

**FINAL COPY**  
**Torrance County Board of Commissioners**  
**Regular Commission Meeting**  
**February 25, 2026 9:00 AM**

Commissioners Present:

**RYAN SCHWEBACH – COUNTY CHAIRMAN - Absent**  
**KEVIN MCCALL- COUNTY COMMISSIONER**  
**LINDA JARAMILLO – COUNTY VICE-CHAIR**

Others Present:

**JORDAN BARELA-COUNTY MANAGER**  
**MICHELLE JONES-DEPUTY COUNTY MANAGER**  
**MICHAEL GARCIA- COUNTY ATTORNEY - Zoom**  
**SYLVIA CHAVEZ-COUNTY CLERK**  
**GENELL MORRIS- ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT III**  
**DON GOEN – PLANNING & ZONING DIRECTOR**

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**1. Call to Order:** Vice-Chair Jaramillo called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM

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**2. Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation:** Pledge led by Vice-Chair Jaramillo, Commissioner’s McCall & Jaramillo said the Invocation.

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**3. Changes to the Agenda:** None

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**4. Public Comment:**

No in-person Public Comment

\*Zoom.

**Ian Philabaum – Innovation Law Lab:**

- Focus: Denial of due process linked to staff failures to deliver legal mail, resulting in:
  - Missed court deadlines
  - Lost appeals
  - Deportations

## **Legal Mail Failures & Deportations**

### **Case Example (Read Aloud – Written Testimony from Last Month)**

- A detained man reported:
  - He attempted to access mail related to his legal appeal but was unable to do so.
  - He filed official complaint documents addressed to CoreCivic.
  - He was subsequently subjected to accelerated deportation.
  - The facility claimed his documents were mailed on December 17 or 18, but:
    - According to his account, nothing was ever sent.

### **Pattern of Failures**

- Previous accounts (shared at the last meeting) described:
  - Other men deported after staff (including referenced personnel) failed to send required court mailings.
  - Repeated procedural breakdowns affecting detainees' legal rights.

### **Key Concern:**

Systemic obstruction of legal correspondence leading directly to deportations.

Allegations of Racial Discrimination

### **Written Statement from Black Migrants (Late January)**

- A group of Black migrants (from African and Caribbean Countries) stated:
  - Mail failures and deportations appear to disproportionately affect Black detainees.
  - They asked: *Why are several Black men being impacted in this way?*

### **November Testimony – Asylum Seeker (Detained Over One Year)**

A man detained at TCDF for over a year while seeking asylum described:

- “Racism and terrorism practiced with impunity on Black Africans.”
- A Correction Officer allegedly told him:
  - “Black Africans are not their priority.”
  - Black Africans are intentionally separated because staff fear they would form a “gang.”
- Allegations of discrimination: By detention officers & Medical staff

- Fear of retaliation:
  - Complaints allegedly lead to:
    - False accusations
    - Segregation placement

#### **Additional Discriminatory Practices Reported**

- Black men allegedly:
  - Disproportionately denied access to haircuts.
- Other detained immigrants — including those of Indigenous heritage — have also:
  - Documented racist and xenophobic mistreatment.
  - Reported prolonged detention (months or years) under discriminatory conditions.

#### **Due Process Violations**

- Legal mail obstruction
- Missed court deadlines
- Deportations without full legal review

#### **Racial Disparities**

- Disproportionate impact on Black migrants
- Allegations of systemic anti-Black discrimination
- Retaliation against those who file complaints

#### **Institutional Discrimination**

- Alleged bias in medical care
- Unequal access to basic services (e.g., haircuts)
- Use of segregation as punishment for speaking out

### **5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**A. COMMISSION:** Request Approval of the February 11, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes of the Board of County Commissioners.

**Motion:** Vice-Chair Jaramillo motioned to approve the minutes; seconded by Commissioner McCall.

Commissioner Jaramillo states she likes the new format of the minutes.

- Roll Call Vote:
    - Schwebach – Absent
    - McCall – Yes
    - Jaramillo – Yes
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## **6. Consent Agenda:**

- a) **FINANCE:** Request Approval of Payables with a date range of February 5, 2026, through February 18, 2026.

