

FINAL COPY
Torrance County Board of Commissioners
Regular Commission Meeting
April 08, 2026 9:00 AM

Commissioners Present:

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

Others Present:

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

1. **Call to Order:** Chairman Schwebach called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM

2. **Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation:** Pledge led by Chairman Schwebach, Vice-Chair Jaramillo said the Invocation.

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

4. **Public Comment:**

Luke Fields – Animal Shelter:

- Provide updates on:
 - Current Animal Control activities
 - Use of secured funds that are now being implemented

Key Topic 1: Emergency Animal Care Funding (Drax Case)

- Case Example: Dog “Drax.”
 - Injured: Bitten by a rattlesnake on the face
 - Condition: Facial swelling (“mopey” appearance)

- Outcome
 - Successfully transported to a veterinary hospital
 - Received emergency treatment
 - Life saved
 - Funding Source
 - Supported by the Rachel Ray Grant
 - Key Message
 - Real-life example demonstrates:
 - Importance of emergency care funding
 - Direct impact of grants on saving animal lives
 - Upcoming Request
 - Will request budget adjustment approval to:
 - Increase professional services contract line item
 - Continue funding emergency veterinary care
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- Speaker Emphasis
 - Personalizes funding impact:
 - “Putting a face” to the budget request → Drax

Key Topic 2: Shelter Infrastructure Repairs

- Issue Identified
 - Dog damaged shelter wall (photo showed hindquarters stuck in wall)
- Funding Support
 - \$75,000 secured
 - Credit given to:
 - Commissioner McCall
 - Previous administration
- Progress Update
 - Contractor has been secured

- Project is:
 - Moving through the CES and procurement process
 - Expected to begin implementation soon

Key Topic 3: Site Preparation Efforts

- Requirement
 - Site preparation needed before kennel repairs
- Contributor Highlight
 - Leonard (Road Department)
 - Assisted with site preparation work
- Recognition
 - Acknowledged as an essential contributor:
 - “Not all heroes wear capes—they wear road department uniforms.”

Don Goen – P& Z Director:

- Announced upcoming and current vacancies on the Planning & Zoning Board:
 - District Two:
 - One member will term out at the end of the current fiscal year.
 - District One:
 - One member resigned last week, creating an immediate vacancy.
- Confirmed that a public notice will be widely distributed:
 - Posted in multiple publications and appropriate public locations.
 - Goal: maximize outreach and encourage applications from the general public.
- Announced that the Torrance County Commission is:
 - Accepting Letters of Interest from residents of:
 - District One
 - District Two
 - Purpose: Fill two vacancies on the Planning & Zoning Board.

Eligibility Requirements:

Applicants must meet ALL of the following:

- Residency & Property:
 - Must own or be purchasing land AND
 - Reside in Torrance County
 - Board Participation:
 - Must not currently serve on another Torrance County board or Commission
 - Employment Status:
 - Must not be employed by Torrance County
 - Provided term details:
 - Term start date: July 1, 2026
 - Term length: 3 years
 - Reappointment:
 - Eligible for one additional 3-year term
 - Maximum: 2 consecutive terms
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Application Process & Key Dates

- Deadline to Apply:
 - May 27, 2026, at 5:00 PM
- Interview Date:
 - June 10, 2026
 - During the regular Commission meeting (begins at 9:00 AM)
- Final Appointment:
 - Determined by the Commission following interviews

Submission Instructions

Applicants may submit Letters of Interest via:

- Mail:
 - Torrance County

- Attn: Planning & Zoning
- PO Box 48
- Estancia, NM 87016
- Hand Delivery:
 - Planning & Zoning Office
 - County Commission Building
 - 205 South 9th Street
 - Estancia, NM

Key Takeaways / Action Items

- Two board seats are open (District 1 & District 2).
- Public outreach is a priority to ensure broad community participation.
- Clear eligibility criteria must be met before applying.
- Strict deadline (May 27) — late submissions will not be considered.
- Commission will interview and decide on June 10.

Helena Meyer, Resident, District One

- Position: Opposed to expanding Torrance County Fire/EMS responsibilities to include the Town of Edgewood
- Tone: Concerned, cautionary, advocating for county-first priorities

Key Points Raised

1. County Capacity & Geographic Challenges

- Torrance County covers approximately 3,346 square miles
- Includes communities such as:
 - Willard
 - Mountainair
 - Clines Corners
 - Indian Hills

- Manzano
- Population exceeds 15,000 residents
- The majority of the County is rural, requiring extensive travel and coverage
- Firefighters and EMS are already operating at full capacity
 - Frequent responses along I-40 and Route 66

2. Concern About Resource Strain

- Adding Fire/EMS responsibility for Edgewood would:
 - Place a significant burden on existing services
 - Potentially reduce service quality for current County residents
- Emphasis on prioritizing:
 - Existing residents
 - Current emergency response demands

