

New Mexico Land Grant Council (NMLGC)
July 11, 2025 – 10:00am
UNM Continuing Education
South Building – Room 207
1634 University Blvd. NE - Albuquerque
Zoom Meeting I.D. - 929 8150 0794

**Final Meeting Minutes
Regular Council Meeting**

1. Call to Order - Roll Call – 10:02 am

Chairman Juan Sánchez called the meeting to order at 10:02am MDT. Roll call of the Council members: Steve Polaco, Monica Rodríguez (virtual), and Juan Sánchez were present; Andrea Padilla was absent.

2. Council Potential Quorum Disclosure

None.

3. Introduction of Guests

Juan Sánchez (NMLGC); Steve Polaco (NMLGC); Monica Rodríguez (NMLGC); Arturo Archuleta (NMLGC/LGSP); Greta Archuleta (NMLGC); Anissa Baca (NMLGC/LGMI); Jacobo Baca (NMLGC/LGMI); Amanda Luján (Torreón, NM); Bella Mollard (USFS – Carson NF & Santa Fe NF); Camila Romero (NM SLO); Eric Chávez (Office of Sen. Ben R. Luján); Tokey Boswell (BLM); Aurora Valdez (Office of Sen. Martin Heinrich); Mark Zientek (Office of Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández); A.J. Pacheco (Office of Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández); Joaquín Argüello (Arroyo Hondo Arriba Community LG); Mike Howsden (Cristóbal de la Serna LG) Lisa Brown (NM DOJ – Treaty Division); Fabian López (UNM Grad Student); Enrique Romero (NM DOJ – Treaty Division).

4. Approval of Agenda

Councilor Polaco made a motion to approve the agenda; Councilor Rodríguez seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Councilor Rodríguez – aye

Councilor Polaco – aye

Chairman Sánchez – aye

The motion was passed.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes from June 20, 2025 Regular Council Meeting

Councilor Polaco made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the June 20, 2025 Regular Council meeting; Councilor Rodríguez seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Councilor Rodríguez – aye

Councilor Polaco – aye

Chairman Sánchez – aye

The motion was passed.

6. Discussion and Possible Action on FY26 Open Meetings Act Resolution

Council members review the FY 2026 Open Meetings Act Resolution for the New Mexico Land Grant Council. (In packet)

Councilor Rodríguez made a motion that the Council adopt the FY 2026 Open Meetings Act Resolution); Councilor Polaco seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Councilor Rodríguez – aye

Councilor Polaco – aye

Chairman Sánchez – aye

The motion was passed.

7. Discussion and Possible Action on U.S. Forest Service Update

Bella Mollard (USFS) reported that the Laguna Fire has grown to 11,334 acres and is 87% contained. The fire is 8 miles north of NM 96. Councilor Rodríguez thanked the Carson National Forest for the fire updates and wanted an opportunity to discuss the historic boundaries and the impact of USFS management on land grants and acequias.

8. Discussion and Possible Action on State Land Office Update

Camila Romero reported that the NM SLO is still waiting on Dee Tarr of the Claunch Pinto SWCD to get a contractor lined up for the Bearcat project. Chairman Sanchez added that Ms. Tarr would reissue the RFP as it changed from mastication to chipping. The Villanueva Project yielded 65 cords and the SLO hopes to do another phase next year if they have funding. Arturo Archuleta reported that the Council was unable to pay for the removal of fuelwood at the Villanueva Project before the fiscal year ended as it missed the deadline to register new vendors in the UNM system. The Council did pay for permits and the San Miguel del Bado Land Grant will cover the cost of removal.

9. Discussion and Possible Action on Federal and State Legislative Update

Federal

A.J. Pacheco (Office of Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández) shared a copy of the press release and bill text for H.R. 4284, the cemetery conveyance bill. Congresswoman Leger Fernández is requesting a hearing from the House Natural Resource Committee. He added that he will attend the Interim Land Grant meeting in Las Vegas. Congresswoman Leger Fernández's website shows the phases of the "Big Beautiful Bill" and its effects, from cutting SNAP and Medicaid to \$50 million being withheld in education alone from a past continuing resolution. Councilor Polaco stated that there is an old cemetery on the Sergeant Wildlife Area that they would like to access. Mr. Pacheco responded that the state wildlife areas is outside of the federal jurisdiction but he would inquire.

