

# UPDATE

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

June 10 Preparing for the 2030 Census, Robert Rhatigan, 3 p.m. online  
June 18 Lunch with a Leader, CDD Director Elias Isaacson, Unitarian Church, 11:45 a.m.  
June 18 Board Meeting, Unitarian Church, 1:20 p.m.  
June 22 Interim Legislative Committee Meetings, online discussion, 3 p.m.

## ***Lunch with a Leader: Community Development Department Director Elias Isaacson***

Our next Lunch with a Leader will be on June 18 at the Unitarian Fellowship Hall on N. Sage Loop from 11:45 AM-1:00 PM. Did you know that anyone can attend these community events? All are welcome to bring a lunch and come hear our local experts - no need to be a League member.

This month's leader is Elias Isaacson, who is the Community Development Director for Los Alamos County. He leads the County's planning, building safety, affordable housing, and economic development operations. He serves as principal advisor to the County Manager and other elected officials on growth, land use, and development policy. His talk will focus on the evolution of the 2026 update to the County's Comprehensive Plan.

Prior to joining Los Alamos County, Isaacson served as Community Development Director for the City of Santa Barbara, California, and held senior leadership roles with the City of Santa Fe and the City of Española, where he also served as Interim City Manager. He holds credentials from the American Institute of Architects, the American Institute of Certified Planners, the International Code Council, and is a LEED Accredited Professional.

He earned a Master of Architecture from the University of New Mexico, a Master of City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania, and a B.A. in Geography from the University of Wisconsin. He is currently pursuing an Executive Certificate in Strategy and Innovation from the MIT Sloan School of Management. He serves on the boards of The Housing Trust in Santa Fe and the North Central New Mexico Economic Development District.

Outside of work, Isaacson is an outdoor enthusiast and a steady reader of current affairs, geopolitics, and financial markets. He lives in Santa Fe with his wife Jessie and their three-year-old son River.



*Community Development Department Director Elias Isaacson. Photo from [losalamosnm.gov/Community](https://www.losalamosnm.gov/Community)*

*Karyl Ann Armbruster*

## ***In Memoriam***

Long-time Los Alamos League member Hedy Dunn passed away unexpectedly on May 27, 2026. Hedy had been a League member for over 48 years and was our League President in 1978. We offer our condolences to her husband and extended family.

A celebration of Hedy's life will be held on Saturday, June 20 at 2:00 pm at the Unitarian Church of Los Alamos, located at 1738 N Sage Loop St, Los Alamos, NM 87544.

*Leslie Wallstrom*

## ***President's Message: Fight for Voters' Rights***

Have you heard of the old North Bridge in Concord, Massachusetts? I visited there in April and learned more about the history of the famous first official battle of the Revolutionary War, fought at the bridge over the Concord River in April 1775 — an impressive 251 years ago. The colonial militias fought for freedom from onerous taxes and control by the British Crown.

As we approach the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, we find ourselves fighting for voting rights for all citizens and freedom from suspicious interference in elections by the federal administration and some states. As the national League of Women Voters is fighting against voter suppression, we at the grassroots are striving to guarantee citizens' voting rights.

Locally the League worked closely with the Los Alamos County Clerk and the Secretary of State of New Mexico to offer clear explanations regarding the first ever semi-open primary in New Mexico. Your League worked to ensure a fair election in Los Alamos for the June 2<sup>nd</sup> primary, first by sponsoring a well-attended candidate forum in April, and second by the effective distribution of a detailed Voter Guide. And we will continue similar efforts this fall for the general election on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

In May I assumed the position of President of the LWV/LA Board. It was wonderful to inherit such a dedicated Board with members well versed in election procedures and devoted to the creation of the Voter Guide. With support from the County Clerk, local foundations, various non-profits, donors, and members like you we will continue to exercise our right to educate citizens about democracy. "Democracy is not a spectator sport."

Let me or any Board member know if you would like to be more personally involved in these efforts!

*Leslie Wallstrom*

## ***Planning for the Census***

On Wednesday, June 10 at 3 p.m. Robert Rhatigan, Director of the Geospatial and Population Studies Center at UNM and the New Mexico State Demographer, will explain how the League can help with the 2030 census.

The census serves as the foundation for fair political representation, equitable distribution of public funding, and the defense of voting rights. New Mexico has had a constant problem with undercounting of some of our communities, especially Native Americans and first-generation immigrant families. Undercounting hurts their ability to be properly represented and is a detriment to receiving federal funding.

Register here for the online meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/VDXgYZiURWSl7xdEbojTRQ#/registration>

## ***Talking About New Mexico's Legislative Interim Committees***

New Mexico state legislators do not stop working after the regular session. Each legislator participates in one or more interim committees. Most begin meeting in late May or early June and go through late November or early December.

These committees are where the ideas and background for legislation start. So, it is important to keep up with what is happening in your interest area(s).

There are 3 main categories of interim committees:

- Those with year-round staff like the Legislative Finance Committee and the Legislative Education Study Committee.
- Issue Committees such as Legislative Health & Human Services, and Water and Natural Resources . They only have staff during the interim.
- Oversight Committees such as Investment and Pension Oversight.