3. Responsibility & Planning Issues

- Argument that:
 - The County should not absorb the consequences of another municipality's decisions
- Claim that Edgewood is:
 - Seeking help after inadequate preparation
- Concern over lack of a clear, sustainable plan from Edgewood

4. Ethical Concerns / Governance

- Reference to statements by Edgewood's Deputy Town Manager
 - Allegedly suggested using personal connections with the Torrance County Fire Chief to secure coverage
- Speaker emphasized:
 - Decisions should be based on public interest, not personal influence

5. Financial Risks

- Concern that Edgewood has:
 - Struggled to meet financial obligations previously

- Risk outlined:
 - If Edgewood fails to pay Torrance County:
 - Could lead to legal costs
 - Financial burden may fall on Torrance County taxpayers

6. Clarification on Mutual Aid Claims

- Edgewood Commission claimed:
 - Their fire department previously assisted Torrance County
- Commissioner McCall clarified:
 - The department is actually operated by Santa Fe County
 - Therefore, assistance came from Santa Fe County, not Edgewood itself
- Characterized the claim as misleading

Cassandra Carnes – Resident:

- Introduced herself and her role with the Rendezvous event
- Formally requested permission to camp in Torrance County Park
- Confirmed event duration: one week (Aug 2–9,2026)
- Asked whether:
 - The request needed to be on the agenda
 - She would need to return for approval

Chairman Schwebach Clarified that:

- The request was not on the current agenda as an action item
- The board cannot take formal action today
- Expressed general support for the event continuing
- Directed that:
 - The request should be placed on a future agenda for formal approval
 - Required paperwork must be submitted
- Reassured Cassandra:

- She likely does not need to return in person
- Staff will help move the process forward

County Manager Barela

- Confirmed ability to:
 - Handle the required paperwork and coordination
- Requested to:
 - Connect after the meeting to proceed
- Took responsibility for ensuring the item is processed properly

Key Decisions & Outcomes

- No formal approval granted yet (not on agenda)
- General support expressed by the board chair
- Next Steps Required:
 - Add item to a future meeting agenda
 - Submit and process formal request paperwork

*Zoom

PJ Podesta – Innovation Law Lab:

- Context of Concern
 - Reported ongoing issues with access to legal services at the Torrance County Detention Facility (TCDF).
 - Emphasized the pattern of obstruction and mistreatment affecting detained individuals.

Incident 1: Denial of Legal Access (Two Weeks Prior)

- Legal team was blocked from scheduled weekly visit to TCDF.
- Explanation given by ICE and CoreCivic staff:
 - Claimed a power outage prevented the visit.
- Later findings:
 - No power outage had occurred.
 - Other activities (including social and visitation services) continued normally.

- Impact:
 - Dozens of detained men were denied access to legal services.

Incident 2: April 2 Legal Visit Disruption

- Prior to visit:
 - CoreCivic staff distributed sign-up sheets in Unit 7C.
 - Detained individuals added their names to attend a legal consultation.
 - During visit:
 - A guard (no visible name tag) ignored the sign-up list.
 - Only 10 men were brought, regardless of who had signed up.
 - Additional actions:
 - Individuals who signed up but were excluded:
 - Repeatedly requested access due to urgent legal needs.
 - Staff response:
 - Ordered all detainees back into their cells, preventing attendance.
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Incident 3: Use of Force Against “Isaac”

- Individual Identified: Isaac
 - Black migrant.
 - Languages: Haitian Creole (primary), Spanish; does not speak English fluently.
- Sequence of Events
 - Isaac complied with orders and remained in his cell.
 - He was using the toilet at the time.
- Use of Force
 - Without communication in a language he understands:
 - A CoreCivic staff member opened the cell door and immediately deployed chemical spray to Isaac’s face.
 - Isaac was:

- Not posing a threat.
- Disoriented and physically affected by the spray.
- Aftermath
 - Guards:
 - Forced Isaac to the ground.
 - Handcuffed him.
 - He was transferred to:
 - Solitary confinement.

Current Status of Isaac

- Remains in solitary confinement.
- Has appealed to return to the general population, but the request was denied.

Broader Concerns Raised

- Allegations of:
 - Racist mistreatment of Black migrants at TCDF.
- Pattern identified:
 - Repeated abuse and lack of accountability.
- Characterization of solitary confinement:
 - Described as “torturous isolation.”

Closing Statement / Recommendation

- Speaker urged:
 - Public awareness and organizing efforts.
 - Call to shut down TCDF due to ongoing abuses.