Aurora Valdez (Office of Sen. Martin Heinrich) reported that Senator Heinrich was in Ruidoso, where he and the congressional delegation welcomed the emergency declaration from the White House. Senator Heinrich has been busy discussing impact of the Big Beautiful Bill on Medicaid and held a roundtable at Health Leadership High School to discuss impact of the Big Beautiful Bill on student health. He was happy that the sale of public lands was omitted from the final bill. She closed that she is leaving Senator Heinrich's office for a position with the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department. Council members and attendees thanked her for her work and wished her good luck.

Eric Chavez (Office of Senator Ben R. Luján) reported that Senator Luján is working on amendments to include RECA and also celebrated that public land sales were excluded from the bill. The Senator asked for guidance for RECA applicants. He will be with Senator Heinrich in Ruidoso today and his staff are happy to help out with those needing disaster assistance. Senator Luján introduced a bill protecting physical therapy, especially for seniors. In the “vote-o-rama” for the “Big Beautiful Bill,” he tried to introduce amendments to protect SNAP and Medicaid, but Republicans voted all of them down. The BBB lowers royalty rates for coal and expands coal and offshore drilling and also calls for expedited NEPA review for energy projects. He is working with Chairman Mike Lee to get the traditional use legislation heard by the Senate Natural Resources Committee. The Senate is working on recissions package, cancelling \$9.4 billion in USAID, CPB, and foreign aid.

State

The Interim Land Grant Committee meeting will take place on July 14 and 15 at New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas. Mr. Archuleta will present for the NMLGC on Monday, July 14; Chairman Sanchez will present on fire recovery on Tuesday, July 15.

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

Tokey Boswell (BLM) reported that the BLM is monitoring the impacts of the ‘Big Beautiful Bill,’ U.S. Supreme Court decisions, and executive orders on agency actions and staff reductions. BLM reps met with the San Joaquín del Río de Chama LG this week to discuss the Continental Divide Trail. He reported that the BLM is still processing the NMLGC’s request for the patents of active land grants, which was submitted to the BLM nearly a year ago.

11. Discussion and Possible Action on NM Dept. of Justice & Treaty Division Updates and Requests

Enrique Romero (NMDNJ Treaty Division) reported that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo Division has experienced the most support and staffing under Attorney General Raúl Tórrez’s leadership. They currently have four attorneys, an administrative coordinator and a student intern from Yale. Megan Veach and Thomas Davis are newly barred attorneys, meeting with acequias and land grants, one on one. The entire NMDNJ, the Attorney General and the Executive Team have been very supportive. The Division will present at the Interim Land Grant Committee meeting in Las Vegas on Monday. The work of the Treaty Division can be broken down into 5 categories.

- 1 – Representation of the Council and Acequia Commission. The Division is trying to help Acequia Commission grow and retain permanent staff. The Division also submitted an amicus brief on behalf of Council regarding the Cristóbal de la Serna case through an interrogatory appeal, where they argued land grant immunity from a suit as a political subdivision.
- 2 - Direct representation of land grants and acequias – The Division serves as legal council for the Cristóbal de la Serna LG in their present case regarding lineas and has worked to assess the impacts of the 1941 assessment survey. They are co-council with NM Legal Aid on San Antonio de las Huertas LG’s case, which the county assessor appealed in district court decision of state tax board. There is a potential representation agreement with five land grants that were effected by the 1897 *U.S. v. Sandoval* decision, and may do a representation agreement with the San Joaquin land grant on their use of the water rights in the Cañón de Chama.

