New Mexico Land Grant Council (NMLGC)
May 29, 2026 – 10:00am
UNM Continuing Education
South Building – Room 207
1634 University Blvd. NE - Albuquerque
Zoom Meeting I.D. - 955 0758 7183

Final Meeting Minutes
Regular Council Meeting

1. Call to Order - Roll Call
Chairman Juan Sánchez called the meeting to order at 10:01am MDT. Roll call of the Council members: Monica Rodríguez, Andrea Padilla, and Juan Sánchez were present.

2. Moment of Silence for Councilor Steve Polaco
Chairman Juan Sánchez called for a moment of silence in honor of Councilor Steve Polaco, who passed away unexpectedly on April 30, 2026.

3. Notice of Inadvertent Quorum on May 15, 2026
Chairman Sanchez stated the following - "Andrea Padilla, Monica Rodriguez, and I attended services for Steve Polaco on May 15, 2026 in Los Ojos, New Mexico, which created an inadvertent quorum. However, we did not discuss Council business or collectively discuss public policy during the event and make this disclosure in the interest of transparency."

4. Introduction of Guests
Juan Sánchez (NMLGC); Monica Rodríguez (NMLGC); Andrea Padilla (NMLGC); Arturo Archuleta (NMLGC/LGMI); Anissa Baca (NMLGC/LGMI); Greta Archuleta (NMLGC); Jacobo Baca (NMLGC/LGMI); Fabian Valdez (LGMI); Olivia Romo (Office of Senator Martin Heinrich); A.J. Pacheco (Office of Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández); Heidi McRoberts (USFS - Cíbola NF); Camila Romero (NM SLO); Ron Chávez; Bella Mollard (USFS - Carson and Santa Fe NF); Tim Martinez (Santa Cruz de la Cañada LG); Melvyn Apodaca (Merced de los Pueblo de Tierra Amarilla); Senaida Anaya (Torreón LG); Don Bustos (Santa Cruz de la Cañada LG); Mike Howsden (Cristóbal de la Serna LG); Ricardo Dow y Anaya.

5. Approval of Agenda
Councilor Monica Rodríguez made a motion to approve the agenda; Councilor Andrea Padilla seconded the motion.
Roll call vote:
Councilor Rodríguez – aye
Councilor Padilla – aye
Chairman Sánchez – aye
The motion was passed.

6. Approval of Meeting Minutes from April 17, 2026 Regular Council Meeting
Councilor Padilla made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the April 17, 2026 Regular Council meeting; Councilor Rodríguez seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Councilor Rodríguez – aye
Councilor Padilla – aye
Chairman Sánchez – aye

The motion was passed.

7. Discussion and Possible Action on Federal and State Legislative & Policy Update

Federal

Olivia Romo (Office of Senator Martin Heinrich) reported that
Senator Heinrich, with Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández, introduced a special protection act for the Caja del Rio on May 8th and are moving forward toward a hearing. With Senator Ben R. Luján, he helped secure the 5-year extension of the Rural Community Hospital Demonstration Act, which helps communities like Artesia. On May 14, he joined environmental groups to speak out against recission of Roadless Rule and on May 15, he joined Senator Luján to send a letter to the U.S. Department of Agriculture regarding the restructuring of the Department of Agriculture and their concerns about the disruption of programs. On May 13, Senator Heinrich criticized the Trump Administration's USFS budget in a hearing, where cuts to wildfire resources will impact the federal response. On May 18, he released a statement on the confirmation of Steve Pearce as BLM Director and his fear of public land sell offs. Arturo Archuleta (NMLGC/LGMI) commented that the Council has yet to take an official position regarding the roadless rule, but pointed out that the rule hurt many traditional communities by making access more difficult. This concern was voiced during forest plan revision, where he questioned if implementation violated other federal statutes passed in 1980s, which called for explicit approval by Congress. It is a situation where communities are often at odds with wishes of environmental groups. Ms. Romo replied that she will be sure that the traditional community perspective will be heard. Councilor Padilla added that it seems like we are always all or nothing and restrictions hurt firefighting and hoped that areas could open with restricted access. Councilor Rodríguez agreed and added that traditional communities don't see ourselves as separate from nature, relying on roads for many uses, but also for stewardship in terms of hundred year, not thousand year blocks in which fire regimes are measured.