Tracey Master – Resident:

1. Acknowledgment of Edgewood Residents’ Needs

- Edgewood residents:
 - Need and deserve quality fire and EMS services

- Have a reasonable expectation to receive reliable protection
- Speaker fully supports the importance of adequate emergency services

2. Core Concern: Liability Risks

- Expanding services beyond county borders would:
 - Extend Torrance County's duty of care into another jurisdiction
 - Significantly increase liability exposure
- Potential legal risks include:
 - Claims of negligence
 - Allegations of insufficient training
 - Equipment failure claims
- While mutual aid agreements may offer some immunity:
 - That protection may not apply in:
 - Routine service provision
 - Contractual service agreements

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- Conclusion:
 - Liability risks are substantial and potentially unmanageable

3. Practical & Operational Concerns

- Even if resources could be aligned (staffing, equipment, logistics):
 - The speaker believes it is not practical or sustainable
- Implication:
 - Scaling services to include Edgewood may strain existing systems

4. Personal Experience Insight

- Speaker served 5 years as a volunteer firefighter
- Highlights past challenges:
 - Outdated or insufficient gear (e.g., improvised equipment use)
- Notes improvement over time:
 - The department has progressed significantly

- Perspective:
 - Improvements should not be jeopardized by overextension

5. Public Sentiment

- Reference to recent public input:
 - Strong community opposition observed during prior meeting
- Interpretation:
 - Public opinion appears to align with the speaker's stance

Recommendation to Commissioners

- Do NOT pursue proposals for Torrance County to provide fire/EMS services to Edgewood
- Reasoning:
 - High liability exposure
 - Operational impracticality
 - Community opposition

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. COMMISSION: Request Approval of the March 25, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes of the Board of County Commissioners.

Motion: Chairman **Schwebach** motioned to approve the minutes; **seconded** by **Commissioner McCall**.

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

Motion Carried

B. COMMISSION: Request Approval of the March 30, 2026, Special Meeting Minutes of the Board of County Commissioners.

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

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

Motion Carried

6. Consent Agenda:

- a) **FINANCE:** Request Approval of Payables with a date range of March 18, 2026, through April 01, 2026.

Motion: Chairman Schwebach motioned to approve the minutes; **seconded by Commissioner McCall.**

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

Motion Carried

7. FISCAL YEAR 2025 AUDIT PRESENTATION:

A. TKM: Presentation of the Fiscal Year 2025 Comprehensive Annual Financial Audit.

Presented by Joe Ortiz, CPA, Audit Partner, also present Shi “Richard” Lu, CPA, Audit Manager.

Opening & Introduction

- Speaker: Joe Ortiz (Audit Partner, TK MLC)
 - Introduced himself as the external auditor for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025

- Introduced team:
 - Shi Richard Lu – Audit Manager
 - Ramon Saxac – Senior Auditor (not present)
- Noted continuity in the audit team to improve efficiency

Auditor Responsibilities

- Objective: Express an opinion on financial statements
- Provides reasonable assurance (not absolute)
- Audit approach includes:
 - Sampling (not reviewing every transaction)
 - Considering:
 - Materiality (importance of amounts)
 - Risk
 - Fraud
- Required communications:
 - Significant audit matters
 - Compliance with laws/regulations
- Independence confirmed
 - No relationships affecting objectivity

Management Responsibilities

- Prepare financial statements under GAAP
- Review and approve auditor-prepared statements
- Provide Management Representation Letter
- Maintain internal controls (checks & balances)
- Ensure accurate and complete information
- No issues noted with cooperation

Audit Adjustments & Issues

- Corrected Misstatement:

- ~\$327,000 adjustment related to capital assets
- No passed adjustments
- No disagreements with management

Key Financial Statement Areas (Estimates & Judgments)

- Areas involving significant estimates:
 - Leases (terms, interest rates)
 - Investments (fair value)
 - Capital asset useful lives
 - Pension & OPEB liabilities
 - Based on actuarial assumptions
- Disclosures align with these estimates

New Accounting Standard

- Implemented GASB 101 – Compensated Absences
 - Now requires liability for sick leave
 - Result: Increased reported liabilities
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Audit Opinion

- Overall: Unmodified (clean) opinion
- Exception: Qualified opinions on certain funds:
 - Due to inability to audit:
 - Property tax receivables
 - Related revenues & deferred inflows
- Meaning:
 - Most financial data is reliable
 - Property tax-related balances could not be verified

Findings & Issues

1. Capital Assets (Repeated Finding)

- ~\$300K restatement due to cleanup

- Transition from manual system → Tyler accounting system
- Old assets removed from books
- No fraud or misconduct
- Expected resolution by FY2026

2. Property Tax Reconciliation Issue (Major)

- Multiple inaccurate/incomplete schedules provided
- Prevented audit verification
- Led to a qualified opinion
- Actions:
 - Ongoing corrections by Treasurer's Office
 - External consultants involved
- Target: Fix by FY2026

3. Bank Reconciliation Process

- Issue:
 - Entire year reconciled at once (not best practice)
- Recommendation:
 - Perform monthly reconciliations
- Status:
 - County has corrected the process

4. Late Audit Submission

- Timeline:
 - Report date: Dec 11, 2025
 - State approval: March 2026
- Delay due to:
 - Review process by the Office of the State Auditor
- Now publicly available

Overall Conclusions

- No fraud or noncompliance detected
- Most prior findings resolved
- Remaining issues:
 - Property tax reconciliation
 - Capital asset cleanup (in progress)
- Improvements underway

B. FINANCE: Request Approval of Resolution No. 2026-15, A Resolution Acknowledging and Accepting Torrance County's Financial Statements and Independent Auditor's Report for the Year Ending June 30, 2025.