- 3 - Policy – The Treaty Division was active in the legislative session and has advocated for acequias seeking OSE recognition. They advised the Lower Gallinas and Los Vigiles Land Grants on FEMA payments and are working with the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant regarding the Laguna del Campo transfer.
- 4 – The Division fields complaints sent to the office, which include OMA violations, election complaints, etc.
- 5 – The Division has not yet done so, but can serve the role of mediator, avoiding costly and time-consuming litigation.

Another land grant and acequia leadership conference is planned for the fall. Lisa Brown (NMDOJ Treaty Division) reported that they did a national institute for trial training, which helped all attorneys who are not litigators. She worked with an acequia in Taos regarding a contract dispute arising from bad engineering services. Thomas Lane gave presentation to the *US v. Sandoval* land grants regarding stare decisis. He is also working with the Taos Valley Acequia Association in inclusion of acequias and land grants in the Taos County comprehensive plan. Enrique Romero sent the Taos County Commission a letter asking that they delay adoption of draft comprehensive plan until they engage with Taos County land grants and acequias. Councilor Rodriguez commented that she works with acequias at the NMAA, and that they must have their information in order when requesting federal funds.

Councilor Polaco asked if any work is being completed on the Tameling case; Mr. Archuleta responded that he will send his analysis of the case to the NMDOJ, but that there would need to be the “right case” to overturn aspects of Tameling decision, to make good law. He also plans to talk with NMDOJ on land grant’s power over “common waters.” Councilor Polaco asked about the spring fed spigot near the Laguna del Campo, Lisa Brown (NM DOJ) stated that she assumed that it was adjudicated to the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, while Mr. Archuleta assumed it was not a part of any litigation and that they would need to consult with David Benavides for clarification.

12. Discussion and Possible Action on Natural Resource Issues & Concerns - Local, State and Federal

None.

13. Discussion and Possible Action on changes to the State Audit Act Tier System Reporting

Mr. Archuleta reported that NMLGC staff were invited to a meeting with the Office of the State Auditor to discuss an amendment of state audit act (in packet) and service to small government entities. The CPA lobby defeated a part of the bill, so the tier system requirements were separated and they want to move a bill to change the tier system. OSA wanted feedback from technical assistant providers and entities themselves. They stated that, as they interpret the law, once an entity gets enough revenue to need a full blown audit, even for one year, they need to do a full audit every single year. Assets are also an consideration when determining if a full blown audit is necessary. OSA is seeking feedback from the NMLGC and land grants.

14. Discussion and Possible Action on FY 2026 Land Grant-Merced Assistance Fund Certifications and Approval Process

The LGMAF certifications have been sent out to land grant several times. No complete sets of the seven certifications have been returned to date.

15. Discussion and Possible Action on Council FY 2025, FY 2026, and FY 2027 Budget FY 2025

Mr. Archuleta provided a budget update (in packet). The Council still does not know the total expenditure (\$3,300) of DFA's administrative fee. Legal services and publishing were fully expended and only \$695 is left under the UNM IGSA. For the total budget, only \$9,203 was reverted of a \$626,000 budget. Mr. Archuleta discussed BAR #2, which adjusted budget line items to actual expenditures, including: publishing - increased from \$5,000 to \$5,532, \$532 added from in state travel. Under the UNM IGSA, staff salary and fringe increased by \$3,473, in state travel increased by \$1,129, out of state travel decreased by \$260, postage decreased by \$19, \$75 was added to pay for a nameplate, the natural resource contract was decreased by \$4,100.

Councilor Polaco made a motion to approve BAR #2; Councilor Rodríguez seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Councilor Rodríguez – aye

Councilor Polaco – aye

Chairman Sánchez – aye

The motion was passed.

FY 2026

None.

FY 2027

None.

16. Discussion and Possible Action UNM FY 2025 & FY 2026 Intergovernmental Services Agreement

Mr. Archuleta presented an IBR (internal bar) for the IGSA, including adjusting the administrative professional salary, increasing it by \$4,623, decreasing fringe benefits \$1,148, decreased postage by \$18, increasing in state travel by \$1,129, decreasing out of state travel by \$263, decreasing other professional services by \$5,871, adding \$648 to facility rental; and adding \$900 to license and permits.

