Final COPY
Torrance County Board of Commissioners
Special Commission Meeting
JULY 29, 2026 9:00 AM

Commissioners Present:

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

Others Present:

STEPHANIE REYNOLDS-COUNTY MANAGER-ABSENT
MICHELE JONES-DEPUTY COUNTY MANAGER
MICHAEL GARCIA- COUNTY ATTORNEY
SYLVIA CHAVEZ-COUNTY CLERK - ABSENT
SENAIDA ANAYA- CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK
DON GOEN – PLANNING & ZONING DIRECTOR

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1. Call to Order: Chairman Schwebach called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM

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2. Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation: Pledge led by Chairman Schwebach, Commissioner McCall said Invocation.

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3. Changes to the Agenda: Remove Item: 8. b. to allow for procurement and contract adjustments

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4. Public Comment:

- **Kieran Byron,** who identified himself for the record as "Kieran" Byron, but you can call me Buttercup," expressed concerns regarding reports of a potential AI-related facility in Torrance County. His comments included:
  - Concerns about possible impacts on local ranchers, livestock, wildlife, and hunting populations, including bighorn sheep, antelope, and other animals.
  - Questions regarding reports of stillborn calves near AI facilities in Texas and research reportedly being conducted by Texas A&M University.

- Concerns about possible impacts on the swine population, noting similarities between swine and human biological systems and the use of swine-related materials in medical research and treatment.
- Requested clarification regarding whether the public would have an opportunity to vote or participate in the decision-making process, including whether a referendum would be considered.
- Asked whether contracts or financial transactions had already occurred and whether the project had already been approved without public knowledge.

- **Julie Morales**, a lifelong Torrance County resident, stated that she was speaking on behalf of herself, her family, and teachers at the local elementary school. She expressed the following concerns:
  - The public has received limited information regarding the proposed project and its purpose.
  - She stated that information available online was limited and primarily came from community sources.
  - She referenced a petition that had been circulated among local teachers and stated that those who signed expressed opposition to the project.
  - She raised concerns regarding potential water consumption, environmental impacts, and noise pollution.
  - She emphasized that the county is already experiencing water challenges and stated that the community does not support a project that could place additional demands on local water resources.
- **Lorri Wafer**, a Torrance County resident, expressed concerns regarding the lack of available information about the AI proposal. She requested:
  - Increased communication and transparency with county residents.
  - Additional time for the public to understand the proposal and review relevant information.
  - Research regarding similar facilities in other states, including lessons learned and methods used to reduce negative impacts.
  - Information regarding potential water usage, electrical demand, and environmental impacts.

  - Consideration of alternatives such as solar energy, wind energy, underground construction, or other technologies that could reduce cooling requirements and water consumption.
  - A comprehensive research report addressing the potential benefits, risks, and impacts of the proposed facility.

- **Kim Ortiz** expressed strong opposition to Project Mars and raised concerns regarding its potential effects on Torrance County and surrounding communities. Her comments included:
  - Referenced Resolution 2026-19 and the County's stated objectives of promoting responsible use of natural resources, balancing agriculture, commerce, and industry, and protecting public health, safety, welfare, and prosperity.
  - Questioned whether Project Mars would fulfill the objectives identified in the resolution.
  - Expressed concerns that the project could place additional demands on limited water resources and utilize land that cannot be replaced.
  - Acknowledged that potential job creation and economic growth may be appealing but questioned whether the anticipated benefits had been sufficiently verified.
  - Stated that information from other data-center projects indicates that such facilities may require substantial resources and may create significant costs for existing residents.
  - Emphasized that the county is currently experiencing water-related challenges and stated that protecting existing resources is essential to the county's long-term economic health.

- **Ernest Ortiz** expressed strong opposition to Project Mars and reported that:
  - More than 400 signatures had been collected within five days from individuals opposed to the project.
  - The signatures were obtained from individuals who voluntarily approached organizers, and broader community outreach had not yet begun.
  - He questioned how many signatures or residents would need to express opposition before the Commission recognized the community's concerns.
  - He stated that community members intend to continue opposing the project and to challenge it throughout the approval process.

