be more effective. Cull responded that consumers were effectively subsidizing other people's use of bags and noted that Smith's was going through approximately 40,000 bags per week. Cull also argued that education had made some impact but had not eliminated the use of bags.

Ryti raised questions about whether bioplastics would be permitted and expressed concern that the proposal could create ill will that would undermine other sustainability initiatives. Havemann clarified that the proposal concerned carry-out bags and would not prevent stores from providing plastic bags for vegetables or other purposes.

The motion failed 3 to 3 with Havemann, Cull, Herrmann voting for; Ryti, Neal-Clinton, Reagor opposed.

Taken together, the discussions during the August 4th meeting reflected a tension between the County's long-term environmental goals and the practical, financial, legal, and political challenges of achieving them. Participants generally recognized the need to reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency, manage waste, and address the broader societal costs of climate change. At the same time, there was considerable disagreement over whether the best path forward is regulation, incentives, education, voluntary action, or some combination of all four. The discussion demonstrated that the County's sustainability efforts will require not only ambitious goals but also careful consideration

of cost, implementation, community acceptance, and measurable results.

Jody Benson

Observer Corps Report — County Council – August 18

2026 Electric Coordination Agreement, Resolutions for Charter Amendments

This work session was attended by Chair Randall Ryti, Vice Chair Rynn Herrmann, and Councilors Theresa Cull, David Reagor, Suzie Havemann, Beverly Neal-Clinton, with Councilor Melanee Hand online.

2026 Electric Coordination Agreement

Ben Olbrich, Deputy Utilities Manager-Power Supply, presented the briefing to the Council. He began by stating that the County's electrical system is unusually complicated. The Department of Public Utilities (DPU) is not a typical electric utility. He said it "does not own all of the assets needed to get energy from the generators to the users." The County does have some contracts for resources and some county-owned assets, such as the Abiquiu Hydroelectric Facility, but does not own the transmission lines. Those are owned by PNM and other companies. DOE and NNSA own the final "leg" that carries the energy to LANL as well as to County residences and businesses. DOE owns the substations that provide the energy to the Los Alamos townsite. The County does own the White Rock substation, but the transmission lines and the backup power feeds are provided by DOE.

The DPU partners with DOE through the Electric Coordination Agreement (ECA) because they own a lot of the pieces Los Alamos County needs in order to access the electricity. The current ECA has been in effect since 1985. It has been modified as needed to address changes in resources as new generating resources become available. The most recent change was the Foxtail Flats contract for solar energy and battery energy storage. The DPU's overriding goal is to minimize the total operational cost of power generation while maintaining reliability.

Now, after over 40 years, the DOE's procurement rules have changed. In order to continue the arrangement, a 2026 ECA is necessary to replace the 1985 ECA. DOE, NNSA, and County staff have been working together on a new plan since 2022 to make the needed changes. Some aspects of the agreement will remain the same.

- The County provides the power generation, management, and scheduling staff.
- The DOE owns the transmission lines.
- The County provides all the billing and accounting functions to the ECA.
- The DOE and NNSA provide the bulk electric metering. They own all the meters that register into our system, and what comes out to Townsite and White Rock.

The 2026 ECA has new provisions for mitigating the County's risks of procuring long-term generation resources. In the past, cost was allocated based upon how much of the electricity was used by each party. Typically, about 80% is used by LANL, and the remaining 20% is used by the County. However, the County takes a risk when it signs up for long-term resources like Foxtail Flats. So, it is trying to mitigate some of that risk by changing the way cost is allocated to the DOE with a new mechanism, a cost premium to the DOE, to capture some of the risk. In addition, the County is going to be selling electricity to Sandia National Laboratory and Kirtland Air

Force Base. The amount will vary, depending on their actual power needs.

DOE's procurement rules have changed over time. Whereas the 1985 ECA was for 40 years, they can now only sign up for a maximum of 10 years, through 2036, with an option to extend that by ten years. Generally, when the County signs up for long-term resources, the term is at least 20 years, potentially longer. The new ECA provides a method for addressing the problem and mitigating the long-term risks. Olbrich pointed out that there is really no alternative to a new ECA "because of the inextricable linkage connection between the resources of the DOE and the County."