### **Linda Jaramillo, County Vice Chair:**

- Noted several invoices submitted for Bohannon and Houston.
- Specifically referenced Page 3 & 15, including charges for “conceptual design.”
- Asked for clarification:
  - How long does the conceptual design phase last?
  - Why are there multiple invoices?
  - Is the billing based on man-hours?
  - Expressed understanding that a design would typically be completed as a single finished product rather than billed incrementally.

### **Response from County Manager Barela**

- Clarified that the design process takes time and is not completed in a single step.
- Explained that:
  - The district is billed periodically throughout the design process.
  - Invoices reflect man-hours worked as progress is made.
- Provided a specific example:
  - The current funded design project is for the Macintosh Water Project.
  - The project design is approximately 70% complete.
  - Invoices are submitted incrementally as milestones are reached and work progresses.

### **Key Takeaways**

- Conceptual design is phased, not a one-time deliverable.
- Billing occurs:
  - Based on ongoing work and labor hours.
  - At intervals during the design progression.
- The Macintosh Water Project design is still in progress (70% complete).
- Multiple invoices reflect staged progress rather than duplicated charges.

**Motion: Vice-Chair Jaramillo** motioned to approve; **seconded** by **Commissioner McCall**.

- Roll Call Vote:
  - Schwebach – Absent
  - McCall – Yes
  - Jaramillo – Yes

**7. ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION:**

**A. MANAGER/GRANTS:** Request Approval of Resolution No. 2026-07, A Resolution Delegation Approval Authority to the County Manager to Submit Grant Applications for Recurring Grants and Grants without Matching Fund Requirements.

**Jordan Barela, County Manager:**

- The resolution was originally presented at the previous Commission meeting.
- Based on direction and feedback from the Commission, staff revised specific language in the resolution.

**Key Updates to the Resolution**

**1. Grant Application Reporting Requirement**

- Any grant application submitted under this provision:
  - Must be presented to the County Commission at the next available Commission meeting.
- Purpose:
  - Ensure transparency.
  - Keep the Commission informed of applications submitted.
  - Maintain oversight even when applications must be submitted quickly.

**2. Commission Approval of Grant Agreements**

- Clarified and reaffirmed that:
  - All grant agreements resulting from submitted applications require County Commission approval.
  - The Commission reserves the right to reject any grant agreements issued pursuant to those applications.
- This language formalizes what is already standard practice.

**Clarification of Current Process**

- Some grant applications must be submitted quickly to meet deadlines.
- Submission of an application does NOT mean automatic acceptance of funds.
- No grant is officially accepted without:
  - Returning to the Commission.
  - Formal review.
  - Official approval vote.

#### Governance & Oversight Emphasis

- The Commission maintains final authority over:
  - Whether a grant is accepted.
  - Whether the county enters into a grant agreement.
- The revised language strengthens transparency while preserving administrative efficiency.

#### Overall Intent of the Resolution Revision

- Balance operational timeliness with Commission oversight.
- Ensure accountability.
- Codify existing practice into formal language.
- Provide clear procedural expectations going forward.

**Motion: Commissioner McCall** moved to approve Resolution 2026-07; **Vice-Chair Jaramillo** seconded.

- Roll Call Vote:
  - Schwebach – Absent
  - McCall – Yes
  - Jaramillo – Yes

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**B. FINANCE:** Request Approval of Resolution No. 2026-08, A Resolution Authorizing a Budget Adjustment to the FY 2025-2026 Budget.

#### **Jordan Barela, County Manager:**

Finance Representative Present: Joanna Romero  
Joanna Romero (Finance) prepared the budget summary sheet to help answer detailed financial questions and provide overall oversight to the Commission.

#### **There are two main provisions in this request:**

1. E-911 Fund Allocation Adjustment
2. County General Fund Transfer for IT Expenses

#### **E-911 Fund Budget Adjustment**

##### Current Fund Status

- E-911 Fund balance exceeds \$3 million
- Dispatch experienced unforeseen expenditures this fiscal year

#### **A. Capilla Peak Tower – Unexpected Costs**

The County is responsible for maintaining the Capilla Peak Tower (remote, mountainous location).

