

**Final  
Torrance County Board of Commissioners  
Regular Commission Meeting  
May 27, 2026  
9:00AM**

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  
MACKENZIE CARLSON- ADMINASTRATIVE ASSISTANT  
DON GOEN – PLANNING & ZONING DIRECTOR**

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

**Chairman Schwebach** Calls meeting to order at 9:05AM

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**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND INNVOICATION**

- Pledge led by **Chairman Schwebach**
  - Invocation led by **Commissioner Jaramillo**
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**3. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

- **County Manager Jordan Barela - Deferral of Item 8c** (Request Approval of a Professional Services Agreement Between Torrance County and Rio Grande Medical Direction, LLC to Provide Medical Director Services for the Torrance County Finance Department.) due to expected contract adjustments related to needs of other departments.
  - Moving **Discussion Item 9a** earlier in the agenda, specifically before item 6A
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**4. PUBLIC COMMENT (Comment limited to TWO Minutes)**

**Don Goen- Planning and Zoning Director**

- Provides update on letters of interest for vacant board positions:
    - District 1: 2 letters received; both “very viable candidates.”
    - District 2: 0 letters received.
    - District 3: Gilbert Sanchez has requested reappointment.
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- Notes:
  - Ideal balance for a 5-member / 3-district board is 2–2–1.
  - Historically has been 3–0–2 for about a year at times due to staggered terms.
  - Deadline for letters of interest is end of business today.

### **Luke Fields – Torrance County Animal Services**

- Introduces “Romeo”, a dog available for adoption:
  - Described as “our most eligible bachelor”, abandoned in a foreclosure.
  - House-trained; refuses to go in kennels and must be let out as soon as staff arrives.
  - “One of the best, goodest doggies.”
- Promotes Martingale-style collars:
  - Describes design: quick-release clip and a 2–2.5-inch cinch that tightens just enough to prevent slipping over the head but doesn’t choke.
  - Recommends them for safety and escape prevention.
  - Notes some manufacturers donate a collar to shelters for each one purchased.

### **Tracey Master – Torrance County Domestic Violence Program Assistant**

- Provides administrative update only (does not have full client data):
  - Notes Ms. Medina is “extremely busy” assisting survivors with orders of protection, hearings, and direct services.
- Contract / payment issues:
  - Tracey appeared before the Commission at the April 22 meeting:
    - Requested to liquidate her contract and transfer remaining funds to Ms. Medina’s contract. So, Medina could be paid for more of the hours she works and reduce donated hours.
  - States:
    - She signed the contract amendment on April 22, believes the Chair did as well, but has not received a fully executed copy.
    - Ms. Medina’s contract was fully executed a couple of weeks ago.
  - Payment delays:
    - Tracey had not received March payment by April 22.
    - Payment later arrived; check dated April 15, 2026, implying it was held for about a week.
    - States that in 7 months of the contract, she and Ms. Medina have been paid on time only once.
  - Ms. Medina’s donated labor:
    - Reports that Ms. Medina has donated 335 hours to Torrance County.

- After funds were moved from Tracey’s contract to Medina’s, Tracey advised Medina to submit an edited April invoice to capture additional hours.
- Medina was told “once payroll is closed, it’s closed”, despite them being contractors, not payroll employees.
- Raises concern that GRT amount on Medina’s April invoice was not paid, and because “payroll was closed,” they are uncertain if that tax reimbursement will ever be paid.
- Operational constraints:
  - A four-month delay in securing ink cartridges via purchase order:
    - Prevented completion of an extra project Tracey wanted to finish before fiscal year-end.
  - States license plate on the domestic violence vehicle was stolen ~6 months ago and has still not been replaced, rendering the vehicle unusable for transporting survivors.
- Stands for questions; Commissioners ask brief clarifying questions, but no immediate action is taken.

## **5. DEPARTMENT UPDATES:**

### **a. ANIMAL SERVICES UPDATE**

#### **Danette Langdon – Torrance County Animal Service Director**

- Call volume and caseload:
  - 448 calls from Jan 1 to current, slightly less than last year, but:
    - Cases are “significantly more complex”, including:
      - Multiple hoarding cases of 20+ animals, requiring staged intake due to limited space.
      - A Chihuahua case with 26 dogs (17 ultimately handled) due to an owner in and out of the hospital.
      - Currently 24–30 puppies waiting to come in, but no space until adult dogs are adopted.
  - 365 animals handled so far this year, down slightly from last year.
- Positive trends:
  - Fewer owner-surrender and euthanasians this year.
  - Access to more medical funding via grants has allowed them to treat animals rather than euthanize.
- Professional development / networking:

- Attended a Salt Lake City animal services conference:
  - Gained new resources and contacts, including:
    - A spay/neuter resource that will sterilize shelter animals for free in Truth or Consequences, with no limit on numbers; shelter just needs to transport animals.
    - Discussion of new AI technology and other operational resources.
  - Danette notes it was encouraging to see other shelters facing similar challenges, reducing the feeling of isolation.
- Grants and capital needs:
  - Pursuing a spay/neuter grant from the Animal Welfare Board to bring a mobile van to Torrance County:
    - Could sterilize up to 270 animals in 3 days.
    - Goal is to make the service free to the public.
  - Seeking funding for a dedicated cat building:
    - Recent New Mexico Board of Veterinary Medicine / Animal Sheltering Board inspection (first in 23 years) noted:
      - Need for a separate cat room per sheltering rules.
      - Old, rusty kennels requiring replacement (grant already in place for kennel repairs).
      - Lack of a proper isolation room:
        - Currently using the “blue kennels” room for:
          - Nursing mothers and puppies.
          - Parvo and sick animals.
          - Cats, whose cages face the blue kennels.
        - This co-location defeats true quarantine, especially with parvo and vulnerable puppies.
    - Proposal:
      - Build a new cat building roughly the size of the current dog kennel building.
      - Use existing 4×4 cat cages (16 total) stacked and modular partitions.
      - Include water and electricity; locate under/near the existing south-side awning and connect via a door where a window currently is.