Resolutions for Charter Amendments

Term Limits

The Council previously passed three ordinances proposing to amend the County Charter. County Manager Anne Laurent presented the formal resolutions for the ballot questions to be submitted to voters on the November 3 General Election ballot. Ballot Question #1 asks the voter whether the Charter should be amended to allow members of standing boards and commissions to serve three terms in succession rather than two terms. After slight changes in the wording to improve the clarity, the Council approved the resolution unanimously.

Composition of Standing Boards and Commissions

The second resolution was for Ballot Question #2 concerning the composition of the standing boards and commissions. The County Charter says that "No more than a simple majority of the voting members of any standing board or commission of the Council shall be members of the same political party." A majority of the councilors propose to amend the Charter to limit the restriction to the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Board of Public Utilities, and the Personnel Board.

Again, there was concern that the ballot question as presented was not clear. Also, there was disagreement among the councilors

about the effect such a change would have if only one point of view was represented on a board. The wording was changed for clarification and the resolution passed 5-2 with Councilors Reagor and Neal-Clinton opposed.

Amending the Priority of Budget Expenditures

The third resolution was for Ballot Question #3 to amend the Charter to delete the provision that all remaining operating profits from the DPU be transferred to the County General Fund. There was no discussion and the resolution passed unanimously.

Barbara Calef

Observer Corps Report — County Council – August 25

Community Health Action Center, LEDA Grant for "The Rock" in White Rock, Gas Service Rates, Electric Coordination Agreement

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

Community Health Action Center

Miguel Jimenez, Senior Project Manager, provided the Council with an overview of the Community Health Action Center (CHAC) Project. Jimenez emphasized that planning was at an early stage. No site has been selected, nor has a design been finalized.

Jimenez said that CHAC aims to provide the community with a multi-service health center for co-located County and non-profit organizations to provide health, wellness, and social services for people in need. The scope of work for planning and preliminary conceptual design is based on CHAC Working Group

Recommendations. Jimenez added that, in addition to Social Services Division staff, the center would include facilities for a Family Resource Center, Self Help, services related to Santa Fe housing, and a Crisis Response Team. Space is also envisioned for health clinics, possibly in a separate, but nearby, facility.

Also included in the preliminary concept is parking for temporary mobile units such as blood drives, veterans' affairs, mammograms, mobile health unit, and a falls prevention trailer.

Jimenez said that three potential County-owned locations have been identified: 1000 Sombrillo Ct. (vacant lot), 1990 Diamond Dr. (unoccupied building in the Pueblo Complex), and 3540 Orange Ave. (existing building currently occupied by Family Strengths Network).

Funds for CHAC design are included in the Capital Improvements Projects (CIP) Fund for a total of \$950K in FY 2026.

LEDA Grant for "The Rock" in White Rock

By unanimous vote (7–0), the County Council approved adopting a Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) project for public support of VE Holdings NM LLC, which is owned by local residents Janet Lovato and Timoteo Martinez.

The redevelopment project, called The Rock, is located at 116 and 118 State Road 4 in White Rock. Economic Development Administrator Maksim Khudiakov explained how the project would transform the vacant Time Out Pizza building at the site into a multi-service space offering a sports bar, a frozen yogurt shop, a laundromat, electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, and food truck pads.

The estimated construction cost is approximately \$1.2M, with the total project cost exceeding \$2.1M. VE Holdings is requesting \$868K from the County's Economic Development Fund in the form of a ten-year, zero-interest loan.

VE Holdings has applied separately for about \$500K in Metropolitan Redevelopment

Area (MRA) funding for exterior building improvements, site improvements, and related amenities. Its MRA application will be discussed in a future County Council meeting.

Gas Service Rates

Voting 6–1, the County Council approved the increased gas rates as recommended by the Board of Public Utilities. This single rate adjustment will go into effect September 1, 2026. Councilor Reagor opposed the rate increase.