Watch for a Constant Contact message with a link to the Zoom meeting to be held at 3 p.m. on June 22.

## ***Los Alamos County Health Council Update***



*Social Services Manager Jessica Strong and members of the Health Council receive the Proclamation from Councilor Melanee Hand. Photo by David Krueger.*

The Los Alamos County Health Council (LACHC) has appointed 2 new commissioners and interviewed 3. We hope to have a full board of 15 by May.

In March Council members discussed community involvement, such as collaborating with other boards and commissions. Jessica Strong, Social Services Manager, explained the Department of Health's coordination and the \$10K to be received from the State.

A 2<sup>nd</sup> Youth Summit was held in March. It was a collaboration between Social Services, the Municipal Court, the LA Community Foundation, JJAB and--most important--high school students themselves. It focused on prevention, preparation, and connection.

In April Stephanie Gonzalez explained SHIP (State Health Insurance Assistance Program) and ALTSD (Aging and Long-Term Services).

### **May focused on Mental Health Awareness.**

The Social Services Manager, Health Council Chair, and Vice Chair attended the Alliance of Health Councils' Community Collaborative Forum in Albuquerque in May. This meeting included a wide range of New Mexico organizations connecting with other counties and tribes to gain a statewide perspective on health challenges. Copies of the slides from this meeting are available from Lisa Hampton at [eightsenough\(at\)comcast.net](mailto:eightsenough(at)comcast.net), or 505-500-7154.

Our local non-profit health organizations received a proclamation in May from County Council in support of Mental Health Awareness Month. "We call upon all community members and organizations to shine a light on mental health, reduce stigma, celebrate recovery, and encourage our community to prioritize mental well-being just as we do physical health, by supporting this year's theme of "More Good Days Together."

The next Health Council Meeting, open to the public, will be at noon on Thursday, June 4 in the County Municipal Building.

Lisa Hampton, Health Council Chair

# Observer Corps Report — County Council – May 5

*LANL Update; Proposed Charter Amendment;  
Public-Private Partnership on Affordable  
Housing; Revision of Temporary Sign Code;  
Cancellation of EPA Grant for Food  
Composting*

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

## LANL Update

Mark Davis, Deputy Laboratory Director for Operations at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), discussed the Lab's achievements and future plans. His presentation focused on LANL's increasing role in plutonium pit production and the related consequences of this mission shift.

*Transitioning from Stockpile Stewardship to  
Modernization*

Davis emphasized that LANL remains central to the nation's strategic deterrence mission, stating that "the heart and soul of the nuclear weapons enterprise is right here in Los Alamos."

He explained that LANL's mission has historically focused on stockpile stewardship — maintaining the safety, security, and reliability of the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile without developing substantially new weapons systems. However, the mission has now shifted toward stockpile modernization, with increased urgency surrounding plutonium pit production.

Davis noted that the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has set a goal of producing 80 plutonium pits per year as close to 2030 as possible. Although Savannah River National Laboratory is also expected to contribute to pit production in the future, he said its operational capability is likely still more than a decade away. As a result, LANL is currently the nation's only active plutonium pit production facility.

*Acceleration of Mission Delivery*

Davis said the NNSA is focused on accelerating mission delivery and has issued directives to help LANL improve the efficiency and effectiveness of plutonium pit production operations.

He also highlighted the Project Velocity initiative, led by the Department of Energy (DOE), which is intended to streamline approximately 80 DOE orders in support of faster warhead modernization efforts. Davis said LANL is optimistic the initiative will be completed later this summer, allowing the new processes and requirements to be integrated into day-to-day operations.

*Electrical Power Upgrade Project and  
Supercomputers*

Davis stressed that the electrical power upgrade project — specifically adding a third transmission line to Los Alamos — is critical for LANL's future Artificial Intelligence (AI) initiatives. He noted that the two existing power lines are expected to approach full capacity by 2028, making the additional line necessary to support the enormous energy demands of advanced supercomputers.

Davis said that LANL has collaborated with OpenAI and NVIDIA to deploy AI models on its Venado supercomputer. The Lab is also developing two next-generation systems, Mission and Vision, to expand its future AI computing capabilities.

*LANL Workforce*

Davis said that LANL experienced a peak in workforce growth in 2023, when the Lab hired approximately 2,500 new employees. He noted that the Lab has since transitioned to a more sustainable staffing level.

According to Davis, the Lab expects to hire between 1,000 and 1,200 employees this year to support modest growth and replace normal workforce attrition, which typically ranges from 800 to 900 employees annually.

## *Discussion on Housing Needs and Commuter Traffic*

Councilor Hand expressed concern about the need for adequate housing to accommodate the growth of the LANL workforce. She asked whether Davis felt that enough housing was available and whether the County's housing initiatives were on the right track. Hand added that "the amount of housing that we're trying to develop right now is like 1,600 houses that we have currently in the works in some phase or another. ... I just wonder ... if you think the County is going in the right direction, if we need to ramp it up more."