Motion: Chairman Schwebach moved to approve Resolution 2026-15; **Commissioner McCall** seconded.

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

Motion Carried

8. DISCUSSION ON FIRE SERVICES IN THE TOWN OF EDGEWOOD:

A. FIRE DEPARTMENT/TOWN OF EDGEWOOD: Discussion on Potentially Providing Fire and EMS Services in the Town of Edgewood.

Background Context given by County Manager Barela

- A preliminary meeting occurred between:
 - County leadership
 - Fire Chief

- Town of Edgewood management
- Key issue:
 - The current JPA (Joint Powers Agreement) with Santa Fe County is expected to expire June 30 (end of fiscal year).
- Edgewood asked:
 - Whether Torrance County would consider stepping in.

Current Service Snapshot (Santa Fe County → Edgewood)

- Annual call volume: ~1,200–1,400 calls
 - Majority are EMS-related
- Staffing:
 - 3 shifts (A, B, C)
 - Each shift includes:
 - 2 ALS rescue units
 - 1 fire engine
 - ~18 personnel total
- Annual cost: ~\$2.3 million (salaries & benefits)

This provides a baseline for what equivalent service might cost.

Key Constraints & Realities

- Edgewood is outside Torrance County jurisdiction
 - County taxpayers cannot subsidize services
 - Must be fully funded by the Town of Edgewood
- Torrance County is NOT currently equipped to take over services by June 30.

Major Areas Requiring Analysis

If pursued, staff would need to evaluate:

1. Staffing & Service Levels

- Number of personnel needed
- Level of fire + EMS coverage

- Special risks (e.g., commercial properties like Walmart → ladder trucks)

2. Financial Impact

- Total cost of:
 - Staffing
 - Equipment
 - Operations
- Whether Edgewood can fully fund services

3. Communications / Dispatch

- Current system:
 - Calls routed through Santa Fe Regional Communications Center
- Challenge:
 - Transitioning to the Torrance County dispatch system

4. Facilities

- Edgewood owns a fire station (currently used for maintenance)
- Would require:
 - Renovation/conversion to an active fire station
 - Relocation of existing occupants

5. Apparatus & Equipment

- Most current equipment belongs to Santa Fe County
- Torrance County would need to acquire:
 - Engines, rescues, tenders
 - Gear (SCBAs, bunker gear, radios, tools)

Alternative Options (Short-Term)

- Possible mutual aid / automatic aid agreements
 - Support during emergencies
 - Not full-time service replacement

Town of Edgewood Perspective (Manager Kelly Hamilton)

- Fire/EMS service is mandatory—not optional
- Current agreement ends June 30
- Exploring multiple options
- Request:
 - Opportunity to collaborate with Torrance County staff
 - Develop more detailed information for future consideration

Commission Perspectives

Key Themes:

- Willing to have discussions
- Not ready to commit or take over services
- Concern about overextending county resources
- Priority: Fix and stabilize Torrance County’s own system first

Notable Points:

-
- Torrance County:
 - Already working to improve its own EMS/Fire system
 - Lacks capacity for immediate expansion
 - Acknowledgment:
 - Regional collaboration is valuable
 - But must be realistic and sustainable

Public Input Insight (Tina Marler)

- Community concern is emotional and high-stakes
 - Public appreciates:
 - Avoiding rushed decisions
 - Thoughtful, deliberate approach
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9. ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION:

A. FINANCE: Request Approval of Resolution No. 2026-16, A Resolution Approving a Budget Adjustment for the FY26 Budget, Allocating Additional Grant Funding Awarded to the Animal Services Department.

Jordan Barela, County Manager:

- The issue was previously introduced by Luke during his public comment.
- The focus is on funding for the Animal Services Department.

Funding Update

- The department received an additional \$10,000 through a Best Friends grant.

Status of Grant

- The grant agreement has already been reviewed and approved.
- Funds are secured but not yet accessible.

Issue Identified

- The funds cannot be used until they are formally included in the current fiscal year budget.
-

Proposed Action

- A budget adjustment resolution is being presented.
- This resolution will:
 - Add the \$10,000 grant funding to the current year's budget
 - Enable the department to access and utilize the funds

Purpose

- Ensure proper financial authorization and compliance with budgeting requirements.

Motion: Chairman Schwebach moved to approve Resolution 2026-16; **Vice-Chair Jaramillo** seconded.

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

- Jaramillo – Yes

Motion Carried

B. TREASURER: Request Approval of Resolution No. 2026-___, A Resolution Adopting a Cash Rounding Policy for Torrance County.

