

**MINUTES  
WORK SESSION  
LUNA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
Thursday, May 16, 2024**

**BE IT REMEMBERED** that the Luna County Board of County Commissioners met in work session at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 16, 2024 in the Commission Chambers of the Luna County Courthouse, Deming, New Mexico, for the purpose of conducting any and all business to come properly before the Board.

**Call to Order:** Chair Chandler called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance and the salute to the flag of the State of New Mexico.

**Roll Call:** Deputy Clerk Toni Esparza called Roll. The following Board Members constituting a quorum were present:

**Ray J. Trejo, District 1  
Colette M. Chandler, Chair District 2  
John S. Sweetser, District 3**

**Presentations:**

- **Funding Appropriations:** Chair Chandler opened up the floor for the new fiscal year appropriations.
  1. **Deming Humane Society-** Sande Foster presented the funding request for the Deming Humane Society: Ms. Foster stated that the shelter was awarded the \$30,000 grant again which is dedicated money and will be put back into the spay and neuter program. All shelters in the state lost the Veterinarian Medicine Grant, due to the funding and the way the grant was written. It was stated that the price of dog food has gone up about 46% and this is why the Deming Humane Society is requesting \$23,000 more on top of what the shelter was granted last year. Chair Chandler asked if the vouchers that are handed out are tracked in case they are not used. In response to the question it was stated that the vouchers are in fact tracked and if there is no response from the person, then the voucher is recycled and assigned to someone else. Commissioner Trejo stated that he has not seen any educational programs come out of the Humane Society to start educating the community. Commissioner Trejo stated that this could be done through social media or radio ads and feels that this would help make the community more aware of the issues and how to help solve them.
  2. **Chamber of Commerce-** Tarcia Rebeiz Executive Director of the Deming/Luna County Chamber of Commerce presented the funding request for the Chamber. Ms. Rebeiz stated that during the 2023-2024 fiscal year

the Chamber has grown by 22 members for a total of 269 members. There have been Chamber Board seats added for both the City and the County to have a representative. The Chamber has hosted 12 ribbon cuttings and participated in or hosted 19 other networking and community events, including Hello Thursday, Lemonade Day, Holiday Chamber in the Park, The Murder Mystery Gala, National Night Out, Trunk or Treat, and the Great American Duck Race Parade just to name a few. The Chamber has also assisted businesses by designing six local business logos, writing 62 radio ads, and created over 179 promotional flyers in the last 12 months. Ms. Rebeiz was pleased to report that not only has the membership grown, but also the reach with 542 instagram followers, with 1,119 individual newsletter subscribers and 4, 118 Facebook followers. The cross-posting efforts through social media the Chamber roughly reaches about 7,000 people on any given day. Ms. Rebeiz stated that with the County's continued support it is the Deming/Luna County Chamber of Commerce desire to grow the scope of services that are offered to the local businesses while maintaining the existing services that the Chamber is best know for. This fiscal year the Chamber will be rolling out new member to member discount programs that will highlight businesses on Facebook and Instagram in new ways.

3. **Columbus Historical Society-** Historian Kathleen Martin spoke on behalf of the Columbus Historical Society. Ms. Martin stated that the Columbus Historical Society has been around since the 70's, but in January 2023 a new board took over and instituted an Elector Event Series that brings presenters and lecturers to Columbus, eight months of the year. The Society's Thursday night presentations have drawn 40 attendees on several occasions. Friday night and Saturday afternoon events, which typically have more than one presenter, have drawn eighty attendees. The Signature event, which is the March 9<sup>th</sup> Commemorative Ceremony, this year drew 200 people. Ms. Martin stated that the Columbus Historical Society is asking for \$23,573.76. Ms. Martin stated that this money will be divided into two categories, which will be \$15,120.00 for salaries and \$8,453.76 for per diem. Ms. Martin stated that this per diem will include housing, meals, and travel.
4. **Community Healthcare Foundation-** Not Present.
5. **Dagship Rescue-** Director Chrystal Kerbo stated that the rescue is asking for \$35,000.00 for the spay and neuter coupon program. Ms. Kerbo stated that there will be a total of 500 coupons distributed in the amount of \$70.00 per coupon. The Rescue is also requesting \$15,000 for vet expenses for the no kill rescues, which includes spay/neuter, vaccines, microchip, heartworm test, treatment and dentals for the older rescues. Ms. Kerbo stated that the rescue's goal is to make Luna County a no kill county.