- Building strategy:
  - Initial idea of a prefab building costing \$80–90k plus similar site-prep costs is being reconsidered.
  - New approach:
    - Purchase a plain metal building (~\$15,000) from a local company.
    - Potentially contract Ricardo with AAA to build out the structure.
    - Purchase stainless steel kennels from a separate company so they are modular and portable.
  - Current priority is kennel repairs:
    - Some kennels have holes completely through the walls.
    - Vendor is identified; contract is pending.
- Commissioner questions:
  - **Commissioner Jaramillo** asks about advance notice for the state inspection (they had 2 days' notice).
  - **Chairman Schwebach** ask about the status of the earlier-discussed building:
    - Danette acknowledges slow progress due to other County priorities and staffing issues.
    - Luke Fields has been instrumental in keeping the project moving and avoiding it being forgotten.

#### **Luke Fields – Grant Admin / Animal Services**

- References a recent serious incident in Mountainair involving animals.
- Action steps:
  - With help from Samantha (Emergency Management):
    - Arranged Narcan training for animal control officers.
    - Officers will begin carrying Narcan.
    - Exploring property contamination methods for animals to handle drug-exposed environments.
- Emphasizes learning from local incidents to be better prepared next time.

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## **6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. **COMMISSION: Request Approval of April 22, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes of the Board of County Commissioners.**

**Motion: Chairman Schwebach** motioned to approve Commission Meeting minutes; Seconded by **Commissioner Jaramillo**.

Roll Call Vote:

- o **Schwebach** – Yes
- o **McCall** – Yes
- o **Jaramillo** – Yes
- Motion Carried

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## **7. CONSENT AGENDA**

- a. **FINANCE: Request Approval of Payables with a Date Range of May 6, 2026, through May 20, 2026.**

**Motion: Chairman Schwebach** motioned to approve Payables; Seconded by **Commissioner McCall**.

Roll Call Vote:

- o **Schwebach** – Yes
- o **McCall** – Yes
- o **Jaramillo** – Yes
- Motion Carried

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

- a. **MANAGER/FINANCE: Request Approval of the Fiscal Year 2027 Interim Budget for Torrance County.**

**Jordan Barela – County Manager**

- Purpose:
  - Request approval of FY 2027 Interim Budget (due to DFA by end of May).
  - Final budget and resolution due to DFA by July 31.
- Notes:

- Detailed budget was not in online packet due to being finalized over holiday weekend but is included in the binder handed to Commissioners.
- Some grant amounts are still unknown; many grant-funded lines are held flat until awards are confirmed.

#### Staffing & Compensation Changes

- Across-the-board
  - 3.5% salary increase for all employees, including elected officials:
    - Elected official increases require a separate resolution and would only take effect next term.
- New / Adjusted Positions
  - New FTE – Financial Analyst (Finance):
    - Assist with processing payables countywide and strengthening internal financial capacity.
  - New FTE – IT Specialist (Manager’s Office):
    - Provide in-house IT support, reduce reliance and cost of fully contracting with external vendor (Ambitions).
  - New FTE – Sheriff’s Deputy.
  - Sheriff’s Office reclassifications:
    - 4 existing deputies reclassified to Corporal to ensure a frontline supervisor on every shift.
  - Dispatch:
    - Admin Assistant reclassified to Public Safety Administrator to better support multi-agency public safety operations.
  - Fire:
    - Chief pay component was added as a pilot program this fiscal year.
  - Emergency Management & Sheriff:
    - Salary adjustments (more detail in binder tables).
- Positions removed from interim budget (due to cost):
  - 2 Float Clerk positions in County Manager’s Office.
  - 3 PRN Fire Department positions (keeping 3 of the 6 previously requested).
- Net staffing impact:
  - Combined effect of new FTEs, reclassifications, salary adjustments, and 3.5% increase:

- Approximate recurring increase of \$501,200 in staffing costs.

#### One-Time Expenditures

- Total: Approximately \$1,963,000 (one-time)
- Items include (high-level):
  - Roads:
    - Transport trailer.
    - 10-yard & 5-yard salt boxes.
    - Gravel and chips.
    - 5-yard dump truck with plow & salt box.
    - Payoff of three blade leases.
  - Fire Department:
    - Mini pumper.
    - Additional gear/equipment.
  - Sheriff's Office:
    - Building sign.
    - Funding for potential front access project at Sheriff's Office.
  - Emergency Management:
    - F-150 truck.
  - Clerk's Office:
    - Funding for additional phase of document scanning project.
- Funding sources for one-time items:
  - Spread between Infrastructure and PILT funds (specific allocations in binder).