Kathryn Hernandez, County Treasurer & Commission, discussed:

Topic Overview

- Discussion of proposed cash rounding policy for tax payments.
- Coordination update with the Tyler Eagle system for 2026 tax year implementation.
- Focus on handling penny shortages and maintaining accurate accounting/audit controls.

Key Updates

System & Implementation

- Currently working with the Tyler Eagle team to:
 - Configure backend system for rounding.
 - Ensure compliance with assessor requirements for the 2026 tax year.
- Important limitation:
 - Existing rounding feature applies to tax calculation, NOT point-of-sale cash transactions.
- Ongoing work:
 - Determine how to implement rounding during the cash receipting process.
 - Maintain accurate balancing and audit trails.

Operational Context

- Pennies are increasingly scarce:
 - Limited supply from banks.
 - Some institutions (e.g., Edgewood Bank) no longer provide pennies.
- Other New Mexico counties:
 - Already adopting similar resolutions as a proactive measure.
- Goal:
 - Avoid disruption during high-volume tax season.
 - Ensure efficient public service.

Explanation of Policy (Q&A)

How Cash Rounding Works

- Applies ONLY to cash transactions:
 - Example:
 - Bill = \$10.13
 - Cash payment = \$10.15 (rounded)
- No rounding for:
 - Credit card payments → exact amount (\$10.13)
 - Checks → exact amount (\$10.13)

Ryan Schwebach, County Chairman, is concerned

- Key concern:
 - How the system tracks differences (e.g., extra \$0.02).
 - What happens to over/under amounts?

Kathryn Hernandez, County Treasurer, response:

- Tyler Eagle is working on a backend solution.
- Current approach:
 - Use over/under accounting adjustments.
 - Ensure daily balancing matches totals.
- Not fully finalized yet.

Major Concerns Raised

Tracking & Transparency

- Concern about:
 - Handling discrepancies between billed and collected amounts.
 - Ensuring the system accurately reflects rounding adjustments.

Invoice vs. Payment Rounding

Chairman's Position:

- Prefers rounding at the invoice level, not just cash payments.
- Reason:
 - Cleaner and more consistent system.
 - Eliminates tracking discrepancies.

Issues Identified:

- Difficult due to:
 - Tax calculation process (valuation × mill rate).
 - Multi-year unpaid taxes.
 - Legal/statutory constraints.

Assessor's Office Input (Linda Gallegos)

- Rounding invoices would require:
 - Adjusting property valuations.
 - Complex recalculations to force totals ending in 0 or 5.
- Not straightforward; may involve:
 - Mathematical adjustments across the tax base.
- Insight:
 - Statistically, rounding up/down balances out over time.

Department Impact

- Clerk's Office:
 - Minimal impact (mostly flat fees, no cents).
- Planning & Zoning:
 - No impact (fees are whole-dollar amounts).
- Assessor's Office:

- The only source of cents is tax calculation via the mill rate.

Key Takeaways

- Current proposal:
 - Apply rounding only to cash payments.
- Major unresolved issue:
 - Whether rounding should occur:
 - At the payment stage (current plan), or
 - At the invoice stage (preferred by some officials).
- System readiness:
 - Still under development with Tyler Eagle.
- Consensus:
 - Need further clarification before approval.

Action Items

- Staff / IT / Tyler Eagle:
 - Clarify:
 - Backend handling of rounding differences.
 - Audit trail and reconciliation process.
- Legal Review:
 - Determine if:
 - County-wide invoice rounding is legally permissible.
- Interdepartmental Coordination:
 - Assess feasibility across all departments.
- Follow-up:
 - Report findings at next meeting.

Closing Summary

- General agreement on the need for a proactive solution.
- Strong concern about:
 - System integrity
 - Consistency across payment methods
- Final decision:
 - Deferred pending legal and technical clarification.

Motion: Chairman Schwebach motioned to defer; **Commissioner McCall** seconded.

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

Motion Carried

10. Department and Program Updates:

A. NMSU Extension Office: Program Update by Debby Maberry:

Opening Remarks

- Deputy Manager expressed gratitude to attendees for supporting the program.
- Introduced the purpose: an overview of programming in the past year with a PowerPoint presentation.
- Emphasized the role of the Cooperative Extension Service (CES) in New Mexico:
 - 33 counties, each with a CES office.
 - Informal education for communities, supplementing traditional school programs.
 - Affiliated with New Mexico State University (NMSU), a land-grant university.

Scope and Reach

- CES serves one-third of New Mexicans annually.
- Youth Engagement: Over 40,000 youth participate in the New Mexico 4-H program.
- 4-H now includes over 200 projects: not limited to livestock.
 - Most popular: Shooting sports (archery, rifle).
 - Other projects: creative arts, baking, sewing, leathercraft, animal health, public speaking, wildlife, nutrition, and fiber arts.
- Torrance County:
 - Project classes at least twice a month.
 - Participation in district and national events.
 - Hosts local events like the buyer's dinner, FCS school contests, and Roundhouse activities.