Councilor Rodriguez Polaco made a motion to approve the IGSA internal BAR, with noted change of 4623 to administrative professional salary rather than faculty salary; Councilor Polaco seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Councilor Rodríguez – aye

Councilor Polaco – aye

Chairman Sánchez – aye

The motion was passed.

Mr. Archuleta presented Pay Request #9 for \$99,952.26, including \$35,744.97 in project personnel, \$1,457.40 in in state travel; \$3,133.56 in facility rental, \$29,353 in surveyor services, \$2,171.56 in Quickbooks supports and \$5,000 in economic development contracts, \$1,970.66 in facility rental \$16,658.71 in F&A.

Councilor Polaco made a motion to approve Pay Request #9, including final invoices for Territorial Land Surveying, UNM School Of Law Clinic, TUO and CB4U, for \$99,952.26; Councilor Rodríguez seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Councilor Rodríguez – aye

Councilor Polaco – aye

Chairman Sánchez – aye

The motion was passed.

Councilor Polaco made a motion for approval of invoice 4155 from Portable Micrographics for \$5,531.93; Councilor Rodríguez seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Councilor Rodríguez – aye

Councilor Polaco – aye

Chairman Sánchez – aye

The motion was passed.

17. Discussion and Possible Action on Legal Services 2025 & 2026 Contract Update & Legal Services Requests

FY 2025 was fully expended and FY 2026 has been signed and sent to State by New Mexico Legal Aid, where it is awaiting approval at DFA.

18. Discussion and Possible Action on Professional Surveyor Services Contract Update & Requests

Invoices were approved in item 16 above.

19. Discussion and Possible Action Land Grant Merced Institute Update

Mr. Archuleta reported that the LGMI has worked with estate of Malcolm Ebright (d. June 12, 2025) to continue to purchase of materials from his collection, which will be received as hard copies rather than digital copies.

20. Discussion and Possible Action on Land Grant Registry Update

The Merced del Pueblo de Chililí submitted the results of their most recent election.

21. Discussion and Possible Action on Correspondence

None.

22. Discussion and Possible Action on Staff Assignments

An editorial appeared in the *Taos News*, written by Leandro Ortiz, that was very negative and highly critical of modern land grants and contains misinformation on political subdivision status. Chairman Sanchez directed staff to wait to respond to the article.

23. Public Comments – discussion only

Councilor Polaco reported that Rio Arriba County is asking the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant to resurvey the colonia so they may request this from the Council. Amanda Lujan from Torreon asked questions regarding the Torreón Land Grant, asking if the land grant or heirs can reclaim land grant land that were already deeded out. Mr. Archuleta responded that every case was

different and it depends on the nature of the deed, the language in the deed, etc. She responded that she feared that once the land grant is reestablished, members of the grant would have rights to access her private property. Mr. Archuleta added that the Council is working to schedule a meeting with the Torreon LG to discuss the potential of NMLGC helping the Grant with their upcoming election.

24. Miscellaneous Announcements

Councilor Rodríguez reported that the Community Governance Attorney Commission met on June 26th and reviewed candidates interested in work with land grants, acequias and colonias. She added that all are invited to the San Joaquin del Rio de Chama celebration on August 2, 2025 at the Echo Amphitheatre campground. Chairman Sanchez reminded land grants that the end of one fiscal year just passed and another one has started, so they need to be sure to have passed their new OMA resolutions and other new year tasks. Lisa Brown asked for the best location for water rights training, Santa Fe or Albuquerque?

25. Date and Location for August Council Meeting

The August 2025 New Mexico Land Grant Council meeting will be held on August 22, 2025 in Albuquerque at UNM Continuing Education at 10:00am.

26. Adjournment

Councilor Polaco made a motion to adjourn; Councilor Rodríguez seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Councilor Polaco – aye

Councilor Rodríguez – aye

Councilor Padilla – aye

Chairman Sánchez – aye

The motion was passed. The meeting adjourned at 12:06pm MDT.

Approved:

Chair

Date