6. **Deming Arts Council-** Deming Arts Council member Marilyn Goble gave a short power point presentation which included the Deming Arts Council mission statement, different community activities that take place in the Arts Council, and showed artwork from community members. Ms. Goble stated that there are about 112 paying members at this time, and that the Deming Arts Council also brings in money through raffles, selling artists work, and donations of estate items that can be sold.
7. **Deming Cesar Chavez Charter High School-** Not Present
8. **Deming Senior Center-** Barbara Rios presented on behalf of the Deming/Luna County Commission on Aging for FY 24-25 funding request. It was stated that the Deming Senior Center is a 50C3 non-profit organization that has been in business since 1977 and in three years will mark 50 years. The funding that is received to operate is a crucial part of the infrastructure that is needed to provide for older adults in these areas. The Center provides services needed to seniors to assure that they age gracefully and with the upmost dignity within the comfort of their homes and not prematurely institutionalized. The current average cost in the state is \$5,450 per month for assisted living stay, which calculates to \$64,500 annually. The Center's Homemaker Service per person annually as of April 2024 calculates to \$2,818 per person. The Respite Care Service calculates to \$4,378 per person annually, and the Adult Daycare Service calculates to \$8,838 per person annually. Ms. Rios stated that she would like expand a meal site into the Village of Columbus which will be a congregate meal site. Ms. Rios stated that for the new fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024 she is requesting an additional \$20,000 in addition to their current level of funding to assist with the expansion. Columbus as of yesterday has verbally acknowledged to tentatively provide \$18,000 of what has been estimated for this meal site service.
9. **La Casa-** Not present
10. **Luna County Historical Society-** Peggy Bishop manager of the Deming/Luna Mimbres Museum and President of the Luna County Historical Society stated that the request for increase in funds is due to the rise in costs and inflation. Ms. Bishop stated that half of the funding goes toward utilities and the rest goes to operating costs with both increasing at the same rate. Ms. Bishop stated that having to close that museum for four months for renovation was the reason for decreased donation income. Ms. Bishop that at this time the main project is updating the security system due to past issues.
11. **Deming Mainstreet-** Executive Director Rebecca Hughes stated that the first and probably most crucial thing that is done for Deming/Luna County is the Visitors Center. Ms. Hughes stated that Penny Utley runs the front

desk at the Visitor's Center and this consists of directing people to different parts of the Luna County and Columbus. Ms. Hughes stated that Mainstreet has been around for several years and hosted several successful events in 2023, Salsa Fest, National Night Out, Trunk or Treat, Christmas Downtown/ Light Parade, Block Party in the Park. Ms. Hughes stated that one of the things that is looking to be improved upon is that all of the events run smoother, and also to further the reach to draw in more people to the County. Mainstreet is in the very early planning stages with the County to build a pavilion and food truck court, with the current plan to have this at the County property across for the museum.

**12. NMSU Cooperative Extension-** Luna County Extension Agent Jack Blandford and Family and Consumer Science Agent Katherine Turner gave a PowerPoint presentation on the several of the FCS programs. Mr. Blandford stated that some of the 4H programs including the Senior shooting sports program, baking/sewing projects, and the I Can Program are housed within the agency. The nutrition educator works out of the office on a USDA grant and through NMSU the nutrition educator works with low-income individuals making sure that if they qualify for food stamp program, and can have all of their needs met. Education is provided in different cooking and preparation techniques that can be used. Mr. Blandford stated that they host some community service events, one of which is the Food Link Day with the Healing House. Other events included, different clean-ups, Trunk-or-Treat, and Senior Leadership. Mr. Blandford stated that for Senior Leadership, they take these students to different camps throughout the state, giving the students an opportunity to see these different places. Ms. Turner stated that some of the other 4H activities include the Clover buds from ages 5-8, which is a program that was put together for education of the younger kids. Mr. Blandford stated the money from these events is used to help minimize the money that families must pay to attend and participate in 4H events. Mr. Blandford stated that the funding request for the new fiscal year went up by about five percent from what was awarded last year due to rising costs.