Program Areas

- CES programs span multiple sectors:
 - Economic Development & Community Development
 - Energy & Water Management

- Farm & Ranch Support
- Food & Nutrition / Food Safety
- Health & Family Well-Being
- Natural Resources & Environmental Stewardship
- Yard & Garden / Foundational Education
- CES produces annual impact statements for programs (e.g., Health & Wellness, 4-H).
- Emergency preparedness highlighted: Southwest Border Food Protection & Emergency Preparedness Center manages livestock and food emergencies (e.g., fires, screw worm outbreak).

Educational Programs & Outreach

- School enrichment programs:
 - Nutrition education, “Egg to Chick,” food preservation workshops.
 - Community outreach: libraries, Boys and Girls Clubs.
 - Holistic mental health workshops combining cooking/nutrition and interactive activities.
- Instructor-led classes include creative arts, fiber arts, baking, sewing, shooting sports, and wildlife activities.

4-H Programming

- Philosophy: “Learn by doing” – develops skills, character, and community service values.
- 4-H now addresses diverse life skills: leadership, public speaking, arts, and marketable skills.
- The President visited all 33 counties last year, focusing on issues like water and youth development.

Personal Program Highlights – Deputy Manager

- Specializes in ceramics instruction:
 - Authored a ceramics book (released January).
 - Teaches 15–18 students annually at Torrance County FCS school, expanding to Valencia, Guadalupe, and Moriarty counties.
 - Goal: establish Torrance County as a ceramics project hub.

- Classes aim to develop marketable skills, hobbies, self-esteem, and community engagement.
- Increased visibility via social media, videos, and demonstrations.
- Three-year focus on 4-H pottery program; experience teaching pottery spans ~15 years.
- Expansion plan includes more equipment (wheels) to reach additional students.
- Emphasized 4-H's intergenerational impact: third-generation 4-H participant, children as fourth generation.

Funding

- Cooperative Extension Service funded 1/3 County, 1/3 State (NMSU), 1/3 Federal.
- Encouraged attendees to utilize CES resources for both youth and adult programs (gardening, skills, or educational projects).

Closing Remarks

- Reinforced the CES mission: empowering youth with life skills, practical knowledge, and community engagement.
- Deputy Manager expressed personal passion for 4-H and lifelong commitment to community service.
- Encouraged community involvement and leveraging CES programs for personal and professional growth.

11. DISCUSSION/PRESENTATION:

A. MANAGER: Discussion on a Potential Partnership with the Lotus Effect, LLC, to Provide Domestic Violence Services in Torrance County.

- County Manager Barela – Provided background and context of program funding and partnership options.
- Rebecca Sonneberg, Executive Director, Lotus Effect – Nonprofit partner representative (via Zoom).
- Tracey Master – County staff, resource identification and program support.
- Jarrah Medina – Direct service contractor (referenced during discussion).

Background & Current Situation

- Torrance County previously partnered with VSS, a domestic violence service provider, under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- MOU with VSS terminated late last year due to unmet service expectations for county residents.
- Current domestic violence funding sources (state, NM Domestic Violence Coalition) require nonprofit eligibility, not government entities.
- Attempts to partner with Albuquerque-based nonprofits failed due to a lack of local presence for direct victim services in Torrance County.

Current Model

- County allocated \$60,000 in funding.
- Two contractors currently provide direct services, including crisis intervention, advocacy, safety planning, legal support, and service coordination.
- County provides operational support: office space, vehicles, fuel, software, and supplies.

Proposed Hybrid Model

County Role:

- Continue funding and oversight of direct service contractors.
- Maintain operational support for field services.

Nonprofit Role (Lotus Effect):

- Provide wraparound services: emergency shelter, housing, counseling, clinical services, referrals, community education, outreach, file management, and program reporting.
- Eligible to apply for additional domestic violence funding, ensuring long-term program sustainability.
- Preliminary discussions held with Executive Director Rebecca, draft MOU in progress.

Benefits:

- Ensures 24/7 response capability within Torrance County.
- Opens access to nonprofit-only funding sources.
- Maintains accountability and transparency.

Funding Clarifications

- VSS Funding: Three-year agreement; approximately 1.5 years remaining. Funds are currently going to VSS under the CYFD grant.
- County Funding: \$60,000 redirected to local contractors, no direct County payment to VSS.
- New nonprofit partner could compete for CYFD and other grants once the VSS contract expires.
- County staff confirmed nonprofit eligibility is required for long-term funding.

Questions & Commissioner Input

- Commissioner McCall: Asked about VSS funding and sunset date.
- Commissioner Jaramillo: Inquired about current domestic violence trends; response: 25–40 calls/month handled by Jarrah Medina and confirmed no local emergency shelters; reliance on Albuquerque resources.
- Commissioner McCall: Asked about support for the Sheriff's department; confirmed response capability in Tarrant County.