A.J. Pacheco (Office of Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández) thanked Chairman Sanchez for testifying on HR 2785, the traditional use bill. They are awaiting markups from the committee since the hearing. They are coordinating with the Senate bill, which has sat in committee after passing 6 months ago. The Congresswoman and her staff have met with local communities and Ghost Ranch regarding uranium mining. She also met at UNM, where they discussed the health impacts of uranium mining in other communities. He asked that land grants spread the word about RECA, where $100,000 tax free payments are available to New Mexicans harmed by radiation exposure through the actions of federal government. Mr. Pacheco added that he is also receptive to land grant concerns and input regarding the roadless rule. Chairman Sanchez and Mr. Archuleta thanked Mr. Pacheco and Congresswoman Leger Fernández's staff for their invitation and assistance. Mr. Archuleta reported that Rep. Melanie Stansbury offered amendment to Farm Bill to expand the eligibility of land grants and acequias for Farm Bill programs.

State Legislation

The Interim Land Grant Committee held its first meeting on Monday, May 18. Their proposed schedule is as follows:

- July 15-16 in Santa Fe – infrastructure bill with opposing agencies presenting concerns
- August 25-26 – in Española – disaster recovery
- September 16-17 – Taos – linea issues at Cristóbal de la Serna
- October 14 – Santa Fe

Councilor Padilla stated that it was her understanding that the Interim is not looking for land grants to report but want to focus on legislation; Mr. Archuleta replied that there are a few land grant specific presentations planned but that is by and large true.

8. Discussion and Possible Action on DFA Local Government Division and Infrastructure Planning and Development Division

No attendees from DFA or IPDD were present. Mr. Archuleta reported that he is still addressing the GRO funds from Rep. Miguel García misappropriated to the Los Vigiles Land Grant. DFA General Counsel deferred to Council's counsel to provide direction, but mistakenly believed there was not enough staff support to move the monies. Lisa Brown left Treaty Division (her last day was Tuesday May 26th) to take care of family and Megan Veach is now counsel to the Council. Regarding the O'Neill Estate, DFA General Counsel still believes that it must be swept. Lisa Brown reached out to O'Neill estate attorney, who provided good analysis, proving that they can keep the monies because of the nature of the source. He has also reached out to the Governor's office but has not heard back. General Fund monies revert on June 30 and the money needs to be moved by then, even though the actual sweep happens in October.

Mr. Archuleta added that there is not enough time to go through an RFP process and they have also discussed the opportunity for the Estate to take back the monies to hold in trust until this issue is addressed. When monies came in, the Council was very specific that it should be in a separate, non-reverting account. When monies came in, DFA did a BAR but did not consult the Council and the Council did not approve the BAR. The Estate attorney provided analysis about the statute and intent of the bequest. We will need to provide more information to Governor's office, including estate attorney analysis. If need be, the legislature can always reappropriate to the Council. Councilors Padilla and Rodríguez discussed how these bureaucratic processes a are holding land grants back, leading to the resignation of the San Joaquín Land Grant's treasurer.

ICIPs are due July 1st.

9. Discussion and Possible Action on State Land Office Update

Camila Romero (NM SLO) reported that the Bearcat project going well and yielding a lot of wood and may not be done by June 30th but the SLO will extend into July if needed.

10. Discussion and Possible Action on Bureau of Land Management Update

No BLM representative was present at the meeting.

Councilor Rodríguez made a motion to approve a letter of support for The Uncivilized Outdoorsman to the BLM; Councilor Padilla seconded the motion.
Roll call vote:

Councilor Rodríguez – aye
Councilor Padilla – aye
Chairman Sánchez – aye
The motion was passed.

Don Bustos (Santa Cruz de la Cañada LG) commented that the BLM has refused to pay the Santa Cruz Irrigation District a portion of the recreation fees collected for Santa Cruz Lake under an agreement (MOU) for the last several years. This typically ranges between $7,000-$15,000. The BLM refused to re-sign the agreement two years ago. Mr. Archuleta suggested that the Treaty Division (who represents acequias) can represent the SCID; Megan Veach commented that it will need to be approved by Enrique Romero and suggested sending a formal letter requesting assistance.