Unplanned Expenses Included:

- Generator replacement
- General tower maintenance
- Pest control services (remote mountainous environment)

Because these expenses were not originally budgeted, Dispatch had to:

- Reallocate funds from other areas in their budget
- This caused shortages in other critical line items

## **B. Critical Technology Needs**

Dispatch now lacks sufficient funding for:

### **1. CAD Software System – \$43,000**

- CAD (Computer-Aided Dispatch) system dispatches all first responders in Torrance
- Payment of this contract is critical to maintain emergency response operations

### **2. New Computers – \$16,000**

- \$6,000 will be reimbursed by the DFA
- Necessary to maintain operational efficiency

### **3. Server Room Mini-Split (Cooling Redundancy) – \$15,000**

- Server room houses all dispatch system servers
- Heat sensitivity is a major risk
- Failure could result in a system-wide shutdown
- Based on building inspections, a second mini-split is recommended for redundancy

Total Requested from E-911 Fund Balance

- Total Allocation Requested: \$74,000 (from E-911 Fund balance)

County General Fund Transfer – IT Line Item

Amount Requested:

- \$469,588 from County General Fund balance to IT line item

IT Line Covers:

- Triadic
- Tyler
- Ambitions

Reason for Transfer

Two large prior-year invoices (Tyler & Triadic):

- Should have been paid in FY25
- Payment delayed due to contractual disputes over billing concerns
- After resolution, invoices were paid in July
- Because of timing, payments hit the FY26 budget instead of FY25

Impact

- FY26 IT budget now short due to prior-year expenses
- Transfer is needed to restore adequate IT funding levels

**Motion: Commissioner McCall** motioned to approve Resolution 2026-08, **Vice-Chair Jaramillo** seconded.

- Roll Call Vote:
  - Schwebach – Absent
  - McCall – Yes
  - Jaramillo – Yes

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## **8. APPROVALS/ACTION ITEM**

**A. MANAGER:** Request Approval of a Small Purchase Professional Services Agreement Between Torrance County and KCK Advisory, LLC, not to Exceed \$59,999.99 for Financial Management and Consulting Services.

**Jordan Barela, County Manager:**

Discussion regarding approval of a short-term professional services agreement with KCK Advisory LLC, tied to Kurt Knight, CPA, to provide interim CFO-level financial services during the transition following Misty Witt's departure to the Town of Edgewood.

- The County's audit firm referred Kurt Knight.
- Discussions have been ongoing regarding support for:
  - CFO-level functions
  - Financial oversight
  - Budget preparation and forecasting
- Mr. Knight was unable to attend due to travel, but is willing to:
  - Attend a future Commission meeting
  - Answer questions in person

### **Scope of Services**

The proposed agreement includes:

#### **Financial & Reporting Duties**

- Revenue forecasting (including tax revenue projections)
- Budget creation (interim and final budgets)
- DFA quarterly reporting

- Budgetary analysis and reporting to the Commission
- Financial data preparation for Commission review

### **Operational Oversight & Staff Support**

- Evaluation of current finance operations
- Training of existing finance staff
- Oversight of:
  - Bank reconciliations
  - Journal entries
  - Treasurer-related accounting functions
- Implementation of enhanced financial oversight procedures

### **Proposed Work Structure**

- Estimated 20–30 hours per week
- Potential for two days per week on-site
- Designed to provide hands-on guidance and support

### **Timing & Need**

- County is entering:
  - Budget season & Financial reporting season
- Finance staff are maintaining daily operations successfully.
- However, higher-level forecasting and strategic financial oversight are currently needed.
- Bringing Mr. Knight on board now ensures preparedness for upcoming budget discussions.

### **Madam Chair – Clarification**

Question:

Would Mr. Knight work with Treasurer's Finance and the County Manager's office?

Response (County Manager Barela):

- Yes, Treasurer-related functions included in agreement.
- Oversight of reconciliations and accounting entries specifically identified.

## **Commissioner McCall – Inquiry on Government Experience**

Question:

What government experience does Mr. Knight bring?

Response (County Manager):

- Experience includes:
  - Employment with at least two local governments
  - Accountant for a tribal entity
- Familiar with:
  - Local government budgeting
  - Legal financial requirements
  - DFA reporting standards
- Also has substantial private sector experience, offering:
  - Broader accounting perspective
  - Operational efficiency insight
  - Ability to evaluate the finance department through both government and private-sector lenses
- Resume available upon request.

### **Additional Staff Comments**

- Staff met with Mr. Knight in person.
- He asked detailed questions about daily operations.
- Demonstrated familiarity and comfort with government processes.
- Expressed urgency to onboard him quickly to support operations.