**13. Play Sharity-** Play Sharity Foundation Board President Chelsea Newman stated that Play Sharity is open Wednesday through Saturday from 11:30-5:00. Ms. Newman stated that on weekends families come in and there are home school groups during the week. There is a small fee for families that come from out of the County, and groups from places like Silver City, Hatch, and Lordsburg. Play Sharity serves several purposes in Deming by having field trips, a safe stress-free place for families to gather, and is a large volunteer run organization. Ms. Newman stated that there were 13, 442 for the year 2023 in spite of the eight-week closure to update flooring and lighting. Ms. Newman stated that the Play Sharity staff has unpacked, assembled, barcoded, and cataloged in their online library software with 2,474 resources, that are free for check out to anyone living in Luna County.

Ms. Newman stated that there are currently 768 families as members, with the number increasing weekly as more families discover all that Play Sharity offers. Ms. Newman stated that there was a parent support group this year which included classes on postpartum depression. There was an Occupational Therapist brought in to help with this. Ms. Newman stated that Play Sharity is requesting \$60,000 this year to continue their operations.

**14. Silver Linings-** Margret Fairman spoke on behalf of Silver Linings. She stated that the facility had been closed for six months last year but have been back in operation since October providing for the needs of the unsheltered here in Luna County. The shelter provides food, clothing, toiletries, showers, laundry, and a twice a week counseling group. Ms. Fairman stated that this group is to help encourage the unsheltered to take the next step for some more intense therapy work. The shelter also provides a trauma informed yoga class and is a kind of extension of the counseling group sessions. Ms. Fairman stated that there are hot meals served five days a week and the numbers of people are going up by a little percentage every year. There are about 130 hot meals being served five days a week. The two new things that have happened since the first of the year. First, the shelter had a small test program with the city where they provided some funding for a work program with the City's Parks Department, for those individuals that are interested in some income. Also, there is a small taskforce group that has been meeting since the middle of April 2024 that was organized by Cassie Arias Ward. There are participants from the city, county, and representatives from different organizations that provide some kind of service to the county population. The Taskforce goal is to prioritize the needs of the unsheltered and find solutions that would have the most positive effects. Ms. Fairman stated that the main her main goal is to establish a Central Intake Facility and someone qualified to run it. she would like to see is a central intake spot, and to find a and someone who would run it. Ms. Fairman stated that what was presented for the budget is the bare minimum of what is needed to keep the shelter in operation. She is asking the same amount from the city and the county with nothing extra.

**15. SWNMF-** Fair Board President Marcus Dominguez stated that the 2024 New Mexico State Fair is scheduled to take place October 3<sup>rd</sup> to October 7<sup>th</sup>. The Fair Board has a carnival under contract, and is scheduling entertainment and vendors. The 4-H and FFA youth are beginning to purchase animals to enter and show at the livestock shows. Mr. Dominguez stated that in the past years the following projects have been completed: replacement of heaters in buildings one and two, repairs and upgrades to crows nest and rodeo arena, new pens for the smaller animal arena, portable panels for the rodeo arena to set up stalls, upgraded electrical in livestock barn, and ripped and crushed raking of the footing in the rodeo arena. The facility continues to prioritize improvements that need to be completed some

which include: continued improvements to the arena, fall barriers on the bleachers, lighting, timing, PA system, entry way ramps to buildings one and two, and covered outdoor pavilion. These improvements will allow the Fair Board to host more and larger events and will attract more visitors to our county. Mr. Dominguez stated that he wanted the Commission Board to kindly consider an increase in funds for the fair in the amount of \$60,000, which would be \$15,000 per quarter.