Commissioner Comments:

- Concerns raised about nonprofit oversight; acknowledged need for clear contract scope.
- General agreement to pursue a hybrid model with a nonprofit partner, ensuring direct services remain reliable.

Staff and Expert Comments

- Tracey Master: Highlighted Rebecca's experience and the benefit of having Lotus Effect as a nonprofit partner.
- Rebecca (Lotus Effect): Emphasized transparency and support; available for questions and collaboration.
- Jarrah Medina: Currently manages field services, handling multiple client calls, court appearances, and service coordination.

Next Steps

- Finalize MOU with Lotus Effect, including detailed scope of services and reporting requirements.
- Implement hybrid model starting July 1 (next fiscal year).
- Continue evaluating funding opportunities and ensure program sustainability.

Key Takeaways

- Hybrid model ensures both direct service provision and access to nonprofit funding.
- Local presence remains critical; direct service contractors stay in-county.
- Collaboration with Lotus Effect provides clinical, housing, and counseling support.
- Transparency, accountability, and sustainability are primary goals.

B. FIRE: Discussion on the New Mexico Ambulance Supplemental Payment Program (ASPP) and Possible Program Participation.

- Program Overview – Torrance County Fire Chief
 - Initial impression: program seemed confusing, potentially similar to a multi-level marketing structure.
 - After discussions with Vanessa Miller, I understood the process better.
 - Program purpose: supplement Medicaid/Medicare transport reimbursements to improve funding for agencies responding to these patients.
- Current Medicaid Billing
 - Torrance County currently bills via Quick Med Claims.
 - Reimbursement rate is low (~20%).
 - This program provides additional supplemental funding to better cover true transport costs (~68% potential).
- Program Participation and Success
 - 12 New Mexico Fire Departments already enrolled; Torrance County would be the 13th.
 - Other agencies have successfully recouped significant funds.
 - City of Moriarty reports positive experience (1–2 years in program).
 - Sandoval County also satisfied; no complaints or missed payments reported.
- Financial Details & Projections
 - FY 23-based estimate for Torrance County:
 - Upfront “earnest money” (IGT): \$24,007.34 per quarter.

- Supplemental payment projected: ~\$61,000 per quarter.
 - Potential 200% return on investment.
 - Money can be reinvested in the pool for interest over time.
 - Payment lag:
 - Potential initial lag (~1 year) before funds are realized.
 - Delays are usually due to not submitting upfront money; no consistent monthly lag reported.
- Questions from Commissioners
 - Q: Is the \$60,000 supplemental payment per quarter?
 - A: Yes, quarterly. One-time upfront money covers all subsequent cycles.
 - Q: Is this program reliable for budgeting?
 - A: Yes, though initial cash outlay and potential lag must be considered. Chief to research further.
- Next Steps
 - Review customized FY 23 estimate packet for Torrance County.
 - Ensure all program documentation and upfront payments are submitted by May 31 for eligibility.
 - Further research on any potential lag in disbursement to provide certainty for upcoming fiscal planning.
 - Consider enrollment as it provides supplemental funding that would otherwise be lost.
- Commissioners' Takeaways
 - The program presents an opportunity to increase reimbursement for Medicaid transports.
 - Participation is considered low-risk based on other departments' experience.
 - Requires initial investment, but financial projections show a strong return.

Action Items:

1. Chief to distribute the customized FY 23 estimate packet to commissioners.
2. Chief to investigate initial lag and payment timeline to inform budgeting.

3. Ensure submission and enrollment by May 31 to secure program eligibility.

C. CLERK'S REPORT:

Sylvia Chavez, County Clerk:

Early Voting & Absentee Voting

- Early voting and absentee voting for the 2026 Primary election start May 5, 2026.
- Applicable races include:
 - Sheriff
 - Assessor
 - Commission Districts 1 & 2
 - Probate and Magistrate Judges
 - State Representative Districts 70 & 22 (Torrance County)
- Office assistance available for absentee voting requests.

Election School & Open Primary Training

- Election school scheduled next week in Albuquerque.
- Purpose:
 - Gain clarity on open primary rules.
 - Train precinct workers for implementation on election day.
- Open primary details:
 - Voters not affiliated with a major party can vote in the primary.
 - Independent or “declined to state” voters may choose either a Republican or Democratic ballot.
- Precinct worker training: last two weeks of April for all precinct workers.

Precinct Workers

- Individuals interested in becoming precinct workers can contact the office.
- Training will cover open primary procedures and machine operation.

Election Equipment / Tabulators

- Tabulators (voting machines) are being programmed toward the end of the month.
- Nine machines were down for maintenance due to thermal printer issues (faded print tape).
- Machines expected back next week; programming date will be publicly viewable.
- Ongoing conversation with the Secretary of State regarding aging machines and potential replacements.

Q&A Notes:

- Issue with machines: The thermal printer required maintenance.
- Changing party registration:
 - Only non-major party voters can change affiliation on the day of voting.
 - Deadline to change party registration is before May 5 (start of early voting).