Joann Gentry, Deputy Utility Manager for Finance and Administration, presented the case for the proposed gas rate increase. She explained that the increase would raise the average monthly bill for a residential customer by approximately 16 percent. According to Gentry, the proposed adjustment is intended to align gas rates with current operating costs while maintaining an appropriate level of net income.

Gentry stated that adopting the proposed rates would support stable utility operations and allow the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) to continue necessary infrastructure maintenance and replacement activities. Without the rate increase, she said, DPU would be required to reduce or defer some maintenance and replacement work, which could ultimately affect the reliability of the gas system.

The County staff report also noted a proposed amendment to the Utilities section of the County Charter that would remove the provision addressing the transfer of utility profits. The proposed amendment will be presented to voters on the November ballot. Depending on the outcome of the election, the charter amendment could affect how DPU develops and recommends future gas and electric rates.

Electric Coordination Agreement (ECA)

By a unanimous vote of 7–0, the County Council approved a new Electric Coordination Agreement (ECA) between Los Alamos County and the U. S. Department of Energy

(DOE)/National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). The current agreement expires on August 31, 2026.

The new 10-year agreement is intended to accommodate ongoing changes in electricity markets, federal procurement requirements, and the County's long-term resource commitments, including the 170-megawatt Foxtail Flats Solar + Battery Energy Storage System Project in San Juan County, New Mexico.

Ben Olbrich, Deputy Utility Manager for Power Supply, highlighted changes made to the draft ECA following his presentation at the Council's August 18 meeting. He emphasized new language outlining processes for addressing potential issues if DOE chooses not to extend the agreement or exercises its right to terminate the contract "for convenience."

Olbrich explained that either scenario could leave the County solely responsible for meeting its obligations under its 20-year contract with Foxtail Flats. The County would also need to address the complex interdependencies between the County and DOE systems, particularly those involving financial and legal obligations associated with long-term resource commitments.

June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin

Observer Corps Report - Planning and Zoning Commission – August 12

Present: Karen Easton (Chair), Katherine Bruell, Robert Chrien, Rebecca Grimm, David Hampton, online: Marlon Brown, Jennifer Best.

Absent: Commissioners Ronald Nelson, Rebecca White.

Site Plan Adoption for a New Medical Facility

Christus Health requested approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) for a site plan adoption for a new health care facility to be located at 401 Trinity Drive, the former location of the Knights of Columbus. The 2-story 37,277-square-foot building was described as a "micro hospital" with four beds for inpatients. It also will include an emergency department, diagnostic and imaging services, surgical and procedural spaces, laboratory and pharmacy services, and other supporting medical uses.

County staff recommended approval subject to conditions concerning the revision of certain documents and obtaining all required permits. Christus Health is not requesting any funding from the County. The P&Z voted unanimously to approve the conditional plan.

Barbara Calef

August Lunch with a Leader: LARSO Director Ramón García

Ramón García has been the Executive Director of the Los Alamos Retired and Senior Organization (LARSO) since last October. He began his talk by saying that he hasn't had time to shape LARSO into what he would like it to be, but that will be up to the community. The purpose is to enable seniors to age well with the connections and resources they need to be independent. Any resident 60 or over can join for free; the cost for people 55-59 is \$20 annually.

LARSO serves 800 folks, or about one third of the seniors in the County. With a staff of 23, the organization offers 26 social programs, weekday lunches, and transportation for seniors, including 300 rides down the hill and 650 within the County each month. In addition, there are 175 households with around 200 folks in the County who are homebound. LARSO brings them lunch during the week and frozen meals for the weekend.