#### Financial Summary

- **Michelle Jones – Chief Deputy County Manager**
  - Presents LGBMS recap:
    - General Fund:
      - Revenues: approx. \$13.5M.
      - Transfers in approx. \$2.8M (to support other funds like Fire, Roads, Dispatch).
      - Expenditures: approx. \$10.3M, similar to last year.

- Last year, transfers from General Fund were \$4M; this year slightly reduced.
- Countywide summary (all funds):
  - Beginning cash balance (FY start): ~\$48.3M.
  - Revenues: ~\$55.9M.
  - Expenditure: ~\$59.9M
    - higher than revenues primarily due to one-time expenditures.
  - Adjusted budget balance: ~\$44.3M.
  - Required reserves: ~\$2.8M.
  - Projected ending fund balance: ~\$41.8M.
- Caveats:
  - Several revenue lines (especially Fire and some grants) are estimates; final amounts expected mid-June and will be reflected in the Final Budget.
  - Emphasizes the budget is a “living, breathing document” to be refined quarterly.

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#### Commission Questions & Comments

- **Commissioner McCall**

- Requests:
  - A clear numeric summary of:
    1. Total recurring cost increase (already cited as approx. \$501k).
    2. Total one-time cost (~\$1.96M).
    3. Year-over-year departmental budget increases (for each department, FY26 to FY27).
- Notes:
  - In earlier worksheets, General Fund departmental expenditures appeared to grow from roughly \$10.7M to \$10.8M, and he wants a consolidated figure for all funds (Fire, Roads, EMS, Dispatch).
  - Points out a \$2.5M funding gap on the new Administration Building project, which must be considered alongside other commitments.

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- **Commissioner Jaramillo**

- Asks whether fuel costs were increased to account for price spikes.

- Jordan & Michelle confirm:
  - Fuel budgets increased by about \$145,000 countywide, concentrated in Roads, Fire, and Sheriff.

- **Chairman Schwebach**

- Praises the clarity and structure of the budget presentation as the best he has seen during his tenure.
- Emphasizes:
  - The need for a cushion, especially because:
    - Budget assumes being fully staffed with full benefits and raises everywhere.
    - Historically, vacancies have yielded unused salary funds that become a one-time cushion.
  - He does not want to “spend that cushion ahead of time” or rely on unfilled positions as permanent funding sources.
  - Distinction between one-time vs recurring costs:
    - He intentionally supported more one-time capital and fewer ongoing commitments, given the current economic uncertainty.

- **Linda Gallegos – Chief Deputy Assessor**

- Expresses strong concern about the 3.5% across-the-board raises:
  - States lowest-paid staff in her department make “just over \$17/hour”.
    - 3.5% = about \$0.65/hour, which she finds insufficient given:
      - Inflation, rising insurance, and higher living costs, especially fuel and groceries.
  - Notes:
    - In 7 months, she and staff have had only one timely paycheck in the DV program context; in Assessor’s Office, they have had limited raises:
      - Last year they received a \$1/hour increase.
    - This year’s proposal feels inadequate given workload and inflation.
- Argues:

- The total cost of requested raises (initial departmental ask) was about \$508,000, which she believes is reasonable relative to overall budget strength.
  - Employees need to see a meaningful change in their take-home pay to remain committed long-term.
  - Speaks as both department head and advocate for her employees, emphasizing retention and morale.
  
- Commissioner/Staff Discussion
  - **Michelle Jones – Chief Deputy County Manager**
    - Acknowledges:
      - Many departments focused their requests almost solely on pay increases, not operational expansion.
      - There is a balance between:
        - Keeping a positive, sustainable budget, and
        - Ensuring staff are fairly and competitively compensated.
    - She believes the pay issue should be revisited before final budget, given its prominence in feedback.
  
  - Discussion of larger raises (\$1–\$1.50/hour)
    - Michelle recalls:
      - They modeled scenarios for:
        - \$1/hour, \$1.50/hour, and \$2/hour increases.
      - She suggests \$1.50/hour as a more meaningful option but acknowledges:
        - \$2/hour was likely beyond what the budget could comfortably absorb.
      - States a \$1.50/hour raise was estimated to cost around \$800,000, while \$1/hour was about \$500,000.
    - Jordan Barela clarifies:
      - Approx. \$750,000 for higher scenarios when including new positions and benefit impacts.
    - Commissioners note:

- Raises have different effective percentages for low vs higher paid employees, with lower-paid staff gaining proportionally more from flat-dollar increases.
- **Chuck Cavaness- Planning and Zoning Senior Code Enforcement Officer**
  - States:
    - In his experience, a 3.5% raise was what you gave when you wanted someone to quit.
    - Notes rising cost of beef and fuel suggest that actual cost-of-living well exceeds 3%.
    - Predicts the County will lose employees if raises remain at 3.5%.
    - Urges the Commission to seriously consider at least \$1.50/hour.

**Motion: Chairman Schwebach** motioned to approve; Seconded by **Commissioner McCall**.

Roll Call Vote:

- **Schwebach** – Yes
- **McCall** – Yes
- **Jaramillo** – Yes
- Motion Carried

**b. SHERIFF: Request Approval to Purchase a 2020 Ford F-150 from the Town of Edgewood Police Department in the Amount of \$8,000.00.**

**John Stocum – Sheriff’s Office**

- Requests for approval to purchase 2020 Ford F-150 from Town of Edgewood Police Department:
  - Mileage: ~93,000 (considered low for county use).
  - Purchase price: \$8,000 (LEPF funds).
  - Value:
    - Notes the equipment alone inside the unit would cost more than \$8,000 if bought separately.
  - Additional setup estimated at \$1,000–2,000:
    - New tires.
    - Decal removal and re-decating for Torrance County.