### **Nature of Engagement – Short-Term Transition**

County Manager emphasized:

- This is a temporary placement, estimated: 6–9 months
- Purpose:
  - Transitional support
  - Operational evaluation

- Strategic framing of long-term financial structure
- If the Commission later chooses to outsource CFO functions permanently:
  - Would likely require a larger firm
  - Formal RFP process
  - More extensive contract
- Current agreement allows:
  - Immediate stabilization
  - Professional evaluation of long-term service scope

**Historical Context – Finance Structure**

- Historically, Torrance County has not consistently had a dedicated accountant in this role.
- Past structure relied on:
  - Treasurer
  - Finance department
  - Individual departments
- Misty Witt (former Finance Director/Deputy Manager) was:
  - A licensed accountant
  - Considered somewhat of an anomaly in historical staffing
- Commission acknowledged:
  - Having someone with CPA-level expertise is necessary at this time.

**Motion: Commissioner McCall** motioned to approve; **seconded** by **Vice-Chair Jaramillo**.

- Roll Call Vote:
  - Schwebach – Absent
  - McCall – Yes
  - Jaramillo – Yes

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**B. ANIMAL SERVICES:** Request Approval to Attend the Best Friends Sanctuary Annual Save Them All Conference in Utah.

## **Danette Langdon, Animal Shelter Director:**

### **Conference Overview**

- Annual conference hosted by Best Friends Animal Society
- Duration: 4–5 days
- We have not attended in several years
- Strong networking opportunity with national shelter leaders and grant partners
- Opportunity to personally thank funders and strengthen relationships

### **Speakers & Key Points**

- Emphasized the importance of attending after several years' absence.
- Highlighted networking benefits.
- Stated desire to personally thank Best Friends for ongoing financial and operational support.
- Recommended sending transport & behavioral specialist (Shea) to:
  - Build professional connections
  - Gain behavioral and transport insights
  - Represent organization expertise
- Described the experience as “exceptionally unique.”
- Mentioned possible extension of trip for additional visits (e.g., regional facilities, Stockton/Delta area).

### **Grant & Financial Impact Report**

Outlined support received from Best Friends:

#### **Grants & Support Received This Year:**

- Positive Challenge Grant
- Applied for the Rachel Ray No-Kill Grant
- “Save Them All” Grant – \$10,000 awarded
- Surprise Grant (unsolicited) – \$5,000 awarded
- Vaccinations provided

- Transportation costs covered
- Emergency animal intake assistance
- Proactive partnership meetings to assess organizational needs

**Summary Statement:**

Best Friends has been “literally lifesavers” for the organization.

**Commissioner McCall – Strategic Requests for Conference**

Requested the following research and networking goals:

**1. Regional Animal Shelter Model**

- What does a regional shelter structure look like?
- Gather insights to support future discussions with legislators.

**2. Portable Shelter Unit Research**

- Speak with colleagues nationwide about:
  - Cost
  - Effectiveness
  - Alternatives
- Portable unit pricing is currently prohibitive.
- Explore scaled-down or alternative building solutions.

**Facilities Planning Discussion**

If portable shelter remains unaffordable:

**Alternative Plans:**

- Consider a smaller building footprint.
- Grant originally intended for the front building.
- Add outdoor kennels for large “blue” dogs (planned within weeks).
  - Can be installed internally to reduce costs.
- Goal: Increase overall space capacity regardless of structure size.

**Benefits Identified:**

- Strengthen grant relationships

- Increase funding opportunities
- Legislative insight for the regional shelter model
- Facility design solutions
- Peer benchmarking
- Transport & behavior networking
- Reinforce national presence

**Financial Context**

- \$15,000+ direct grant funding received this year
- Additional in-kind support (vaccines, transport coverage)
- Emergency animal transfer assistance
- Ongoing proactive engagement from Best Friends

**Motion: Vice-Chair Jaramillo** motioned to approve; **seconded** by **Commissioner McCall**.

- Roll Call Vote:
  - Schwebach – Absent
  - McCall – Yes
  - Jaramillo – Yes

**C. HUMAN RESOURCES:** Request Approval of an Unauthorized Purchase in the Amount of \$3,763.05 to Robert Caswell Investigations for Services Regarding an Internal Administrative Investigation

**Michelle Jones, Deputy County Manager:**

**Background**

- December 15, 2025: HR received a quote totaling \$5,271.67.
- February 2, 2026: HR received the invoice totaling \$3,763.05
- Both the quote and invoice were submitted to procurement upon receipt of the invoice.