Davis acknowledged past concerns about housing but believes the current growth rate is manageable. He noted that the days of 2,000 or 2,500 new employees are past and that the growth over the next several years will be modest, a couple hundred at the most. "When I first got here, pretty much all that was on the minds of the employees was housing, and so I don't hear that as much anymore. ... I do think that what you're doing is what needs to be done, and so I don't have the concerns I did a handful of years ago."

Councilor Havemann raised a related concern about the effect of insufficient housing. She said, "in my opinion, when we don't have sufficient housing here, there's ramifications on quality of life, on the environment, carbon footprint, sustainability, traffic safety, time with kids, volunteer hours, wherever people reside."

Havemann concluded that "I just hope we could make sure that people have a choice." She asked Davis whether he had a sense of what percentage of the workforce at LANL would prefer to live closer than they do.

Davis replied that he has talked to a lot of employees about their personal situations. "I think for the most part they choose to live where they want for family reasons, what they're used to, and being close to people that they care about. So, I don't often hear a lot of people complain that they want to live in Los Alamos. ... I'm sure there are some of them out there but that's not a big concern that I hear from people."

Davis said LANL is focused on reducing commuter traffic on "the Hill" by encouraging employees to use alternative transportation options and by improving commuting safety and efficiency. He highlighted services such as buses and van pools as viable alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle travel. He also expressed appreciation for the role of the Los Alamos County Police Department in improving traffic safety through the visible presence of police vehicles along major commuting routes.

## *Discussion About Skilled Trades*

Councilor Melanee Hand raised concerns about the growing demand for skilled trades workers and the impact of competition from LANL on local employers. She noted that LANL's higher salaries and strong benefits packages make it difficult for small businesses, schools, and local government agencies to retain workers. She said, "we're losing our resources as you're building up yours."

Hand added that the labor shortage also affects subcontractors attempting to provide services to the Lab because many qualified workers are being hired directly by LANL.

Davis acknowledged the concern and said LANL management is sensitive to the issue. He noted that the Lab is competing for skilled workers not only within the local community but also with larger labor markets such as Albuquerque, where many of its skilled workers reside.

Local developer Sam Gardner described the challenges he has faced hiring workers for his subdivision project on North Mesa. He said that at one point he had 30 people working for him but that for the past two years he has struggled to maintain a workforce because LANL offers substantially higher wages. Gardner noted that many of his former employees now earn between \$80,000 and \$90,000 annually at the Lab, compared with more typical construction industry wages of \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year.

Councilor Cull asked whether LANL employees could be encouraged to teach skilled trades courses at local institutions such as University of New Mexico—Los Alamos and Northern New Mexico College, citing the need

for a welding instructor at UNM-LA. Davis said he would explore whether the Lab could help support those workforce development efforts.

#### *Discussion About Science and Engineering*

Councilor Neal-Clinton expressed concern that LANL's singular focus on plutonium pit production was affecting the community's identity as a science- and research-driven town. She asked Davis to provide examples of the Lab's current research and development activities beyond weapons production.

Davis said the issue is also a concern for LANL leadership. He emphasized that the Lab has spent 80 years building its reputation as a scientific leader and a premier research and development institution, and that preserving that legacy and identity remains important even as production responsibilities expand.

He noted that LANL continues to conduct significant work in areas such as nuclear nonproliferation and added that discussions are underway about potential support for Artemis program missions led by NASA.

#### *Discussion About Work Schedules*

Councilor Cull asked whether LANL had transitioned to shift work or 24-hour operations. She noted that changes in employee schedules could create new demands for community services.

Davis responded that the expansion of LANL's operating schedule is currently under discussion. He explained that the Lab traditionally operated on a 4/10 schedule — four days per week, ten hours per day. About a year and a half ago, LANL expanded operations by conducting production activities during daytime shifts while scheduling construction and maintenance work for other time periods.

Davis added that, because of recent discussions with the NNSA regarding increased production requirements, LANL is now considering expanding production operations to a 7/10 schedule. He said the current 4/10 model is approaching its operational capacity limits.

## **Proposed Charter Amendment**

Council introduced an ordinance proposing to amend the County Charter pertaining to term limits for standing boards and commissions. The amended text would allow citizens to serve three terms; the current limit is two terms.

If Council approves the ordinance, the proposed amendment will be put to the electorate for adoption or rejection at the General Election on November 3, 2026.

## **MOU for Affordable Housing Project**

By unanimous vote (7–0), Council adopted a resolution and associated memorandum of understanding (MOU) relating to the development of a workforce housing facility on County Parcel A-8-A (now known as "Coyote Mesa") on DP Road.

The MOU formalizes the partnership between Los Alamos County and Madrone Community Development Corporation, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) public benefit corporation.

Dan Osborn, Housing and Special Project Manager, said that the project utilizes the nonprofit ownership model to minimize project costs. As a 501(c)(3) entity, Madrone can access tax-exempt bond financing at lower borrowing rates and can operate with significantly lower overhead than traditional for-profit developers.