- **Caleb Ortiz** reiterated concerns previously raised regarding Project Mars, public disclosure, and the availability of Commission meeting minutes. His comments included:
  - Referenced statements made during a previous meeting regarding whether information about Project Mars had been kept confidential.
  - Stated that a Commissioner had indicated that certain information could not be disclosed because of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs).
  - Expressed concern that the public had not been adequately informed about the project.
  - Questioned the County's practice regarding the delayed posting or availability of Commission meeting minutes.
  - Stated that meeting minutes reportedly remained unavailable for 20 to 30 days following some Commission meetings.
  - Expressed concern that delays in posting minutes may limit the public's ability to remain informed and participate in discussions or public votes.
  - Noted that members of the public had been advised to submit Inspection of Public Records Act (IPRA) requests or visit the County Courthouse to obtain meeting information.
- ***Loretta DeRusso Montoya***, a Torrance County resident for approximately 40 years, expressed strong opposition to Project Mars and stated:
  - The project could have significant negative effects on the county, including impacts related to water availability, noise, agriculture, ranching, and local families.
  - Many local farms have already experienced financial or operational difficulties because of limited water supplies and groundwater pumping.
  - Large data facilities may generate continuous or excessive noise that could affect nearby residents and animals.
  - She expressed concern regarding reports of stillborn livestock and possible effects on animal health, land fertility, and local food production.
  - She raised concerns regarding potential low-frequency vibrations or noise and their possible effects on individuals with sensory sensitivities, including autistic children.
  - She urged the Commission to protect the County's natural resources, agricultural community, land, and residents and requested that the project be reconsidered.

- **Tracy Master**, a Torrance County resident, raised concerns regarding compliance with the New Mexico Open Meetings Act and notices of possible Commission quorums at EMWT meetings. She stated:
    - At a previous Commission meeting, Commissioner Jaramillo requested that notices of a possible quorum be posted before each monthly EMWT meeting.
    - She stated that no notice of a possible quorum was posted before the previous evening's EMWT meeting.
    - She noted that only one Commissioner attended the meeting and indicated that the lack of notice may not have resulted in a quorum issue on that occasion.
    - She stated that a notice had been posted the previous day regarding a possible quorum for an EMWT meeting scheduled for the following day.
    - She expressed concern that the notice did not meet the 72-hour advance notice requirement under the New Mexico Open Meetings Act.
    - She requested clarification regarding whether an EMWT meeting was actually scheduled for the following day.

Commission Discussion and Response

- **Commissioner Jarmillo** stated that there had been an EMWT meeting the previous evening and indicated that the notice regarding a possible quorum for the following day may have been posted in error.
- The Commissioner stated that there was no EMWT meeting scheduled for the following day and that the matter would be reviewed and corrected as necessary.
- The Chair stated that Project Mars and the proposed facility were not listed as agenda items for the special meeting and therefore were not scheduled for formal discussion during the meeting.
- The Chair clarified that the proposed project was not a data center.
- The Chair stated that the Commission would first complete the business listed on the special meeting agenda and would then return to address questions and concerns raised during public comment.
- The Chair explained that the special meeting had been scheduled because of time-sensitive budget requirements and state deadlines.
- The Chair noted that the executive session item involved discussion of a contract and stated that the special meeting was necessary to complete budget-related matters within the required timeframe.

- The Chair indicated a willingness to have an open and honest discussion regarding the proposed project and to receive additional public input after completion of the scheduled agenda.
- Commissioner Jaramillo clarified a previous statement concerning knowledge of the proposed project and stated:
    - The Commissioner understood that the proposed project was not an AI center.
    - The Commissioner's understanding was that the project involved an aerial defense manufacturing facility.
    - The Commissioner stated that this clarification was being provided to correct the record regarding what information had been known about the project.

5. <u>Approval of Minutes:</u>

a. Commission: Requests approval of the minutes for July 8, 2020, Regular Meeting Minutes of the Board for County Commissioners.

Motion: Chairman Schwebach motions to approve. Commission Jaramillo seconded.

- Roll Call Vote:
    - Schwebach – Yes
    - McCall – Yes
    - Jaramillo – Yes
    - **Motion carries**

6. <u>Approvals/Action Items:</u>

a. MANAGER/FINANCE: Request Approval of Resolution 2026-23, a resolution approving Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Final Quarter Financial Report year ending June 30, 2026.

Deputy County Manager Michelle Jones presented the County's FY 2026 fourth-quarter financial report, explaining that the report summarized the County's financial activity for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026.

The County began FY 2026 with approximately $39.5 million, received approximately $65.9 million in revenues, and incurred approximately $58.9 million in expenditures, resulting in an overall ending balance of approximately $46.6 million.