**Issue Identified**

- Procurement determined the quote was outdated at the time of submission.

- The quote should have been submitted in December 2025, when it was originally received.
- The delay created a timing/procedural issue, not a service or performance issue.

**Service Status**

- Services have already been rendered.
- Confirmation was provided during the discussion that the work is complete.

**Financial Information**

- Total Amount: \$3,763.05

**Motion: Commissioner McCall** motioned to approve; **seconded** by **Vice-Chair Jaramillo**.

- Roll Call Vote:
  - Schwebach – Absent
  - McCall – Yes
  - Jaramillo – Yes

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**9. DISCUSSION/PRESENTATION:**

**A. CLERK’S REPORT:**

**Sylvia Chavez, County Clerk:**

- Candidate Filing Day: March 10
- Time: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
  - *No exceptions*
  - Filing is allowed only on this day
- Location: Clerk’s Office

**Offices Open for Filing:**

- Magistrate Judge
- County Sheriff
- County Assessor
- County Commission District 1
- County Commission District 2
- County Probate Judge

**Important Details:**

- Candidates must file on March 10 for their name to appear on the ballot.
- Write-in Candidate Filing Day: March 17 (following Tuesday)
- If unable to attend March 10:
  - A proxy filing is allowed.
  - Proxy form must be completed and notarized.
- State office candidate filing is handled separately through the Secretary of State's Office (not the County Clerk).

**Special Election Updates****Estancia School District**

- Mail ballots have already been sent out.
- All voters within the Estancia School District should have received ballots.
- If a voter has not received a ballot, they should contact the Clerk's Office immediately.

**Corona School District**

- Ballots will be mailed today and tomorrow.
- Voting machines will be programmed:
  - Time: 10:00 AM
  - Location: Early Vote Room (in the building)
  - The public is welcome to attend and observe the programming process.

**Vaughn School District**

- Planning a special election this summer.
- This would bring the total to five elections being managed.

**Clerk's Office Activity & Public Access**

- The Clerk's Office is currently very busy due to:
  - Multiple special elections
  - Candidate filing preparations
- Community members are welcome to:
  - Pick up candidate filing forms
  - Ask questions
  - Visit the office for clarification

**Discussion Highlights**

- Commissioners acknowledged the heavy workload with overlapping elections.
  - Clerk confirmed:
    - Filing is strictly 9–5 on March 10.
    - No early or late filings allowed.
    - Proxy filing is the only alternative if unavailable in person.
  - Encouragement was given to candidates to file on March 10 rather than wait for the write-in filing.
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## B. MANAGERS' REPORT:

### Jordan Barela, County Manager:

#### 1) Legislative Update & Public Thank You

- **Public Acknowledgment:**
  - Expressed formal appreciation to Stephanie Lord for her advocacy and late-session efforts.
  - Noted direct communication from Rep. Lord around 1:00 a.m. on the final legislative day, confirming successful amendments.
  
- **Bill Overview:**
  - Senate Bill 273 – “Hold harmless” mitigation legislation.
  - Designed to assist counties impacted by House Bill 9 and related facility closures.
  - Purpose: Replace lost Gross Receipts Tax (GRT) revenue and offset increased detention and operational costs.
  
- **Original Funding Proposal:**
  - ~\$300,000 for the Town of Estancia
  - ~\$300,000 for Torrance County
  - Combined total insufficient to address:
    - Estancia’s projected revenue loss
    - County’s increased detention and operational costs
  
- **Final Amended Outcome (Significant Improvement):**
  - Town of Estancia:
    - \$900,000 annually in GRT replacement
    - Matches five-year GRT average from Tax & Rev
    - Effectively makes the Town whole
  - Torrance County:
    - \$642,000 annually in GRT replacement (exact amount requested)
    - Additional \$450,000 for increased operating costs
  
- **Operational Impact for Torrance County:**
  - \$450,000 allocation will temporarily fund:
    - Purchase of new transport vehicles
    - Hiring of three new transport officers
    - Fuel and associated vehicle costs
  - Not Funded:
    - \$2.1 million in increased detention costs payable to Santa Fe County

#### 2) Fairgrounds Building Project Update

- On-site meeting held with contractors (previous day).
- Project Status:

- No major issues or delays at this time.
- Footings and concrete foundation are being poured this week.
- Metal building delivered to the site and ready for installation once the foundation is set.
- Timeline:
  - Construction is currently on schedule.
  - Estimated completion: End of July.