## **Revision of Temporary Sign Code**

Elias Isaacson, Director of the Community Development Department, provided Council with an overview of issues associated with the County's temporary sign code.

#### *Problems of the Existing Code*

Isaacson reported that staff is receiving ongoing complaints about signs in the public rights-of-way, but the current temporary sign code lacks clear and enforceable standards. The code references signage zones that do not exist, provides no practical way to enforce the 60-day limit, creates confusion between right-of-way and private property sign rules, and does not require removal of outdated signs.

### *Recommended Option*

Isaacson listed options for addressing these issues and requested Council feedback and direction before staff proceeded to draft code amendments.

Isaacson said that staff recommends restructuring the Sign Code to clearly separate regulations for temporary signs on private property from standards specific to signs placed in the public right-of-way. The proposed changes would retain the existing 60-day limit for temporary signs while adding a requirement that signs be removed within two days after that period expires. The amendments would also formally authorize the County to remove signs that are in violation and create a new exemption for temporary signs displayed for only 24 to 48 hours.

The same rules would apply to political signs, local businesses, community events, and youth sports organizations.

### *Registry for Temporary Signs*

Isaacson said that staff are exploring the creation of a temporary sign registry rather than a formal permitting system. Under the proposed approach, individuals or organizations placing temporary signs in approved right-of-way locations would complete a simple online or in-person registration process. The system would generate a registration number that, along with the placement date, would need to be displayed on the sign.

Isaacson explained that the registration system would provide staff with a way to track how long signs have been posted and enforce the 60-day duration limit. Staff believes that combining this system with designated signage zones would significantly improve the County's ability to manage and enforce temporary sign regulations in the public right-of-way.

### *Next Steps*

Isaacson outlined the next steps in the process, explaining that County staff will draft proposed code language based on feedback received from the Council. The draft ordinance will then be submitted to the Planning and

Zoning Commission for formal review and recommendation before being forwarded to the County Council for consideration. The goal is to complete the process by Fall 2026.

## **Cancellation of EPA Grant for Food Composting**

Deputy County Manager Linda Matteson informed Council that the EPA cancelled the anticipated \$1 million-plus grant for the County's food composting program. The decision was largely due to unresolved permitting and lease modification issues involving NMED and DOE.

Matteson said that, although County staff explained the County's mitigation plans and readiness to move forward, EPA determined the project was not yet shovel-ready. Staff plan to participate in EPA's debrief process to improve future grant applications and pursue similar funding opportunities once the project is further along.

*June Fabryka-Martin, Craig Martin*

## **Observer Corps Report - County Council – May 12**

*Briefing by Planning and Zoning Commission  
Chair; Traffic Safety in Los Alamos County*

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

## **Briefing by Planning and Zoning Commission Chair**

Karen Easton, chair of the Planning and Zoning (P&Z) Commission, presented the Commission's work plan for FY26, emphasizing updating the Comprehensive Plan and Development Code, public engagement, and commissioner education.

### *Update of the County's Comprehensive Plan*

Easton highlighted the County's Comprehensive Plan update as the Commission's main focus. She emphasized the importance of public input in the process, given that the plan will guide land-use priorities, budgeting, and future changes to the County's Development Code. Easton pointed out that the plan is a key component of what P&Z uses to decide guide zoning and development cases presented to it.

Easton said that the Community Development Department (CDD) had established a steering committee of 45 members to provide input on land use, housing redevelopment, and infrastructure to ensure that the plan aligns with community desires and County goals. The steering committee includes three current P&Z commissioners, as well as a commissioner who termed out.

### *Update of the Development Code*

Easton said that P&Z is also supporting CDD in identifying updates in the Chapter 16 Development Code that will align with the updated Comprehensive Plan and are intended to simplify implementation for applicants and reviewers.

Easton said that P&Z was particularly interested in continuing its work on two Development Code issues: accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and parking requirements. P&Z is evaluating the potential for ADUs to expand housing opportunities while mitigating neighborhood impacts. She said that parking requirements are being revisited to ensure right-size standards and to improve efficiency in redevelopment and infill development.

Danyelle Valdez, Planning Manager, provided an update on the ongoing cleanup of

the Development Code. She explained that code changes will be finalized once the CDD has an understanding of how the community wants to see the Comprehensive Plan developed. Code changes would be implemented after the updated plan has been completed and adopted.

### *Future Land Use Map and Zoning Changes*

During Council discussion, Councilor Reagor asked for an update on the long-delayed cleanup of zoning-related inconsistencies, specifically concerns raised by residents about open space classifications. He asked whether Council could expect a clear timeline for completion.

Elias Isaacson, CDD Director, clarified that Reagor's question specifically concerned the Future Land Use Map. Isaacson explained that this map is expected to be reviewed and potentially revised during the Comprehensive Plan process, rather than as a standalone earlier action, with a target completion by the end of the year. Once the revised Comprehensive Plan has been adopted by Council, any resulting zoning changes would be evaluated for possible incorporation into subsequent revisions of Chapter 16.