- Radio reprogramming.
- This will help replace aging and failing fleet units.

**Motion: Commissioner McCall** motioned to approve; Seconded by **Chairman Schwebach**.

Roll Call Vote:

- **Schwebach** – Yes
- **McCall** – Yes
- **Jaramillo** – Yes
- Motion Carried

- c. **FIRE: Request Approval of a Professional Services Agreement Between Torrance County and Rio Grande Medical Direction, LLC to Provide Medical Director Services for the Torrance County Finance Department.**

~Deferred~

## 9. DISCUSSION/PRESENTATION

~Moved before 6A~

- a. **MANAGER: Presentation on Potential Affordable Housing Partnership to Create an Affordable Housing Project at Salt Mission Park.**
- **Tim Nisly – Manager of Salt Missions Park**
  - Background:
    - Former Executive Director of the Rio Grande Community Development Corporation and South Valley Economic Development Center.
    - Has spent the last 8 years building a private development company and working on Salt Missions Park in Estancia.
  - Proposal:
    - Create 44–50 affordable housing units (mobile homes) at Salt Missions Park in Estancia within 12 months.
    - Targeting State of New Mexico \$40M fund for workforce, affordable, and senior housing.
    - Site advantages:
      - Existing RV Park, already zoned for both RVs and mobile homes.

- 53 sites available and “shovel-ready”:
    - No new zoning approvals are required.
    - No new electric transformers are needed.
    - Water and sewer infrastructure are already in place.
- Current use:
  - Historically used heavily for wind farm workers.
  - Houses CoreCivic workforce housing on part of the site (to remain).
  - Roughly 5 existing mobile homes now; most sites are currently empty.
- Proposed county role:
  - County would apply for and receive DFA grant funds (grant, not loan).
  - County would purchase mobile homes.
  - Land would be leased from Salt Missions Park’s private owner (Isley’s company).
  - County could:
    - Self-manage the units, or
    - Contract management to a third party / nonprofit (similar to a housing authority model).
  - Land lease anticipated around \$400/month per lot (to be negotiated).
  - Rental income:
    - Monthly rents expected to exceed lease cost, creating positive cash flow for county.
    - Likely requirement from DFA that net income be reinvested in affordable housing.
- Tenant targeting (flexible):
  - Could be designated for:
    - Seniors.
    - Domestic violence survivors.
    - Workforce housing (e.g., in partnership with major employers like CoreCivic).
  - Affordable family housing.

- Design considerations:
  - Interest in ensuring it “doesn’t look like a park”:
    - Breaking up roof lines.
    - Adding carports, uniform privacy fencing.
    - Strategic landscaping to create a visually appealing neighborhood.

Questions from Commission and Town of Estancia

- **Chairman Schwebach**

- Notes:
  - Site is inside the Town of Estancia.
  - Wants to avoid “stepping on municipal toes”.
  - he is not willing to move forward without clear support from the Town of Estancia.
- Concerns:
  - Policy hesitation to invest county dollars into improvements on land the county does not own, unless under a long-term lease (20–30 years).
  - Asks about:
    - Liability exposure as a landlord.
    - Rental rate setting and whether county might be obligated to subsidize rents to keep them “affordable.”

- **Amy May – Town of Estancia Trustee**

- States the town just learned of the proposal from seeing it on the agenda.
- Key concerns:
  - Water and wastewater capacity:
    - Estancia is pursuing Water Trust Board funding to upgrade lagoons.
    - Unsure if 56 units at once can be supported with current lagoon and water system.
    - Notes an active project for a new well, also awaiting Water Trust Board funding.
  - Zoning limits:
    - Property is zoned as a Planned Area Development (PAD):

- Set up as RV park with a limited number of mobile home spaces within that.
    - Town may need to revisit zoning if the number of mobile homes is to be expanded.
  - Readiness:
    - Town is working toward infrastructure improvements to support growth but may “not be quite there yet.”
- Broader issues:
  - Notes that subsidized housing can sometimes bring additional social service demands (from her experience living in “the projects” back East).
  - Worries the town’s first responders and services may not be equipped yet to handle potential increased demand.
- Commission Discussion (Schwebach, McCall, Jaramillo)
  - Mayor / Town engagement:
    - Commission agrees Estancia must be “intricately involved” in planning and decision-making.
  - Infrastructure & economic development balance:
    - **Chairman Schwebach:**
      - Emphasizes chronic housing shortage as a barrier to economic development, especially for employers like CoreCivic and other contractors.
      - Challenges the town to align zoning and infrastructure with the types of projects it has already zoned for.
      - Distinguishes between:
        - Healthy, mixed-income affordable housing that supports economic growth, and
        - Overly concentrated “welfare-style” low-income housing that could harm the town.
    - **Commissioner McCall:**
      - Concerned about potential impacts on private landlords:
        - If rents on the project are artificially low due to subsidy, it could undercut existing private rentals.
        - Emphasizes fairness so the entire city is not “turned into low-income” by design.