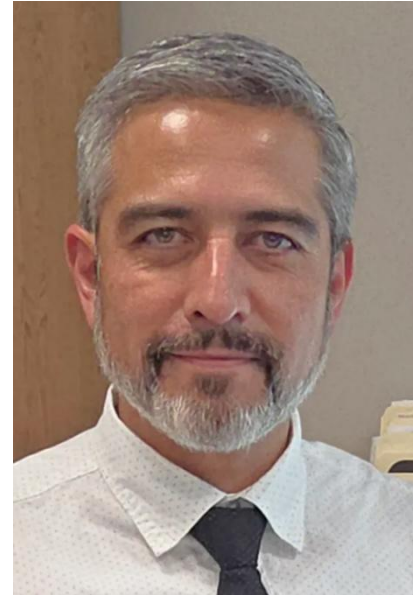
Currently the Betty Ehart Senior Center is closed for extensive renovations including the installation of a new Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) System with related electrical and plumbing upgrades; improvements to the electrical and lighting systems to make the facility energy efficient; and updating the elevator, flooring, restrooms, doors, and windows. The project, under the direction of the project manager, Sobia Sayeda, is expected to take eight months. García said he is prepared for the completion to take longer.

Meanwhile, LARSO is operating under a "scatter-site model" in order to continue offering good, predictable services. The library provides private spaces for meetings such as the Book Club. At Fuller Lodge lunch is served; the Throne Room is filled with computers, tables, and a freezer. The Day Out Program is continuing there. The YMCA has been very flexible. Senior Center members check in at the kiosk. They are not charged for attending the yoga class and may use the facilities from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Los Alamos Assisted Living (formerly called Aspen Ridge) is hosting some Senior Center programs, including arts and crafts.

García said they are "holding it together thanks to the wonderful staff." On August 14 the community celebrated the 31st anniversary of the White Rock Senior Center. On that occasion, due to a staffing shortage, García worked in the kitchen, cooking lunch for 100. He noted that no one complained that it was late. "The members are being very positive."

In response to a question, García said that LARSO is a 501(c)(3) and contributions are welcome. Volunteers are also needed. Go to [volunteer\(at\)larso.org](mailto:volunteer@larso.org) to sign up to help with lunch service in Fuller Lodge or White Rock, special events, newsletter production, kitchen duties, driving, or the Day Out Program.

García explained that LARSO is contracted with the County. The contract will come up for renewal in 2027. He said, "I am trying to be kind to them," but he really needs more funding to pay for more transportation resources and salaries. They currently must turn down 20% of the requests for rides. Staff turnover is high because pay is 30% too low. He needs the staff to be well-paid and happy!



Ramon Garcia, Courtesy Los Alamos Reporter.

Barbara Calef

Tickler Report – Upcoming Council Agenda Items

Tickler Report

Tentative Council Agenda Items, as of August 21, 2026

A partial list of tentative Council agenda items from the County tickler distributed on August 25. All items are subject to change.

- **Property Tax Rates**
 - 09/08/26 meeting. Adoption of rates. Action requested.
- **Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) grant for the 1735 Central Avenue Redevelopment Project in Downtown Los Alamos (former CB Fox Building)**
 - 09/08/26 meeting. Introduction of Ordinance.
 - 09/29/26 meeting. Public Hearing. Action requested.
- **Department of Public Utilities' Water Service Rates Schedules**
 - 09/08/26 meeting. Introduction of Ordinance.
 - 09/29/26 meeting. Public Hearing. Action requested.
- **Automated License Plate Readers**
 - 09/08/26 meeting. Briefing on Education Session held 8/27/26. No action requested.
- **Granting Cable Franchise for Construction, Operation, and Maintenance of Cable System and Provision of Cable Service in Los Alamos County**
 - 09/08/26 meeting. Public Hearing. Action requested.
- **Presentation by Wildland Fire Chief Van Leimer**
 - 09/22/26 meeting. Presentation. No action requested.

eComment Tool for Council meetings:

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

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



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

Name: _____ Partner*: _____

Address: _____ Date: _____

_____ ZIP: _____

Phone 1: _____
(cellular phone)

Phone 2: _____
(other phone)

E-mail (required): _____

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

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

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

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

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

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

_____ Serve on the LWV-Los Alamos Board

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

_____ Fundraising – Assist in raising money for LWVLA.

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

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

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

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

_____ Publicity – Submit press releases to local media.

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

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

_____ Another area (please specify): _____

* Optional – another LWVLA member in the same household.

Rev. 11/5/25

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

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