### *Parking Requirements*

Councilor Ryti asked for clarification regarding possible changes to parking requirements.

Valdez explained that the County is still actively collecting data on parking requirements; she provided examples of current policy, noting that significant parking reductions already exist, particularly in Downtown Los Alamos and the White Rock Town Center zoning districts.

She described several overlapping reductions, including a 50% reduction in general commercial areas within designated downtown zones, a 20% reduction for proximity to transit, a two-for-one credit for electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and an additional 10% reduction for bike-related amenities. Collectively, she said these mechanisms could result in total reductions of

up to nearly 80% of standard parking requirements.

Valdez added that, despite the availability of these parking reduction incentives, they are not always fully utilized. She explained that developers often choose to provide higher amounts of parking based on project economics and long-term leasing needs.

She referenced the Coyote Mesa mixed-use development project on DP Road as an example. It includes a parking structure with over 400 spaces even though it qualifies for up to a 50% reduction in required parking. She said the final scale of parking was driven by market demand and tenant expectations, noting that the development would not be viable without sufficient parking to match unit-level occupancy demand.

### Traffic Safety in Los Alamos County

Keith Wilson, Deputy Public Works Director, and Police Chief Sgambellone briefed Council on traffic and road safety initiatives, including outreach, education, enforcement, studies, and infrastructure projects aimed at reducing crashes and improving safety. The presentation covered crash data analysis, ongoing safety activities, and efforts to increase public awareness.

He emphasized that public input is incorporated into the decision-making process before recommendations move forward for implementation.

#### *Overview of Crash Data*

Wilson explained that the County uses crash data to identify problem areas and determine causes before developing solutions. He provided a detailed summary of crash data for Los Alamos County. He said, "When we look at crash data, we don't want to just focus on one year or one incident, we want to try to build a picture of what's going on. We're trying to look at trends."

Data from 2019 to 2025 revealed 8 fatal crashes, 250 injury crashes, and just over 600 property damage crashes in the County over that seven-year period.

Los Alamos County Crash Data, 2019–2025

2019 to 2025	All Crashes	Pedestrians	Bicycles
Fatal	8	2	0
Injury	250	6	25
Property damage only	636	0	1
Totals	894	8	26

Using the metric of crashes per 1000 population, Wilson reported that the County is about 33% of the statewide rate for total crashes and 20% of the rate for crashes involving pedestrians. Although the rate of bicycle crashes in Los Alamos is slightly higher than the state average, Wilson cautioned that the County's rates are based on fewer than 4 crashes per year over the 7-year period examined.

Wilson said that crash reports indicated that the primary contributing factors in the 900 crashes in the County were inattention (47%), failure to yield (14%), following too closely (12%), improper driving (9%), and speed (5%). Alcohol was a contributing factor in only 3% of the crashes.

Wilson showed maps of the spatial distribution of crashes throughout the County. He pointed out that, for fatal crashes and crashes involving pedestrians, the absence of a consistent pattern or common feature makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions. However, he said that such is not the case for the 26 crashes involving bicycles, which are primarily concentrated in the town site along its three main travel corridors, Trinity, Central, and Diamond Drive.

#### *Traffic Safety Projects in Progress*

Wilson updated Council on the components, status, and schedule for three road safety projects in progress, which were covered in previous observer reports in the League's monthly newsletter:

- Trinity Drive Safety & ADA Improvements Project from Oppenheimer Dr. to Knecht St.,
- Ashley Pond Crowd Protection Project on Trinity Drive, and
- NM4 Crossing and Multi-use Trail Improvement Project and Piñon School Trail in White Rock.

### *Diamond Drive Wildlife Crash Study*

Wilson said that wildlife crashes continue to be a problem in the County. The number of vehicular accidents involving large game animals was 102 in 2024, 63 in 2025, and 24 as of April 2026.

The County is launching a wildlife assessment to address areas with high rates of animal-vehicle crashes and expects recommendations from a consultant in the coming months. In the meantime, staff are exploring technology-based solutions. For example, AI-enabled cameras can detect wildlife and will activate flashing warning signs.

Public Works staff are considering a pilot installation in high-crossing areas near the Golf Course and are also evaluating additional options such as street lighting and speed management measures along the corridor. Street lighting remains under consideration but would require Council approval and carries an estimated cost of approximately \$600,000.

### *NM 502 Crashes and Speeding*

The County continues to study safety improvements along the NM 502 corridor from the County line to Airport Road following a 2024 fatal crash that prompted a road safety audit in partnership with LANL. The audit identified several areas for further study, including raised medians, traffic calming measures, and possible long-term intersection improvements such as a roundabout or traffic signal near Camino Entrada.

In response to previous crashes, the County has already implemented new striping, painted islands, and signage at Camino Entrada to slow turning vehicles and improve lane guidance.

The County is also extending centerline rumble strips from the County line to the airport to help reduce lane departure crashes, with installation expected by early June.