- Legal / structural context:
  - **County Attorney Garcia & County Manager Barela:**
    - State that:
      - Counties can undertake such projects under the Municipal Housing Act, which also applies to counties.
      - Typically done via a housing authority but can be structured directly under county authority.
      - County’s liability would be that of a typical landlord for any property it owns.
    - Implementation issues:
      - Need detailed partnership structure, leasing frameworks, and rent management models.
      - Could use voucher programs (e.g., Housing Choice Vouchers) so tenants pay an income-based share and landlord still receives full rent via subsidy.
    - Mixed-income model:
      - Recommend mixed-income approach rather than concentrating on extremely low-income tenants:
        - Example: split into senior units, workforce units, affordable units, and some market-rate units.
- Time frame & next steps:
  - **Tim Nisly:**
    - Notes the state wants the \$40M expended by July 2027, implying a one-year window once the project is approved.
    - Requests that in the next 30 days, the county consider at least a preliminary “agreement to develop” enabling a strong response to the state’s RFI.
  - Commission consensus:
    - Recognizes project potential but insists:
      - Town of Estancia must evaluate infrastructure and zoning capacity.
      - More detailed analysis is needed regarding management structure, liability, rent levels, and long-term lease terms.
  - No vote taken at this meeting; Commission will continue exploring and seek Estancia’s input.

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**b. DISTRICT COURT: Discussion on Staff and an Expansion Request from the 7th Judicial District Court.**

**Judge Shannon Murdock – District Court Judge, 7th Judicial District**

- Accompanied by:
  - **Dorella Molina – CFO/CEO of the District Court.**
  - **Denise Lujan – Court Manager.**
- Context:
  - 7th Judicial District is a circuit system covering Torrance, Sierra, Socorro, and Catron counties.
  - It is among the largest judicial districts by geography in the continental U.S.
- Current building:
  - Neil Mertz Judicial Complex (built 2003):
    - Housed DA's Office, District Court, and Magistrate Court originally.
    - Around 2016, Magistrate Court relocated and the space was renovated for the Sheriff's Office, eliminating:
      - One courtroom.
      - Several court offices.
  - Since then, the courthouse has:
    - Insufficient office space:
      - Some staff are forced to work from home due to no office availability.
    - Confidentiality concerns:
      - Pretrial Services Officers and Drug Court Surveillance Officers meet clients in public hallways in view/earshot of the public.
    - Courtroom capacity constraints:
      - Sometimes three judges are present with only two courtrooms.
    - Visiting judges must use:

- A single visiting judge office, or
  - Alternative spaces (Judge's personal office, court monitor's office) for virtual hearings, which is not ideal for preserving the official court record.
- Security & infrastructure issues:
  - Shared facility with Sheriff's Office:
    - Original alarm system tied to entire building was disabled after Sheriff's move-in, because routine movement in that space repeatedly triggered the system.
    - There is an ongoing dispute over whether a wall should be built between the Sheriff's side (which wants to allow open carry) and the court side.
    - Judge Murbach strongly opposes open carry in the judicial complex (except by law enforcement and judges) and is skeptical that a wall alone resolves security threats.
  - Physical conditions:
    - Tiles throughout the building is cracking and lifting, creating trip hazards.
    - Carpet is worn and in disrepair.
    - Stucco on the exterior is peeling, bubbling, and missing around windows; concerns about possible water intrusion and mold.
    - A large structural crack in an interior wall has widened over the years.
    - Roof leaks:
      - Past leaks were "repaired," but effectiveness awaits testing with future heavy rain.
    - Windows leak water when it rains; seals have been attempted but remain inadequate.
    - Front glass hallway:
      - No ventilation in the atrium-like entrance; extremely hot in summer.
      - Jurors and witnesses often wait there for extended periods.
- Funding history:
  - There was previously a joint project (District Court + Sheriff's Office) for:
    - Expanded secure fencing and parking.

- Funds were allocated, but county subsequently reallocated money to emergency sheriff fleet purchases, and the project never broke ground.
- District proposed matching funds to spur courthouse projects:
  - Judge notes that offers of state matching dollars of ~\$355,000 in prior years did not result in county follow-through.
  - She reports that at recent state capital outlay hearings, the district was asked about matching funds history, and she had to explain that they haven't received confirmation from Estancia/Torrance for those matches.

#### Discussion – Short-Term Options & Long-Term Plan

- Commission questions:
  - Commissioner McCall
    - Asks about temporary office solutions (e.g., portables).
    - Notes that building a new courthouse is a year-long endeavor, especially securing funding.
  - Judge Murdock
    - Suggestions:
      - If the Sheriff's Office could relocate (e.g., to its building across the street), District Court could reclaim the former Magistrate/sheriff area, which includes:
        - A courtroom.
        - Additional offices.
      - Would resolve many immediate spacing and confidentiality issues.
  - Undersheriff / Sheriff's Office
    - Explains current sheriff evidence building across the street is fully utilized, with:
      - CID, evidence, and emergency management already housed there.
      - Only one office vacant, reserved for a future Emergency Management Specialist.
    - States no significant extra space is available in that building.
- Commissioner McCall
  - Considers:

- Whether some court staff who do not meet the public (e.g., hearing officers working virtually) could be temporarily placed in portables near the complex or in other county buildings.
- Recognizes:
  - Significant security concerns in having high-risk defendants or probationers meet in unsecured portables.
- Funding / Matching Opportunities
  - District CFO (Dorella Molina)
    - States:
      - She believes there are FY27 state matching funds potentially available, on a 1:1 match, for courthouse improvements (up to ~\$350k or more depending on unused state funds).
      - Matching funds can be used for:
        - Repairs (roof, stucco, interior finishes).
        - Technology.
        - Other capital improvements.
  - Commissioner McCall
    - Signals willingness to:
      - Include one-time county money in this budget (FY27) for courthouse needs.
      - Leverage state matches if the district can confirm availability.
    - Requests district confirm with state judicial capital staff that matching dollars can be applied to temporary offices as well as major rehab.
- Chairman Schwebach
  - Proposes:
    - Tie courthouse planning into the larger county facilities plan:
      - New Administration Building (already funded/committed) will free up to 23,000 sq. ft.
      - Long-term: potential relocation of Sheriff's Office into current admin building once vacated.
      - Then, District Court could reclaim the entire Mertz Complex and more logically configure courtrooms, security, and offices.
- Short-term:

- Avoid large capital investment that may become obsolete in 2 years due to major reconfiguration when the new admin building opens.
- But acknowledges urgent safety and functionality issues (flooring, stucco, windows, atrium heat, etc.) should be prioritized for near-term fixes.
- Direction:
  - Requests the court provide a prioritized “wish list” of:
    - Most urgent repairs.
    - Minimal space expansion is needed for staff now.
    - Highest priority security upgrades.
- No formal motion or funding commitment at this meeting, but clear Commission interest in investing one-time funds if matched by state, and a directive to integrate court needs into long-term facilities planning.

**Break at 11:58AM**

**Returned from break at 11:15AM**

**c. MANAGER: Presentation the Creation of a Torrance County Safety Officer Position within the Torrance County Fire Department.**

- **Jordan Barela – County Manager**
  - Notes that safety responsibilities are currently fragmented:
    - HR handles injury reporting and claims.
    - Samantha (Emergency Management) handles OSHA reporting and compliance.
    - Operations Manager and others handle fire inspections and safety training loosely.
  - Proposal:
    - Create a countywide Safety Officer role by reclassifying an existing Fire Department position into an administrative safety role (fire + countywide safety).
    - This position would:

- Conduct fire and safety inspections for all county facilities (including senior centers).
- Oversee alarm systems, fire extinguishers, egress compliance, etc.
- Lead safety committee work, policy reviews, and training.
- Conduct after-action reviews of incidents (e.g., Mountainair event), identify training gaps and policy changes.
- Funding:
  - By converting a 56-hour/week firefighter position to a 40-hour/week administrative position, the gross pay remains the same, but hourly rate is adjusted upward via the provided conversion chart.
  - No net increase to base payroll from the reassignment; however, backfill needs must be considered in Fire staffing models.
- **Chief Gary Smith – Fire Chief**
  - Supports concept:
    - Candidate:
      - States there is an internal candidate with:
        - Extensive fire service experience.
        - Certification in plans-check, inspection, and investigations.
      - Could also assist with:
        - Building plans review for life-safety code.
        - Countywide compliance with state and national fire codes.
    - Benefits:
      - Consistent oversight of all County buildings to ensure compliance with fire codes and OSHA.
      - Reduce ad-hoc reliance on untrained staff for alarm and fire-extinguisher maintenance.
      - Provide technical support to the County’s Safety Committee.

Commission Discussion

- **Commissioner Jaramillo**
  - Asks whether this would reduce workload for Samantha in Emergency Management.
  - Jordan confirms it would offload OSHA and some facility-safety duties.
- **Chairman Schwebach**

- Raises a structural question:
  - What happens if this qualified individual leaves?
  - Wants assurances that:
    - The position itself remains tied to specific qualifications, not to a person.
    - If a replacement cannot meet those minimum certifications within six months, the position could be re-evaluated or returned to Fire operations.
- Jordan confirms:
  - Job description states minimum certifications required.
  - New hires would have six months to obtain missing certs, or they would be disqualified from the role.
- Commission consensus:
  - No vote taken; this is an informational presentation.
  - General support to explore the concept further and bring back a formal proposal.

**d. MANAGER: Continued Discussion on the Fiscal Year 2027 Infrastructure and Capital Improvement Plan.**

- **Jordan Barela County Manager & Jody Cornwall Grants Administrator**
  - Present the current ICIP list and a status sheet flagging:
    - Which projects are realistically “shovel ready”.
    - Descriptions, budgets, and titles are outdated or misleading, especially after DFA’s conversion to online ICIP/PARS system.
  - Jody notes:
    - Some ICIP entries do not match the Commission’s intent or current needs.
    - Examples:
      - Judicial/Sheriff entry referencing “sheriff entry way improvement / wall and security upgrades”, whereas courts’ expectation also included fencing and secure parking.
      - Duran water system description referencing potential impacts to cultural/historic resources, which they now want to reword or remove to avoid negative state interpretation.
  - Some projects are:

- Under-budgeted (e.g., ABO water system at \$130k is unrealistically low).
  - Owned by other governments or private entities but currently sit under Torrance County's code.
- Chairman & Commission Direction:
  - All Commissioners agree to:
    - Review the provided ICIP titles/budgets/descriptions (Tab: ICIP Project Titles, Budget, and Descriptions).
    - Propose corrections:
      - Ensure descriptions match actual desired scope.
      - Remove overly specific or problematic wording (e.g., references to cultural resource conflicts).
      - Update budgets were clearly misaligned.
  - Return edits to Grants by July 1<sup>ST</sup> this is the deadline to submit.