### **3). Solid Waste Authority Project**

- Site Assessment:
  - The Solid Waste Authority plans to send its Project Manager to inspect the property.
  - Goal: Determine the optimal layout for their operations.
- Lease Agreement:
  - Discussions are ongoing with the land grant.
  - The land grant is expected to send a draft lease agreement to the county for review soon.
  - Next steps: County review, back-and-forth negotiations, then finalization.
- Status: Progressing; both the county and land grant are actively participating.

### **4). T-Mobile Transition**

- Project Overview:
  - Coordinated rollout of T-Mobile changeover for county devices.
  - Hundreds of devices were updated in 2.5 days.
- Key Contributors:
  - Melissa and Geneva (Manager’s Office) – recognized for exceptional coordination and effort.
  - Teams involved: County staff, T-Mobile, Ambitions team.
- Outcome: Successful completion with minimal disruption; public recognition extended by the chair.

### **5). Transition to Deputy Assessor**

- Requested time from the Chair to allow Deputy Assessor Linda Gallegos to provide additional report updates.

#### **Linda Gallegos, Chief Deputy Assessor:**

#### **1. Reporting Deadline – Livestock & Business Personal Property (“Blue Forms”)**

- Deadline: Saturday, February 28
- Applies to:
  - Livestock
  - Grazing land
  - Business personal property
- Forms must be:

- Submitted in person by Friday (office open) – in person today, Wednesday, and Thursday, 7:30 am to 5:30 pm.
- The Assessor's office closed on Fridays.
- OR mailed and postmarked by February 28
- Late filings: Subject to 5% tax penalty

**Personalization Note:**

The Assessor emphasized urgency and encouraged residents not to wait until the last minute to avoid penalties.

**2. Notices of Value**

- Target mailing date: On or before April 1
- Important period for filing exemptions
- Property owners should carefully review their notices upon receipt

**3. Property Tax Exemptions – Critical Filing Period**

Residents may apply for:

- Head of Family exemption
- Veteran exemptions
- 65 and Older Value Freeze

Deadline to Apply:

- April 30 (30 days after mailing of Notices of Value)

The Assessor stressed that this is a critical timeframe and encouraged early application.

**4. Disabled Veterans Exemption – Legislative Update**

- Legislation was passed by both the House and the Senate
- Currently awaiting the Governor’s signature
- Expected to be signed

**Key Change in Calculation**

**Previous Method:**

- Based on:
  - % disability rating
  - % property ownership

**New Method:**

- Based only on disability rating

**Example:**

- 80% disability rating → 80% reduction in property taxes

This simplifies administration and increases clarity for veterans.

**5. If Certificate of Eligibility Is Delayed**

- If veteran paperwork from Veteran Services is still processing:
  - There is an alternate procedure available

- Allows exemption to still apply for the current year
- Assessor's Office will assist affected veterans

## **6. Legislative Monitoring**

The Assessor confirmed the office has:

- Closely tracking legislation affecting:
  - Property tax administration
  - Veterans
  - Local taxpayers
- Preparing to implement changes efficiently

## **Key Action Reminders for Residents**

- Submit Blue Forms by February 28  
Watch for Notices of Value (by April 1)
- Apply for exemptions by April 30
- Veterans: Monitor eligibility documentation status

## **C. COMMISSIONERS REPORT**

### **Kevin McCall, County Vice Chair:**

#### **1. Legislative Funding Efforts**

- Representative Stephanie Lord:
  - Actively advocated for Torrance County funding.
  - Helped secure additional funding related to potential prison closure.
- Recognition:
  - Commissioner McCall acknowledged her relentless efforts, including direct engagement with the Governor's Office.

#### **2. Regional Dispatch Center Initiative**

- Tour & Assessment:
  - Meeting with Jordan and Bernalillo County Fire Chief.
  - Visited the Bernalillo County Dispatch facility, which is being considered for Torrance County dispatch operations.
- Facility Advantages:
  - Designed to function as a Regional Dispatch Center.
  - Staffed with 10 dispatchers during visit.
  - Equipped with advanced technology, including potential AI-assisted non-emergency call handling.
- County Support:
  - Bernalillo County Commission and County Manager are supportive.
- Next Steps:
  - Continue discussions with the Sheriff, Fire Department, and Dispatch teams.
  - Address anticipated growing pains and operational changes.