11. Discussion and Possible Action U.S. Forest Service Update

Bella Mollard reported that the Santa Fe and Carson NF held joint leadership meetings. In the Carson NF, 33 campgrounds have reopened and more are going to open today. The Carson NF is in stage 1 fire restriction (no smoking or campfires). The annual Valle Vidal closure to protect elk during this season. The Carson NF met with the NMAA for support and guidance. There is no movement on Uranium mining proposal. She asked if the Council has Council reached a decision on the MOU with the Santa Fe forest. The Council has completed its review and the NMDOJ is reviewing the document on behalf of itself and the Acequia Commission. Meghan Veach commented that she went through and made sure language matched the statute for the MOU. Heidi McRoberts (Cibola National Forest Supervisor) reported that the Sandia District Fuels Reduction projects at Sandia Crest is active and the road to crest is closed. The Sandia Crest recreation project will include renovation on the Crest house and redesign on the Crest site. The Huertas canyon fuel wood project in effect and they working with Ancestral Lands and crews from Santa Ana Pueblo. Regarding uranium mines, two plans of operations have been submitted to the Cibola in the Mount Taylor district.

Councilor Rodriguez made a motion to allow executive director to make any necessary changes to the MOU for President's signature.; Councilor Padilla seconded the motion.
Roll call vote:
Councilor Rodríguez – aye
Councilor Padilla – aye
Chairman Sánchez – aye
The motion was passed.

Mr. Archuleta added that the traditional use legislation calls for an MOU that would be different, principally because it includes Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior.

12. Discussion and Possible Action on Natural Resource Issues & Concerns

Monica Rodríguez reported that Senator Ben Ray Luján's office has been coordinating meetings regarding the protection of the northern Rio Grande watershed. The New Mexico Acequia Association and environmental justice organizations attending a meeting yesterday, where it was reported that counties are passing resolutions and Río Arriba County is charging hefty fees to use its roads. She did tour the site of the proposed uranium test mine and there is no movement. It is up to local communities to rally around issue and lead. Councilor Padilla commented that data

centers pose a threat to water and the Council should make known its position opposing them. Harvey Yates is exploring one in Valencia County and the center in Los Lunas is expanding. Their water consumption, traffic problems, and power consumption are a detriment to our communities. In Los Lunas developers want to extend the Manzano expressway.

13. Discussion and Possible Action on NM Department of Justice Treaty Division Update & Requests

Megan Veach (NMDOJ – Treaty Division) reported that Lisa Brown left the DOJ. They have hired two summer interns. The Division received findings and updates in the Manzano case, which upheld the political subdivision status of the land grant and their immunity from adverse possession suits. The San Antonio de las Huertas case, they filed writ of error with the District Court, where opposition argued that land grants are not immune as political subdivisions. The Division is waiting to see if the Court of Appeals request to New Mexico Supreme Court will be allowed in the Cristóbal de la Serna case and the she has been working on joint memorial with stakeholders to identify possible resolutions to present to ILGC.

14. Discussion and Possible Action on Council FY 2026, FY 2027 and FY 2028 Budget

FY 2026

A budget update was provided, including $5,207.06 in council travel, $51,217.50 in legal service contract, $304,922.63 in staff, $26,229.20 in surveyor contract, $19,706.60 in facility rental, $71,836.04 in F&A for grand total of $493,580.81 spent and $133,319.19 remaining.

FY 2027

None.

FY 2028

Mr. Archuleta presented that staff recommendation for the FY 2028 Council budget, a $1.3 million budget (in packet), including: Legal Service Contract $60,000; Operating Grants to Land Grants (Bonds, Insurance, etc) $3,000; Publishing $2,000; In State Travel $10,500; Out of State Travel $6,500; FY UNM Inter-Governmental Services Agreement $1,214,500; Staff Salary & Fringe $840,043.

Councilor Padilla made a motion to approve the staff recommendation for the Council's FY 2028 budget; Councilor Rodríguez seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Councilor Rodríguez – aye
Councilor Padilla – aye
Chairman Sánchez – aye

The motion was passed.

15. Discussion and Possible Action UNM FY 2026 Intergovernmental Services Agreement

Mr. Archuleta presented Pay Request #9 for $43,812.11 including, but not limited to, $30,407.78 in project personnel, $2,693.25 under the surveyor contract, $1,970.66 in facility rental, and $7,302.02 in F&A.