### *Pedestrian Crossing Studies*

The County is evaluating several pedestrian and intersection safety improvements across multiple intersections. Planned and proposed measures under study include:

- enhanced crossings and refreshed pavement markings,
- additional crossings along Central Avenue,
- removal of streetside parking spaces to improve pedestrian visibility at crosswalks along Central Avenue, and
- installation of modular curbing to tighten the intersection and adjustment of school zone flashing beacons to better define and expand the school zone at the intersection of Grand Canyon and Sherwood Drives in White Rock.

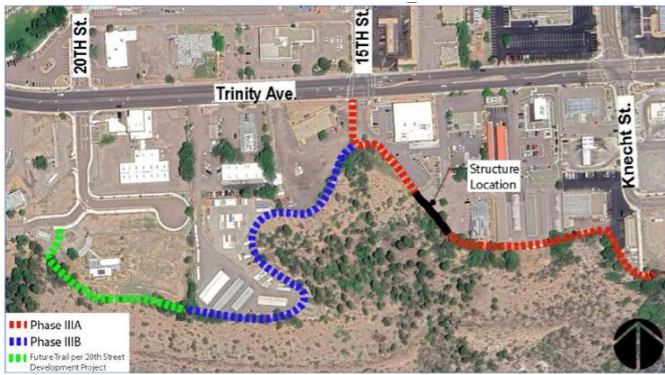
Staff are currently analyzing traffic, crash, transit, and pedestrian data, coordinating with community stakeholders, and preparing recommendations for upcoming Transportation Board and Council meetings.

### *Canyon Rim Trail*

Wilson reported on the status of the Canyon Rim Trail, which is being advanced as an alternative route to reduce reliance on Trinity Drive through the Los Alamos Town Center.

Phase 3A is currently in design and, due to easements on LANL property, requires a biological assessment before proceeding. The segment is expected to go out to bid in the fall, with construction to follow shortly after, extending the trail connection to 15th Street near Natural Grocers.

Phase 3B and later work tied to the 20th Street development are anticipated to be completed around 2028, ultimately creating a continuous connection between Trinity Drive and the Urban Trail system.



Eric Martinez, Public Works Director, noted that Phase 4 of the Canyon Rim Trail—from Oppenheimer Drive west toward Diamond Drive—was "on the radar" but not currently on the list of Capital Improvement Projects included in the County's budget. He added that this section of trail would require some condemnation of land.

### *Bicycle Safety*

Wilson reported that the County has installed its first green bike lane sections on Diamond Drive near the Sullivan Field parking lot entrance and on Canyon Road. These locations experience high bicycle use and frequent conflicts with turning vehicles.

He noted that the project was enabled only after updates to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices allowed green bike lane markings. The treatment uses a durable epoxy and crushed glass material designed to withstand heavy use and winter maintenance.

### *2026 Traffic Enforcement Update*

Police Chief Sgambellone reported that, in the first four months of the year, the Traffic Enforcement Unit issued 787 warnings and 50 citations. Although recent commuter traffic monitoring shows some improvement in driver behavior, excessive speed and dangerous driving continue to be concerns, particularly among motorcycle operators. Police recorded 526 vehicles driving over the speed limit, of which 61% exceeded the limit by 16–25 mph.

Sgambellone said the Traffic Unit is working to organize a multijurisdictional traffic enforcement operation targeting evening commuter traffic, in coordination with the New

Mexico State Police, Pojoaque Tribal Police, and the Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office.

## **Council Discussion on Traffic and Safety Improvements**

### *Summary of Council Discussion*

Councilors discussed numerous ways to improve traffic and pedestrian safety.

Wilson and Martinez responded thoughtfully to each suggestion. In some cases, they promised to follow up or request guidance from Council. In other cases, they explained why they did not support adopting the recommendation.

They emphasized that such decisions are made deliberately and in accordance with adopted national guidelines. They noted that many measures must also be evaluated through the lens of liability, as features that are difficult to maintain or that fall outside national standards can create legal and safety concerns that are difficult to defend. They warned that some of the suggested solutions could unintentionally increase safety risks for pedestrians or bicyclists.

### *Pedestrian Visibility at Crossings*

Councilor Havemann opened the discussion by advocating the Public Works use a Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper (LQC) approach for implementing improvements to safety issues as soon as possible after the issues are identified. She felt that there was a tendency to overstudy and overanalyze some issues.

Havemann recounted her frustration that Public Works delayed taking action to remove parking spaces on Central Avenue because they were waiting for business input from the Los Alamos Commerce and Development Corporation. Noting that only four businesses would be affected, she suggested that the issue could quickly be resolved by direct interaction with those businesses, with councilors, or with the Transportation Board. "I don't know why it couldn't be done tomorrow. Let's get on with it, because it's just an accident waiting to happen."

Havemann acknowledged the reality of liability but said "I just think we need to figure out how to do that risk calculation and decide maybe sometimes we're willing to take the risk on the liability." She urged that serious traffic safety problems be elevated to a top priority immediately when it is clear that measures in place are not effective, "just like we fix a power outage."

