

New Mexico Land Grant Council (NMLGC)
February 27, 2026 – 10:00am
UNM Continuing Education
South Building – Room 207
1634 University Blvd. NE - Albuquerque
Zoom Meeting I.D. - 937 2529 5685

**Final Meeting Minutes
Regular Council Meeting**

1. Call to Order - Roll Call

Chairman Juan Sánchez called the meeting to order at 10:01am MST. Roll call of the Council members: Steve Polaco, Monica Rodríguez, Andrea Padilla, and Juan Sánchez were present.

2. Notice of Inadvertent Quorum

Santa Fe – January 27, 2026

“Andrea Padilla, Monica Rodriguez, Steve Polaco and I attended a hearing for HB 21 on February 27, 2026 during the New Mexico State Legislative session at the State Capitol, 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.

Santa Fe – February 2, 2026

“Andrea Padilla, Monica Rodriguez, Steve Polaco and I attended the 2026 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and Acequia Day celebration at the New Mexico State Capitol, 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.

3. Introduction of Guests

Juan Sánchez (NMLGC); Steve Polaco (NMLGC); Monica Rodríguez (NMLGC); Andrea Padilla (NMLGC); Arturo Archuleta (NMLGC/LGMI); Anissa Baca (NMLGC/LGMI); Jacobo Baca (NMLGC/LGMI); Fabian Valdez (LGMI); Don Bustos (Santa Cruz de la Cañada LG); A.J. Pacheco (Office of Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández); Mike Howsden (Cristóbal de la Serna LG); Eric Chávez (Office of Sen. Ben R. Luján); Louis Gallegos (San Miguel del Bado LG); Camila Romero (NM State Land Office); Anna Stearns (NM Forest Stewards Guild); Lisa Brown (NMDOJ); Leonard Martínez (San Joaquín del Río de Chama LG); Lenora Chávez; Bella Mollard (USFS); Richard Valdez

4. Approval of Agenda

Councilor Andrea Padilla made a motion to approve the agenda; Councilor Steve Polaco seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Councilor Rodríguez – aye

Councilor Padilla – aye

Councilor Polaco – aye

Chairman Sánchez – aye

The motion was passed.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes from January 16, 2026 Regular Council Meeting

Councilor Polaco made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the January 16, 2026 Regular Council meeting; Councilor Monica Rodríguez seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Councilor Rodríguez – aye

Councilor Padilla – aye

Councilor Polaco – aye

Chairman Sánchez – aye

The motion was passed.

6. Discussion and Possible Action on State Land Office Update

Camila Romero reported that Dee Tarr plans to start the Bearcat Project contractor in May. The Villanueva project will begin in August. Arturo Archuleta (NMLGC/LGMI) reported that Louis Gallegos of the San Miguel del Bado LG requested for a land grant position on the State Land Office Advisory Board (letter in packet). Ms. Romero clarified that board members are named by and serve at the discretion of the state land commissioner and serve 6 year terms. Mr. Gallegos commented that even if a “land grant position” is not created, maybe a person from a land grant can be named for an at-large board position on State Lands Trust Advisory Board.

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

Mr. Boswell was unable to attend the meeting but provided the following update via e-mail:

- BLM-New Mexico is undergoing a change in leadership, as State Director Melanie Barnes has left the organization. For the next 120 days, Gera Ashton will be the acting State Director. Her position of record is as the Associate State Director of BLM-Arizona. Tokey Boswell will remain your BLM liaison to the Council.
- The Fire programs of the Department of Interior agencies have been consolidated into the new Wildland Fire Service (WFS). Leadership for the new organization is still being finalized. Land Grant communities should continue to work with the local BLM district and field office leadership as related to prescribed fire needs, fuel wood collecting, and related items. A list and contact information of the district offices can be found at the bottom of this page: [New Mexico | Bureau of Land Management](#)
- BLM received a request from Leonard T Martínez, president of the San Joaquín Del Río de Chama Land Grant, who requested GIS shape files for the Cañón de Chama Land Grant Irrigation Project. The request was sent to our GIS team, who were able to respond to Mr. Martinez with the requested files.
- BLM has received the Council's priorities for the next batch of certified patent documents, and will begin work on those packages. The priorities include the Abiquiú Land Grant, Chililí Land Grant, San Joaquín del Río de Chama Land Grant, San Miguel del Bado Land Grant, Santa Cruz de la Cañada Land Grant and the Las Trampas Land Grant

The San Miguel del Bado Land Grant has requested a letter of support for their Recreation and Public Purposes Act application. They are applying for the transfer of 68 acres parcel with 2 cemeteries.

Councilor Padilla made a motion that the Council offer a letter of support for the San Miguel del Bado Land Grant's Recreation and Public Purposes Act application to the BLM; Councilor Rodríguez seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Councilor Rodríguez – aye

Councilor Padilla – aye

Councilor Polaco – aye

Chairman Sánchez – aye

The motion was passed.