## **Gary Smith, County Fire Chief:**

- **Current Negotiations and System Challenges**
  - Torrance County has been in active negotiations with Bernalillo County, not limited to Bernalillo County.
  - Most issues identified (95%) are technical or structural, not personnel-related, reflecting an antiquated dispatch system.
  - Goal: Streamline operations using advanced technology (referred to as AIA/Skynet) for efficiency and modernization.
  
- **Dispatch Personnel Considerations**
  - Open discussions have been maintained with the Torrance County Dispatch Director to address concerns about personnel shifts and processes.
  - 10 dispatch positions have been confirmed for transfer to Bernalillo County under the proposed contract.
  - Personnel costs are the largest portion of the proposed \$1.25 million fee, reflecting higher salaries for Bernalillo County employees.
  - The transfer will not segregate personnel; Torrance Dispatchers will operate within Bernalillo County's system while handling calls for Torrance County.
  
- **Operational Integration**
  - Discussions are ongoing about satellite dispatch centers vs. fully moving dispatch operations.
  - Bernalillo County's technology capabilities:
    - Advanced GPS and CAD systems for autonomous dispatching.
    - Fire and medical calls are handled separately from law enforcement, ensuring specialization.
  - Opportunity for Torrance personnel to observe Bernalillo's PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point) operations to understand workflow and technology.
  
- **Geographical and Procedural Considerations**
  - Torrance County's terrain is similar to Bernalillo's East Mountain area, making local knowledge critical for accurate dispatching.
  - Fireboxes (mapping of resources to specific addresses for call types) will be built collaboratively, with Torrance Dispatchers contributing their local expertise.
  
- **Next Steps**
  - Joint meeting planned with key stakeholders:
    - Fire Chiefs (both Counties)
    - County Managers
    - Sheriffs
    - Dispatch Directors
  - Goal: Address remaining questions, staffing logistics, and integration planning.

- Facility visit for Torrance personnel to see Bernalillo County operations is being scheduled.
- **Technology Upgrades**
  - Torrance County will transition to 700 MHz digital radio systems, improving coverage and reliability for all first responders.
  - The system is robust across 3,500 square miles, comparable to or better than Bernalillo County coverage.
- **Overall Objective**
  - Ensure efficient, modernized dispatching for Torrance County residents.
  - Maintain safety and support for staff during the transition.
  - Leverage technology and local knowledge to provide the best service possible.

#### **Action Items**

- Schedule a joint stakeholder meeting to finalize integration plans.
- Set up a visit for Torrance personnel to the Bernalillo County PSAP.
- Develop a detailed plan for fire boxes and local call procedures.
- Continue communication regarding personnel shifts and technology transition.

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**Ryan Schwebach, County Chairman:** Absent

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**Linda Jaramillo, County Commissioner:**

- Chad Hamilton – Coordinated the memorial wall celebration in Moriarty.
- February 21 Memorial Wall Celebration (Moriarty):
  - Chad Hamilton played a key role in organizing the event.
  - Event highlights:
    - Large turnout of attendees.
    - The Traveling Replica of the Vietnam Wall received an escort procession to Moriarty from Albuquerque.
    - Presence of a 100-year-old veteran, with attendees interacting and honoring him.
  - Overall, the event was considered a great success.
  - Unfortunately, Commissioner Jaramillo was unable to attend due to her mom's funeral.
- Heartfelt thanks to Melissa, Arley, and Deborah for hosting a dinner for her family the day before her mom's funeral.

**10. Announcement of the next Board of County Commissioners Meeting:**

Next meeting: March 11, 2026, 9:00 AM

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**11. Signing of official documents**

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**12. Adjournment:**

**Motion: Commissioner McCall** motions to adjourn. **Vice-Chair Jaramillo** seconded.

- Roll Call Vote:
  - Schwebach – Absent
  - McCall – Yes
  - Jaramillo – Yes

Meeting adjourned at 9:49 AM.

  
Linda Jaramillo – Vice-Chair

  
Gene K. Morris – Admin Assistant

  
Date

  
Sylvia Chavez – County Clerk

\*The video and audio of this meeting are available upon request.