### *Crosswalks on Central Avenue*

Havemann felt that the variety of crosswalk designs used on Central Avenue created confusion for drivers, saying "You've got bump outs at one point, then you've got big striped crosswalks at another point and then you go a bit farther and it's a different kind of crosswalk."

Martinez explained the design of Central Avenue through Downtown was deliberately done to encourage traffic calming. He said the number of parking spaces, the tightness of the corridor, the number of crosswalks were all intended to encourage traffic calming, not to put anybody crossing at a disadvantage.

### *Left Hand Turns by Drivers at Intersections*

Havemann said one of her top safety issues was the need for measures to encourage drivers to make tighter left turns. She felt that shortcutting left turns was a primary source of danger for other vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, and hidden wildlife. She encouraged Public Works to implement quick and easy simple ways to change driver behavior.

### *eBikes*

Councilor Havemann highlighted the dangers posed by ebikes. She suggested the need to be proactive by considering ebikes in future transportation planning.

Wilson explained that the issue was with high-speed powered non-pedal ebikes that can reach speeds of 30 to 40 mph.

Martinez noted that most complaints about ebikes have come from people on multi-use trails, not from roadways, and that the department had not received a lot of complaints about the issue.

Martinez added that the Transportation Board recognized that the speed ebikes can

maintain on a multi-use trail like Canyon Rim Trail can pose dangers for the bikes and pedestrians, given the speed disparity between the two.

### *Closing Central Avenue to Motor Vehicles*

Council Cull asked whether Public Works had considered closing Central Avenue between 15th and 20th Streets.

Wilson replied that the Bicycle Working Group had raised the potential to create a bike boulevard for pedestrians and bicyclists, but that Public Works had not looked into it or conducted analyses of the possible ramifications. One of his concerns would be whether traffic might start cutting through Peach and Nectar Streets if Central Avenue were closed.

*June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin*

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

*Longview Drive Project; Trinity Drive Diet and ADA Improvements; Gas Rate Ordinance; Inclusivity Board*

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

### **Building Demolition for the Longview Drive Project**

Council unanimously (7–0) approved a task order for All-Rite Construction to demolish three buildings on County-owned land along Longview Drive in White Rock. The approved project budget is \$750,000.

Providing background on the request, Public Works Director Eric Martinez presented redevelopment plans for the White Rock Town Center, highlighting the boundaries of the Metropolitan Redevelopment Area and the target area surrounding Longview Drive. He explained that the roadway realignment project is intended to create a safer and more efficient transportation network and requires the removal of three vacant buildings.

Demolition work is expected to begin in June and be completed by August. The tentative timeline for the broader Longview Drive realignment project includes conceptual design, public engagement, land acquisition, and preparation of final design and construction documents, with construction anticipated to begin next year.

## **Trinity Drive Road Diet and ADA Improvements**

County Council voted 6–1 (with Councilor Reagor in opposition) to award the Trinity Drive/NM 502 Safety and ADA Improvements project to Hasse Contracting for \$7.12M in roadwork and utility work.

Jennifer Morrow, Engineering Project Manager, outlined the project's key elements, which include a hybrid road diet for Trinity Drive, along with pedestrian crossing upgrades, new bus stops, and the installation of a pedestrian-activated flasher at 20th Street opposite Ashley Pond. She also noted that the project is fully funded through grants.

Councilor Reagor opposed the project, expressing a preference for bicycle infrastructure designs that would provide greater separation between bicycle traffic and motor vehicles along Trinity Drive.

## **Proposed Gas Service Rate Changes**

Council introduced a code ordinance to increase gas service rates following a recommendation from the Board of Public Utilities, which reviewed this proposal during its work session on May 6, 2026.

A public hearing on the proposed rate changes is scheduled for June 9, 2026.

According to the County staff report included in the agenda packet, the proposed increases are driven by financial shortfalls in the Gas Fund. The FY2025 audited net income for the Gas Fund reflected a loss of \$489,267, and the projected net loss for FY2026 is approximately \$2.36 million. Officials stated that the rate adjustments are intended to stabilize revenues, maintain current operations, and rebuild cash reserves needed for future infrastructure investments.

## **Proposed Inclusivity Board**

Council voted unanimously to direct the County Manager to move forward with development of a code ordinance to form the Inclusivity Board.

*June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin*

## **Observer Corps Report – Planning and Zoning Commission – May 13**

Present: Karen Easton (Chair), Katherine Bruell, Robert Chrien, Rebecca Grimm, David Hampton, Ronald Nelson, Rebecca White (left early)

Absent: Commissioner Marlon Brown

## **Site Plan Adoption for a Commercial Project in White Rock**

The Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) unanimously approved (7–0) the adoption of a Site Plan for a multi-tenant commercial development at 116 and 118 State Road 4 (SR4) in White Rock, at the corner of SR4 and Bonnie View Drive. The properties are located within the White Rock Town Center zone district.

The request was submitted by VEGA Architecture, LLC. on behalf of Janet Lovato, dba 118 St Rd 4, LLC., property owner.