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

Bella Mollard (USFS) reported that the Santa Fe National Forest cancelled the Blanco Prescribed burn this week. Shaun Sanchez and Ruben Montes of the Santa Fe NF met with the Juan Bautista Baldes Land Grant to discuss projects and conducted site visits on the HPCC recovery area. The Carson National Forest continues with the Enchanted Circle projects, which have mechanically thinned 343 acres and treated 2,000 acres with prescribed fire. The Las Trampas LG (which purchased a wood processor) and Santa Barbara Land Grant met with James Durán of the Carson NF to discuss the ongoing wood project. The 6.7 million acres Rio Chama Project is moving along, having reduced wildfire risk on 5.7 million acres and invested 78% of funding on timber harvesting and processing. This includes 750 partners and organizations, which hold quarterly meetings, the next being in April.

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

Federal

A.J. Pacheco (Office of Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández) reports that Congresswoman Leger Fernández is hopeful that the cemetery bill will get floor vote in house. There is no movement on the Traditional Use Bill. Their office is accepting 2027 CPF funding applications. The deadline is March 9 and she will fund 20 projects this year. The House is accepting applications under the CPFs for Agriculture, Commerce/Justice/Science, Defense, Energy/Water, Homeland Security, Interior, Health, Transportation/HUD projects. No SAMS number is needed to apply, but will be needed when awarded. Mr. Jacobo Baca mentioned that the Las Trampas Grant is interested in applying. Councilor Polaco asked for a letter of support from the Council for the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant's application for funding to add an elevator to their administration building. Mr. Archuleta stated that the LGMI may participate in a proposal that might work through a community partner and that the Las Trampas project might be ideal.

The LGMI has discussed applying with the Southwest Hispanic Research Institute and the ARID Institute at UNM. He congratulated the San Joaquín del Río de Chama Land Grant on their CDS award. Councilor Rodriguez thanked the Council and others for their support. The \$605,000 award is for the remodeling of the Salon de Suazo, which will serve as a community and economic development center. Eric Chávez (Office of Sen. Ben R. Luján) congratulated the San Joaquín del Río de Chama Land Grant and added that Sen. Lujan is happy to move the project forward. Mr. Chávez added the CDS application for Sen. Lujan's office has opened and closes March 27th. The Senator's website has lists of eligible projects and required 2 letters of support. Senator Luján's skipped the State of the Union address and hosted a round table on effects of trade war, the effects on small businesses and increased household costs, including groceries. RECA claims are still being accepted. The legislative team has met with the Republican Energy Committee on the Traditional Use Bill. The bill did pass this committee in December of last year and they are awaiting the committee report and want to move the legislation to Senate floor for a vote. The

Farm Bill remains in limbo. Councilor Padilla commented that many people in the HPCC are waiting for their FEMA payment and haven't received anything. Mr. Chávez responded that the Senator's office can do some casework to assist. The New Mexico delegation has called out FEMA issues, including transparency and accountability. Mr. Pacheco stated his office can help as well.

State

Mr. Archuleta reported on a busy 30-day legislative session. The Land Grant and Acequia Infrastructure Act did not pass. The original bill, HB 21, was tabled by the House Taxation and Revenue Committee. Senate Bill 59 never got out of Committee's Committee. The State Board of Finance raised questions of constitutionality of legislation, even though it is designed off of current programs. Rep. Linda Serrato reintroduced the legislation as HB 371, using her generic bill, and worked with House Appropriations & Finance Committee Chair Rep. Nathan Small and his director of finance. Mr. Archuleta commented that he was impressed with the tenacity of Rep. Serrato and her willingness to fight for our communities. The legislation passed the House Appropriations and Finance Committee and went to House floor, where it passed with vast bi-partisan report. In the Senate, Senator Munoz, the Board of Finance, and DFA's general Counsel all raised issues. When their concerns were addressed, they turned to purported constitutional issues. Proponents also met with the Governor's office and the Board of Finance, but they never gave their support, so no hearing ever took place in the Senate. The Council is excited to work with Sen. Jaramillo and Rep. Serrato to appear before the LFC in interim to work through issues for next legislative session.

HB 88, amending the Land Grant Merced Support Act, got stuck in Senate Finance. Rep. McQueen retiring from the House to run for State Land Commissioner so we will need a new sponsor to reintroduced the legislation. HM 24 relating to the Las Vegas LG, passed and the Council received a letter from Rep. Serrato and Rep. Anita Gonzales asking the Council for support to move the Las Vegas LG under 49.1 or to amend their current statute. While other legislation did not pass, land grants did very well in capital outlay. Fifteen land grants received \$3,055,000 in capital outlay and another \$1,000,000 was reauthorized. Mr. Archuleta commended Council staff Anissa Baca for her work on capital outlay and reauthorizations. Rep. Serrato's land grant and acequia museum feasibility study didn't pass because it lacked steps in the capital outlay process. Mr. Archuleta floated the idea of a BBER study on the economic impact of infrastructure fund. Councilor Rodríguez commented that Mr. Archuleta did a great job leading land grants on policy, helping us get a better understanding of how the funding works. She added that we need to grow our capacity, possibly by growing staff or contractors or personnel and that this should be a priority. Mr. Archuleta reported that the NMLGC Budget stayed flat while the Los Vigiles LG got GROW monies for operations. If the NMLGC gets in front of the LFC, we want to approach with a packet of requests, including infrastructure bill, NMLGC budget growth, etc.