Councilor Padilla made a motion to approve Pay Request #9 for $43,812.11; Councilor Rodríguez seconded the motion.
Roll call vote:
Councilor Rodríguez – aye
Councilor Padilla – aye
Chairman Sánchez – aye
The motion was passed.

16. Discussion and Possible Action on Legal Services Contract Update & Requests
NMLA pay request 2 for work from December for March for legal services for Cristóbal de la Serna, Manzano, San Antonio de las Huertas, Tierra Amarilla, Juan Bautista Baldes, and Abiquiú Land Grants

Councilor Rodríguez made a motion to approve New Mexico Legal Aid Pay Request #2 for $25,590.00; Councilor Padilla seconded the motion.
Roll call vote:
Councilor Rodríguez – aye
Councilor Padilla – aye
Chairman Sánchez – aye
The motion was passed.

17. Discussion and Possible Action on Professional Surveyor Services Contract Update & Requests
Territorial Land Surveying submitted invoice #05292026 for $7,032.38 for work on the Cristóbal de la Serna court case.

Councilor Padilla made a motion to approve Territorial Land Surveying invoice #05292026 for $7,032.38; Councilor Rodríguez seconded the motion.
Roll call vote:
Councilor Rodríguez – aye
Councilor Padilla – aye
Chairman Sánchez – aye
The motion was passed.

18. Discussion and Possible Action on Land Grant Registry Update
Mr. Baca reported that the following items were submitted to the New Mexico Community Land Grant Registry: Santa Cruz LG - board membership; Santa Barbara LG - 2026 election results; Cristóbal de la Serna LG – bylaws.

19. Discussion and Possible Action on Land Grant-Merced Institute Update
LGMI, with ARID, CRP, applied for the UNM Grand Challenges funding, seeking monies (up to $200,000) for wildfire resilience. The LGMI will coordinate meetings with organizations, land grant and acequia communities, regarding their needs. The latest *El Grito de las Mercedes* newsletter s in the packet. Student Fabian Valdez is helping the Trampas LG with a brochure for the Trampas church's 250th anniversary and will then work to update posters used for Treaty Day. Mr. Baca reported that he is analyzing and distributing to boards of trustees electronic copies of

land grant documents found in the Spanish Archives of New Mexico. These come from microfilm digitized by the Council a few years back, as well as high quality color copies found on Ancestry.com. Mr. Archuleta commented that the LGMI needs to obtain past director LM García y Griego's research from the National Archives. He added that David Benavides pointed out that confirmation by Congress or the Court of Private Land Claims, not issuance of patent, has the force of law regarding ownership. Mr. Baca added that he is coordinating a meeting with Georgia Roybal, the NHCC and UNM Special Collections regarding Roberto Mondragón's collection.

20. Discussion and Possible Action on Correspondence
The Lower Gallinas requested a letter regarding their status as a political subdivision of New Mexico.

21. Discussion and Possible Action on Staff Assignments
Mr. Baca reported that the Council has received dozen or so membership applications for the Torreón Land Grant and that Council staff will table at June fiestas in Torreón.

22. Public Comments – discussion only
Ricardo Dow y Anaya offered his condolences to the Council for the loss of Councilor Steve Polaco. Health issues have made him pull back from public work and his brother in Belen is being strongarmed into allowing powerlines, sale, lease, or facing imminent domain. Its happening to farms, ranches, acequia communities and land grants and he asked if there is an attorney that people can approach for advice and representation. Councilor Padilla commented that people are selling agricultural water rights and Councilor Rodríguez commented that an oil company purchased land in Gallina and plans to drill wells into its artisan spring. She added that the Consejo should be the voice for these issues, including datacenters. Communities have the passion to protect their lands and their rights – they just need the assistance in organizing.

23. Miscellaneous Announcements
None.

24. Date and Location for June Council Meeting
The June 2026 New Mexico Land Grant Council meeting will be held on June 22, 2026 in Albuquerque at UNM Continuing Education at 10:00am.

25. Adjournment
Councilor Padilla made a motion to adjourn; Councilor Rodríguez seconded the motion.
Roll call vote:

Councilor Rodríguez – aye
Councilor Padilla – aye
Chairman Sanchez - aye

The motion was passed. The meeting adjourned at 12:12 pm MDT.

Approved:

_____ _____
Chair Date