The application proposes redeveloping an existing building and site to establish a multi-tenant commercial development called "The Rock," offering retail, restaurant, bar, and laundromat facilities. Redevelopment is primarily limited to interior renovations.

Constructed in 1995, the existing building was originally operated as a McDonald's and then, in the mid-2000s, was converted to Time Out Pizza, which closed in 2020.

Proposed site improvements include construction of a deck, utility connections for four designated food truck spaces, and installation of four electric vehicle charging spaces.

Approval was subject to the condition that the applicant obtain any necessary permits and agreements for encroachment and use of the County property prior to receiving a building permit for site improvements.

### **Conditional Use Permit for a Private School on Church Property**

The P&Z unanimously approved (6–0, with Commissioner White absent) a Conditional Use Permit requested by Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church on behalf of Zephyr Ridge Academy, a private school. The permit will allow the school to operate within the church building located at 2390 North Road in Los Alamos.

The proposed use involves the weekday shared use of four existing classrooms in the church's religious education wing. The school will serve students with learning differences, including dyslexia, ADHD, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia.

The subject property is zoned MFR-L, where private schools are allowed only through approval of a Conditional Use Permit. Planning Manager Danyelle Valdez stated that staff found the proposed use to be compatible with the zoning district and surrounding neighborhood. She emphasized that the conditional use permit was required because Zephyr Ridge Academy will operate as an organization separate from the church, not because school use is incompatible with the zoning regulations.

#### *Church Actions*

The Congregational President for Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran said that, before the arrangement becomes final, the Church will hold a congregational vote on whether to allow Zephyr Ridge Academy to operate within the church's classrooms. If approved, church leaders will finalize a facility-use agreement that incorporates the conditions of the conditional use permit and establishes limitations regarding hours of operation, noise, and facility access.

*June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin*

### **May Lunch with a Leader: Marcela Diaz**

Marcela Diaz is the Executive Director of Somos Un Pueblo Unido, a grass roots, statewide, immigrant-based advocacy organization. It was founded in 1995 after the passage of Proposition 187 in California. That ballot initiative denied essential services to immigrants. Although never implemented, it spurred activity across the country. The first sanctuary policy was passed in Santa Fe in 1999. A state-wide sanctuary policy passed in 2005 but was vetoed by Governor Richardson. In 2008-2009 northern New Mexico



counties passed strong non-cooperation, non-discrimination policies. San Miguel and Taos Counties were the first in the nation to restrict compliance with “ICE detainers,” which facilitate the transfer of people in custody to immigration authorities and which Diaz called a “jail to deportation pipeline.”

Somos now has about 3,000 members with 16 staff members across eight counties. It is a 501 (c)3, providing citizenship literacy, community education, voter registration, and many other programs. Somos also has a 501 (c)4 called Somos Acción that lobbies for economic justice issues including raising the minimum wage, mandated paid sick leave, and unemployment insurance for immigrants.

Diaz pointed out that about 10% of the New Mexico population is foreign born as is 13% of the labor force. She said that while population growth in the state is stagnant, it is increasing in the Permian Basin, where 17% of the energy workers are immigrants. She advised the audience to look on the Somos website for the “UNM Southeastern New Mexico Oil & Gas Workforce Study,” commissioned by Somos and published in 2024. The study explored workforce development issues as well as health and safety concerns. Somos is organizing those workers to demand assistance in response to decreasing pay and hours as well as unemployment insurance for immigrants.

At the legislature, Somos and its allies, including the League, have succeeded in passing a number of important bills in the last couple of years:

- In 2025 SB36 Sensitive Personal Info Nondisclosure Act passed. The law prohibits the disclosure by state employees of sensitive information about immigration status, sexual orientation, or MVD data.
- In 2026 SB40 Driver Privacy and Safety Act passed, providing limitations on the sharing of automated license plate reader information. Information may not be sold or shared to assist in immigration enforcement, to investigate or prosecute protected healthcare activity, or to identify or impose liability based solely on activities protected by the U.S. Constitution or the Constitution of New Mexico. Diaz commented that data privacy issues have a big impact on all of our lives; that is how ICE is finding immigrants.
- HB9 Immigrant Safety Act also passed in 2026, prohibiting state or local governments from any agreement to detain individuals for federal civil immigration violations.
- In 2026 HB124 created the Office of New Americans as a division within the Workforce Solutions Department for the purpose of supporting new Americans residing in New Mexico “in achieving their maximum economic potential in New Mexico's workforce and as entrepreneurs.” The new office acts as a central resource to help immigrant workers and their employers navigate workforce integration, licensing, and federal policies. The office also supports key industries like health care, construction, and agriculture.



Karyl Ann Armbruster and Marcela Diaz. Photo by Leslie Wallstrom.

During future legislative sessions Somos plans to work to pass a state-wide sanctuary policy and to make sure immigrants have access to unemployment insurance. Asked to name two actions League members can take, Diaz said we should support community-based organizations representing impacted workers that are growing in power and “getting stuff done.” She also stressed that we let our legislators know that we care about the issues.

*Barbara Calef*



**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.

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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