#### Specific ICIP Project Decisions

##### Fire Station Water Suppression System – McIntosh

- Project: Fire Station water suppression system (Macintosh station; fire sprinklers & 30,000-gallon tank).
- Status change:
  - Initially listed as not shovel ready due to concerns about well capacity and water supply.
- Discussion:
  - Jody reports:
    - Recent well driller logs:
      - New well (drilled ~2023) tested at ~20 gpm, completed at 15 gpm.
      - Driller believes the old well may come back overtime.
    - Current usage:
      - New well serves fire station, uncertain about dispatch/animal shelter tie-in.
  - Commission & Fire Chief:
    - Chief explains:
      - Sprinkler project largely involves:

- Tank installation, ceiling modifications, and piping.
    - Minimal structural changes.
  - Existing well, over time, should be enough to fill the 30,000-gallon tank without needing rapid fill.
- Chairman notes:
  - Tank is dedicated to suppression; does not need to be refilled overnight.
  - After a major fire event in the station, buildings would likely be offline for weeks, allowing gradual refill.
- Funding status:
  - Jody confirms:
    - About \$375,000 already appropriated via capital outlay for Macintosh.
    - Additional \$115,000 reauthorization plus a recent \$95,000 tank quote.
    - Combined funding appears sufficient to proceed.
- Decision:
  - Commission consensus to:
    - Mark the project as “Shovel Ready – YES”.
    - Keep it on ICIP but marked as funded and in progress.
    - Direct staff to move forward with design, quotes, and contracting to get system built.

#### Fire Department Comprehensive Plan

- Project: Fire Department Comprehensive Plan.
- Funding status:
  - \$90,000 already awarded.
- Chief Smith:
  - States:
    - Full-blown comprehensive plan may be more “luxury” than immediate need.
    - Funding could be re-scoped for:
      - Asset management, water resource mapping, or other targeted planning that directly benefits operations.
- Decision:

- Keep project on ICIP as funded.
- Staff to explore narrower, more operations-driven scope within allowable grant parameters.

#### Regional Animal Shelter Study

- Original title: Regional Animal Shelter Study.
- Discussion
  - Danette Langdon:
    - Notes:
      - Other municipalities (Moriarty, Estancia, etc.) have their own animal control operations and some kennel capacity.
      - No strong push or clear interest from other municipalities in a shared regional shelter.
      - Torrance County Shelter already serves all unincorporated areas, with heavy load.
      - Additional expansions at the existing Torrance facility (including a cat building and more kennels) would have more immediate benefit.
  - Commissioners:
    - Recognize that regional framing can sometimes help at legislature (more sponsors, bigger ask).
    - But the practical need is clearly at the County shelter.
- Decision:
  - Retitle project to:
    - “Torrance County Animal Shelter – Plan, Design, and Construct Improvements”.
  - Mark as Shovel Ready – YES, because:
    - There is available land behind the current shelter (already graded by Roads).
    - Needs are well understood (cat room, kennel upgrades, isolation, expansions).

#### Third-Party / Non-County Projects on ICIP

- Identified projects:
  - Duran Schoolhouse / Duran “Torrance Class” (privately owned building).

- Arthur Park and Lake/Pool Improvements (Town of Estancia asset).
- Mountainair Rodeo Grounds and others, where County does not own the property.
- Legal / Grants guidance:
  - County cannot legally invest state or county funds into privately owned assets (anti-donation clause).
  - DFA advised that if County is not owner and not fiscal agent, such projects should not be on the County's ICIP under its code.
- Decision:
  - Remove:
    - Duran Schoolhouse / Torrance Class project.
    - Arthur Park & Pool project and other non-county assets from County ICIP.
  - Explanation:
    - Towns or private owners must carry their own projects or seek separate capital outlay.
    - County may express support through letters but not list as its own ICIP projects unless acting as formal fiscal agent.

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**e. CLERK'S REPORT**

**Sylvia Chavez – Torrance County Clerk**

- Election update (Primary Election):
  - Early voting turnout (as of this morning):
    - Admin Building location: 217 voters.
    - Civic Center (alternate site): 328 voters.
    - Total early in-person: 545 voters.
  - Absentee ballots:
    - 182 returned.
    - 255 still outstanding.
- Observations:
  - Turnout is unusually low compared to prior primary cycles:
    - At this point in past cycles, early voting was often near 1,000 voters.

- Confirms this is a statewide trend, as confirmed by other county clerks via email discussion.
- Emphasizes importance:
  - Reminds public that in 6 days (Election Day), voters will decide:
    - Multiple statewide races (gubernatorial primary).
    - 5 Torrance County offices that are on the ballot this cycle.
  - Urges citizens:
    - If they want to influence local leadership, they must turn out to vote.
- Logistics:
  - Election equipment delivery to polling places begins tomorrow.
  - Encino polling place:
    - Community center will be used for a funeral on Election Day.
    - Voting will be held in the gym next door instead (signage and coordination will direct voters).