**16. The Well-** Not Present

**17. Corre Caminos-** Not Present

- **Preliminary Budget-** County Manager Chris Brice presented the Preliminary Budget. Mr. Brice stated that there have been comments about funding and budgets relating to the Road Department and other departments, Capital Outlay, etc. There is no Capital Outlay funding for roads, it only exists for equipment and the county has routinely gone out for Capital Outlay for equipment for the Road Department. Mr. Brice stated that when the word “mismanagement” is used, it puts down the people everyone that works make sure that the budget is accurate and that everything is being done correctly. Mr. Brice stated that Road Department David Bailey has done a tremendous job. He just got back from two big grant decision making committees. The county got the full application from Colonias this time. Mr. Brice stated that this grant was \$2,000,000. Mr. Brice stated that the unencumbered balance as of June 30 is the money that rolls over to the next year. The ending cash balance from 2018-2019 is about \$9,000,000 in the General Fund and for 2023 the ending cash balance is almost \$15,000,000. Mr. Brice stated that year after year the cash balance in the General Fund is increasing and putting the County in a good position and overall the county is doing exceptionally well. Mr. Brice stated that since taking over as County Manager that he as told the department directors and elected officials that every year will be a flat budget, numbers are not changing, the only thing that will change is salaries based on the percentage that the Commission authorizes.

Mr. Brice stated that he along with County Attorney Charles Kretek, Director of Public Safety Pablo Montoya, HR Director Rosa Porras, Budget and Procurement Director Joanne Hethcox, Budget & Reporting Analyst Grisel Taylor, went to Portal, AZ for about a day and a half for a budget retreat. This was a great spot to have a budget retreat because there were no TVs in the rooms, not good phone signal, this allowed them to get a lot accomplished. A lot of the things that came out of this retreat and a lot of brainstorming was done with some of the things that need to be done. Mr. Brice stated that Treasurer Kristie Hobbs would really like to get a drive through for her office and this would consist of adding an expansion on the back of the building in order to take payments due to limited space inside of the office at this time.

Mr. Brice stated that as Ms. Hughes had mentioned earlier on in the meeting the old Parents as Teachers Health Office, there are Outdoor Recreation grants are being investigated and they are working with Mainstreet to establish a food truck court in

that area. The intent is to knock down the existing medical building across from the museum and put something where people are able to gather, have music, food trucks able to park, and outdoor games as well. Mr. Brice stated that there is already an established children's playground since the building belonged to Parents as Teachers.

Mr. Brice stated that some of the discussions regarding evidence that is stored at the Sheriff's Office have been an issue for some time since there is so much evidence in such a small space. The County is looking at possibly building them a new evidence room to accommodate.

Mr. Brice stated that the County is looking at raising the CDL drivers for the Road Department pay to \$18.00 an hour and creating a position out at the Road Department that is already essentially filled with Mr. Goodwin as a Sign Tech which will be made a permanent position.

Mr. Brice stated that some of the smaller changes in the Manager's Office, the Assistant to the County Manager will now be Executive Assistant, HR Legal Assistant to IPRA which Mr. Brice stated he is not sure what will become of this position since Malarie Carlos was just moved from this position to Procurement Specialist. Both Grant's Department Deputy Director Yossie Nieblas and Executive Assistant to the Manager Mayra Hernandez have been handling IPRA requests at this time. Mr. Brice stated that there is an Admin Assistant Position in the Manager's Office that will remain funded.

Mr. Brice stated that in Maintenance Department the custodial and the maintenance person assigned to Starmax belong to Maintenance Director Ricardo Hidalgo. This would have these positions working directly under Mr. Hidalgo making the chain of command easier.

Mr. Brice stated that the Clerk's Office did not come through with any adjustments of personnel or anything else.

Mr. Brice stated that the County is looking at adding a full-time position at the Sheriff's Office for an Evidence and Property Custodian, limiting the number of people from going in and out of the evidence room.

Mr. Brice stated that the CIO Position in IT that the county funded a couple of years ago is no longer funded. This position was a \$110,000 per year paid position.

Mr. Brice stated that Dispatch is a department that really needs to be looked at. Mr. Brice stated there needs to be 16 dispatchers total and at this time there are 12 dispatchers and 2 supervisors.

Mr. Brice stated that Bryan Reedy was essentially the Projects Manager and is now Director of the Grants Department and there is also an Administrative Assistant

position in the Grants Department that will remain funded until the position is filled pending room.