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

Anna Stearns of the Forest Stewards Guild introduced herself and discussed some of the work of the Guild. Councilor Rodríguez commented on the Healthy Soils program and added that the San Joaquin Grant is working with Anna Jaramillo Scarborough of the Forest Guild (retired from the USFS) on conservation planning. Councilor Padilla stated that the Town of Tomé Land Grant is considering applying for a Healthy Soils Grant but asked if grant recipients can only hire LLCs (i.e., businesses).

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

Lisa Brown (NMDOJ) reported that Thomas Davis left the NMDOJ for a position at the OSE. The NMDOJ filed motion to dismiss in the San Antonio de las Huertas Land Grant’s response to a quiet title suit. The plaintiff’s response was confusing and was countered with a sovereign immunity claim, which received input from David Benavides of NMLA. The case will have a hearing and counsel will need to deliver oral arguments. The Treaty Division is also assisting the San Antonio de las Huertas on the property tax protest case against Sandoval County. Councilor Polaco commented that the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant is trying to get info from the acequias on the 1939 agreement on the Laguna del Campo. Mr. Archuleta commented that the land grant may need to come to new agreement with the acequia. Ms. Brown added that the Treaty Division filed an amicus brief for Cristobal de la Serna case and that 516 Arts and the Outpost withdrew their claim to funds from the late Sen. Bill O’Neill’s estate

12. Discussion and Possible Action on Council FY 2026 Budget

A budget update was provided, including \$ 3,513.66 in council travel, \$213,686.79 in staff, \$13,794.62 in facility rental, \$50,093.52 in F&A for grand total of \$338,447.31 spent.

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

Mr. Archuleta presented Pay Request #6 for \$45,037.74 including, but not limited to, \$30,520.50 in project personnel, \$1,970.66 in facility rental, and \$7,506.29 in F&A.

Councilor Polaco made a motion to approve Pay Request #6 for \$45,037.74; Councilor Rodríguez seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Councilor Rodríguez – aye

Councilor Padilla – aye

Councilor Polaco – aye

Chairman Sánchez – aye

The motion was passed.

14. Discussion and Possible Action on Legal Services Contract Update & Requests

Mr. Archuleta reported that David Benaides and Victoria Lovato are working hard on pending litigation. NMLA will likely draw down on all contract funds before the end of the fiscal year. Land grants that have monies no longer qualify for free services and they will need to cover NMLA legal costs if there is a gap in funding and the FY 2027 Council contract.

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

Invoice 02272026 for \$3,886.97 from Territorial Land Surveying for work on the Cristóbal de la Serna LG was presented.

Councilor Polaco made a motion to approve Invoice 02272026 from Territorial Land Surveying for \$3,886.97; Councilor Rodriguez seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Councilor Rodríguez – aye

Councilor Padilla – absent
Councilor Polaco – aye
Chairman Sánchez – aye

The motion was passed.

16. Discussion and Possible Action on Land Grant Registry Update

Mr. Baca reported that the following items were submitted to the NM Land Grant Registry

- Santa Cruz LG - updated bylaws
- Las Trampas LG – updated board membership

17. Discussion and Possible Action on Land Grant-Merced Institute Update

Mr. Archuleta reported that the LGMI explored a CDS request and Grant Challenges application with SHRI and the ARID Institute.

18. Discussion and Possible Action on Correspondence

The Council received a notice from the New Mexico Environment Department regarding a class 3 permit application for a solid waste permit on the White Sands Missile Range, the former Pedro Armendaris Grant. The Council also received a letter from Rosemary Molina regarding the Cubero Land Grant.

19. Discussion and Possible Action on Staff Assignments

Mr. Archuleta reported that Council staff will have a meeting with Torreon in the middle of March. The Cristóbal de la Serna LG has requested assistance for May 2 election.

20. Public Comments – discussion only

Lenora Chavez commented that the Torreon Land Grant canceled its January 18 meeting without notice. Their meeting notice does not advertise a time or place. Leonard Martinez (San Joaquin del Rio Chama LG) reported that the San Joaquín Grant is 75% through its MOU with Santa Fe National Forest and thanked the NMDNJ for their help. Councilor Rodríguez commented that the ICIP deadline is early. Anissa Baca (NMLGC/LGMI) commented that she will help with ICIPs and CAPS updates, which are due soon.

21. Miscellaneous Announcements

None.

22. Date and Location for March Council Meeting

The March 2025 New Mexico Land Grant Council meeting will be held on March 20, 2026 in Albuquerque at UNM Continuing Education at 10:00am.

23. Adjournment

Councilor Padilla made a motion to adjourn; Councilor Rodriguez seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

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

The motion was passed. The meeting adjourned at 12:33pm MST.

Approved:

Chair

Date