#### **f. MANAGER'S REPORT**

##### **Jordan Barela – County Manager**

- Notes he is in transition out of the position and is working to:
  - Ensure projects such as the Fairgrounds, Emergency Operations Center design, and Administration Building are in good order.
  - Tie up loose ends related to EMWT property acquisition in coming weeks.
- Economic Development interest:
  - Reports that State Economic Development Department contacted him about:
    - A business is considering relocation to Torrance County, potentially bringing ~400 jobs.
  - States:
    - State is asking whether Torrance has a Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) ordinance in place.
    - There appears to be growing interest among Albuquerque-based federal contractors to relocate operations east, closer to Torrance.
- LEDA Ordinance & Economic Development Plan:
  - Clarifies:

- Torrance County currently does NOT have its own LEDA ordinance on the books.
  - Past work with Avita (economic development entity) did not leave behind a county-adopted ordinance.
  - Explains:
    - LEDA ordinance allows:
      - Counties to legally invest in infrastructure / incentives for private employers (roads, utilities, site work) without violating anti-donation laws.
    - To adopt LEDA, the County:
      - Must first have an Economic Development Plan detailing:
        - Employment data.
        - Target sectors.
        - Community needs.
      - Then adopt a LEDA ordinance anchored in that plan.
  - Notes:
    - These plans are often done by specialized consultants, sometimes funded by EDA or COG.
    - The COG is currently exploring ways to get a regional EDA grant with sub-grants to small counties like Torrance.
  - Suggestions:
    - Contracting for an Economic Development Manager using reallocated budget funds.
    - Working with COG, AREA (Albuquerque Regional Economic Alliance), and former officials like Wayne Johnson (Sandoval County) for best practices.
  - Commission response:
    - Commissioner McCall strongly supports pursuing a LEDA ordinance quickly, even while the full ED plan is being developed.
    - Commission instructs staff to:
      - Verify any prior economic development planning documents.
      - Connect with COG and outside advisors.
      - Begin drafting path toward plan + LEDA ordinance.
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**g. COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS:**

**1) Commissioner McCall, District 1**

**Commissioner McCall**

**No Comment**

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**2) Commissioner Schwebach, District 2**

**Chairman Ryan Schwebach**

**No Comment**

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**3) Commissioner Jaramillo, District 3**

**Commissioner Linda Jaramillo**

- Emergency Incident in Mountainair
  - Attended a scheduled dispatch center meeting on May 20, which overlapped with the start of the Mountainair incident.
  - Choose to stay and observe the full duration in the incident room.
  - Comments:
    - Sheriff's Office, Dispatch, Emergency Services, and Samantha (Emergency Management) for their strong coordination.
    - States it was impressive to watch agencies work together fluidly, despite injuries and hospitalizations in the incident.
- Local History in Schools
  - On May 21, attended a meeting with Javier Sanchez about:
    - Integrating local Torrance County history into school curricula.
    - Notes there are pushbacks, and efforts are ongoing.
- Memorial Day Activities – May 25
  - Attended:
    - Memorial ceremony at the Fallen Soldier Memorial Wall.
    - Reception at the VFW.
    - Blue Ribbon Bar grand opening, noting:
      - Good community turnout.
      - Positive atmosphere; personal nostalgia about dancing there in past years.

- Other Meetings
    - Attended LEPC (Local Emergency Planning Committee) meeting.
    - Attended EMWT water organization meeting; reports:
      - Tech memo has been completed; can be shared via email upon request.
- 

## **10. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

### **COMMISSION: Executive Session Pursuant to 10-15-1.H(2) Limited Personnel Matters: Personnel Matters Regarding the Transition of the County Manager.**

**Motion: Chairman Schwebach** motioned to enter Executive session; Seconded by **Commissioner McCall**.

Roll Call Vote:

- **Schwebach** – Yes
  - **McCall** – Yes
  - **Jaramillo** – Yes
- Motion Carried

**~Entered Executive Session at 12:25PM**

**Motion: Chairman Schwebach** motioned to exit Executive session; Seconded by **Commissioner McCall**.

Roll Call Vote:

- **Schwebach** – Yes
  - **McCall** – Yes
  - **Jaramillo** – Yes
- Motion Carried

**~ Exited Executive session at 1:08PM**

### **Chairman Schwebach**

- Only limited personnel matters regarding the County Manager transition were discussed.
  - No action taken in executive session.
  - Next steps include making phone calls and continuing the hiring/transition process outside of this meeting
- 

## **11. Announcement of the next Board of County Commissioner's Meeting:**

June 10, 2026

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**12. SIGNING OF OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS**

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**13. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion: Chairman Schwebach** motioned to Adjourn; Seconded by **Commissioner Jaramillo**.


Roll Call Vote:

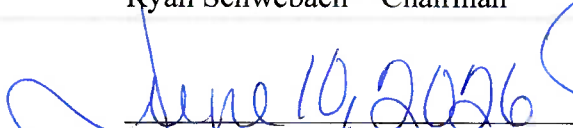
- **Schwebach** – Yes
- **McCall** – Yes
- **Jaramillo** – Yes
- Motion Carried

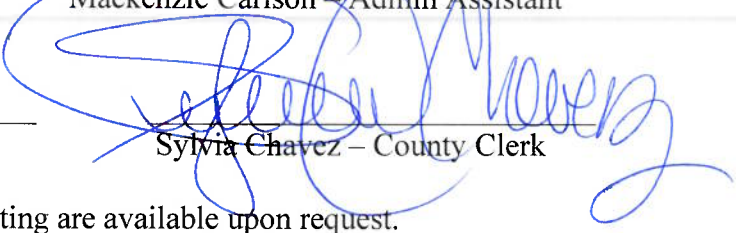
**Meeting adjourned at 1:09PM**

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Ryan Schwebach – Chairman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mackenzie Carlson – Admin Assistant

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Sylvia Chavez – County Clerk

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