In the Road Department there was a Fleet Manager Position that was added which has been filled by Matthew Berry, former Procurement Specialist.

Mr. Brice stated that at the Detention Center there has added a Billing and Records Specialist Position added for the new Fiscal Year. Mr. Brice stated that eight of the Detention Officer positions have been made strictly Camera Monitors for people who are concerned with inmate contact.

Mr. Brice stated that Starmax Manager Mr. Troyer went through, and terminated some excess budgeted positions, these positions were never filled but were still budgeted. Starmax needs a full-time employee for the bowling area, at least two more bar tenders, and floor servers. Starmax now has a party host and the county may look into making this position a full-time position. Since the beginning of the renovation, the bar and kitchen have been closed. Mr. Brice stated that when the time comes to re-open there will be a need for more cooks, because that the kitchen will be bigger. The lead cook and bartender position will be taken over by the lead cook. Mr. Brice stated that the county will possibly be looking for mechanics for the batting cages, bumper cars, and all of the other mechanical items that have been added.

Mr. Brice stated that the county talked about another position in the Planning Department that would be an Animal Control Officer, which Devan Zamora is already certified in Animal Control through one and two. The reason this was brought up is because the Sheriff's Office gets a lot of calls for animal control and with the lack of deputies this would help both the Sheriff's Office and assist Code Enforcement.

Mr. Brice stated that the county will propose another five percent cost of living raise this year due to inflation.

Mr. Brice stated that in the Treasurer's Office Administrative Assistant Senior Lisa Maynes will be moved to an Executive Administrative Assistant position. This will be at range 40, and there are now two new hires in the Treasurer's Office.

Mr. Brice stated that in the Planning Department Administrative Assistant Aylin Carreon has been moved to an Administrative Assistant Senior Position and there will be a new Administrative Assistant position for this Department. Director Lupita Hernandez moving up to range 56 which is still below director salary.

Mr. Brice stated that there are no changes for the GIS Department.

Mr. Brice stated that Nathan Ortberg IT Tech will be moved to range 21.



Mr. Brice stated that in Maintenance Roberto Jimenez (Custodial) will move to \$16.80 per hour, and this is done according to what the five percent would look like when new hires come in and trying to keep a spread on years of service.

Mr. Brice stated that for the Manager's Office Payroll Specialist/Indigent Coordinator Alexandria Garcia was moved to range 24.17 and Accounts Payable Specialist Alizandra Mercado has resigned. Budget & Reporting Analyst Grisel Taylor is moving Range 60, and Martha Torres will move to \$15.75 an hour, and Mayra Hernandez will move from Administrative Assistant to Executive Administrative Assistant.

Mr. Brice stated that in Dispatch the county is hoping to go to \$16.00 an hour and \$17.50 after certified which would match what is being done at the Detention Center at this time.

Mr. Brice stated that with the Road Department Kelly Lane has been doing a lot in this department and his title will be changed to Deputy Director at \$34.00 an hour.

Mr. Brice stated that there have been no changes to Starmax.

Mr. Brice stated that there will be new hours as of July 1<sup>st</sup>. this schedule will consist of four nine-hour days and half day on Friday to match what the city is doing with the exception that the county offices will stay open a half hour later Monday through Thursday.

**Upcoming Meetings/Events (unless otherwise specified)**


- Citizen's College: Starmax: May 23, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.
- Luna County Offices Closed; Memorial Day: May 27, 2024
- Special Meeting: May 30 2024 at 2:00 p.m.

**Adjourn:** Chair Chandler adjourned the Work Session at 4:42pm

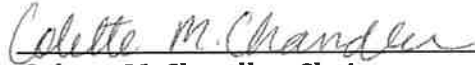
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LUNA COUNTY BOARD OF  
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

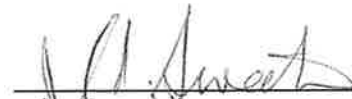
  
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Berenda McWright, Luna County Clerk

  
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Ray J. Trejo,  
Commissioner, District 1

Approved: 6-10-24

  
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Colette M. Chandler, Chairperson  
Commissioner, District 2



  
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John S. Sweetser  
Commissioner, District 3