- Open primary flexibility: Voters can choose party affiliation if not previously registered with a major party.

Statistics & Reporting

- The state keeps statistics on voters switching from party affiliation to “not disclose.”
- Clerk expressed interest in receiving these numbers for both Democrats and Republicans.

Action Items / Reminders

- Contact the clerk’s office for:
 - Absentee ballot requests
 - Precinct worker participation
- Attend tabulator programming session if interested.
- Stay informed on open primary procedures.

D. MANAGERS’ REPORT:

FY 27 Budget Requests

- Budget Hearings Completed:
 - All departmental budget requests were finalized yesterday.
 - Requests are now being consolidated into a single format for:
 - Year-to-year comparison
 - Identification of one-time expenditures
- Next Steps:
 - Meeting scheduled this week with CPA Kurt Knight to discuss revenue forecasting.
 - Once revenue forecasts are finalized (expected early next week), individual budget review meetings with commissioners will likely be scheduled over the next one to two weeks.
- Takeaway: Commissioners should anticipate detailed follow-ups on FY 27 budget reviews shortly.

Administrative Building Update

- Recent Activities:
 - Commissioner McCall and the speaker held multiple meetings with the architects.
 - Received final site plan and floor plan for the new admin building.
 - Architects are requesting Commission approval at the next meeting (April 22).
- Importance of Approval:
 - Approval is critical to release Mechanical & Plumbing (M&P) engineers to finalize the project.
 - Any design changes after approval will significantly increase costs (affecting electrical, mechanical, plumbing, and overall engineering).
 - Timeline: If approved, design completion is expected within six weeks.

- Design Adjustments:
 - Some areas had square footage reductions to balance the design.
 - Example: Clerk’s office storage was measured and slightly increased, while other areas were reduced.
 - All changes will be highlighted in the presentation for full transparency.
 - After approval, the project moves from 70% to 100% construction drawings, with no further changes without substantial cost.
-

E. COMMISSIONERS REPORT:

Kevin McCall, County Vice Chair:

Administration Building & Architects Update

Architects’ Progress

- Architects are on track and focused, delivering good results at this stage.
- Space reductions:
 - Some areas reduced, mainly common areas and hallways.
 - Offices largely unchanged.
 - Commission Chambers were intentionally kept the same size or slightly larger than prior plans—this was a positive adjustment.
- Department input:
 - Around Christmas, departments were visited for storage needs and feedback, which informed current layout changes.
 - Resulting adjustments are balanced, with give-and-take between space reductions and necessary expansions.

Fairgrounds Administration Update

- Construction progress:
 - Recent site visit with Jordan shows good progress.
 - Red iron framing is in place; bathrooms are ready for rough-in.
 - HVAC on the restroom side completed; walls framed.
 - Expected completion mid-June, though spring winds may slightly delay insulation and panel installation.
- Team performance:
 - Franken and BNR are stepping up and maintaining progress.

County Roads / Approaches

- DOT (Rhonda) follow-up:
 - Attempted to clarify ownership of approaches for County roads connecting to state highways.
 - East Martinez road ownership and the failing road in front of Pilot Truck Stop are still unclear.

- No response yet—project is in a waiting stage for official answers.

Overall Status

- Project is progressing well, architects making thoughtful design adjustments.
- track construction, minor potential delays due to weather.
- Ongoing coordination required for DOT-related road ownership issues.

Ryan Schwebach, County Chairman: None

Linda Jaramillo, County Commissioner:

*Personal Update: Shared that her mother recently passed away.

*Religious Context: Mentioned that their mother was a devout Catholic.

*Current Circumstances: Due to the Easter season and associated Lenten activities and services, the speaker does not have much to report at this time.

*Commitment: Expressed intention to continue their mother's traditions and participate more actively in future meetings.

*Closing Note: Thanked attendees for understanding and indicated they will provide a fuller update next time.

12. Announcement of the next Board of County Commissioners Meeting:

Next meeting: April 22, 2026, 9:00 AM

13. Signing of official documents

14. Adjournment:

Motion: Chairman Schwebach motions to adjourn. **Vice-Chair Jaramillo** seconded.

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

Motion Carried

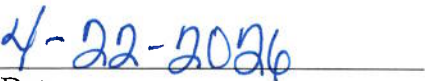
Meeting adjourned at 10:49 AM.



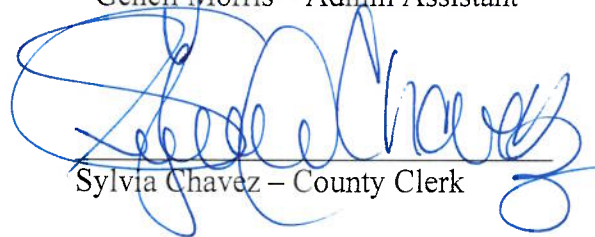
Ryan Schwebach - Chairman



Genell Morris – Admin Assistant



Date



Sylvia Chavez – County Clerk

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