- Began the fiscal year with approximately $8.2 million.
- Received approximately $11.6 million in revenue.
- Transferred approximately $2.3 million.
- Recorded approximately $9.5 million in expenditures.
- Ended the fiscal year with approximately $6.4 million, which will be carried forward into FY 2027.

A Commissioner asked whether quarterly financial reports were required. Finance staff explained that the Department of Finance and Administration requires midyear and fourth-quarter reporting, while providing reports each quarter is considered a best practice.

The Commission discussed the importance of receiving regular financial updates to monitor budget activity and maintain oversight throughout the fiscal year.

A motion was made and seconded to approve **Resolution 2026-23**.

Motion: Chairman Schwebach motions to approve. Commission McCall seconded.

- Roll Call Vote:
  - Schwebach – Yes
  - McCall – Yes
  - Jaramillo – Yes
  - **Motion carries**

b. MANAGER/FINANCE: Request Approval of Resolution 2026-24, a resolution approving Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Final Budget.

- Deputy County Manager Michele Jones, presented the FY 2027 Final Budget, noting that the budget reflected finalized financial information following the close of FY 2026.
- The FY 2027 budget includes:
  - A projected General Fund carryover of approximately $6.4 million.

  - An overall carryover of approximately $46.6 million from FY 2026.
  - Projected revenues of approximately $56 million.
  - Projected expenditures of approximately $61.8 million.
  - A projected ending balance of approximately $40.8 million.

- Michelle Jones explained that the interim budget was based on estimated financial information and that the final budget was updated after the County received final year-end balances, grant information, fire funding allocations, payroll information, and other financial data.

- Commissioners Schwebach and Mcall requested that the $60,000 annual road allocation be specifically identified and tied to Resolution 2026-22, rather than being listed generally as funding for road projects.

- Michelle agreed to revise the applicable budget description so the funding would clearly identify the specific resolution and purpose.

- Commissioner Jaramillo expressed concern that the final budget information was provided shortly before the meeting and requested that future budget materials be distributed earlier when possible.

- Finance staff explained that the fourth-quarter report and final budget could not be completed until bank reconciliations and final financial information were available. Staff stated that the reports were finalized as quickly as possible while ensuring the information was accurate.

Personnel and Staffing Budget Discussion

- Commissioners reviewed changes in the personnel budget and requested clarification regarding the difference between the previously discussed personnel cost increase of approximately $501,000 and the final increase of approximately $604,000.

- Deputy County Manager Michelle Jones explained that the final personnel costs reflected:
  - The addition of three PRN Fire Department positions after determining that eliminating all PRN positions was not practical.
  - Funding for an emergency services grant position.
  - Funding for an IT specialist position.
  - Corrections to employee hourly wage information.
  - Updates to salary ranges and employee benefits.

- Adjustments related to incentive or specialty pay in certain departments.

- Commissioner Mcall requested an itemized explanation of the approximately $103,000 difference between the interim and final personnel cost increases.
- Deputy County Manager Jones agreed to provide additional detail and reconcile the differences by position and payroll category.
- The Commission discussed a previously listed $167,000 savings associated with removed or modified positions.
- Deputy County Manager Michelle Jones acknowledged that the $167,000 figure remained on the budget recap as a working or reference figure and should have been removed or clarified in the final presentation.
- It was clarified that the final personnel increase was approximately $604,000 compared with FY 2026, and that the $167,000 figure did not represent an additional expenditure.
- The discussion indicated that personnel savings resulted from adjustments and position changes across multiple departments, including changes within the County Manager's Office, Finance Department, Fire Department, and Sheriff's Office.
- Deputy County Manager Michelle Jones agreed to further review and document the personnel changes for clarity.

Property Valuation Fund Discussion

- Ms. Gallegos raised concerns regarding the Property Valuation Fund, noting that the projected FY 2027 expenditure amount appeared significantly higher than the department's historical expenditures.
- Finance staff explained that the FY 2027 budget had carried forward or "comped" the prior year's budgeted expenditure amount rather than being adjusted to reflect actual expenditures.
- The Commission discussed whether the projected expenditure amount should be reduced.
- Ms. Gallegos expressed concern that the Property Valuation Fund is a separate, restricted fund associated with the Assessor's Office and should not be transferred or commingled with the General Fund.
- The Commission clarified that the discussion involved a budgeted expenditure amount, not the removal or transfer of money from the Property Valuation Fund.
- The Commission agreed to:
  - Leave the current amount in the budget at this time.

    - Conduct additional review to determine the correct projected expenditure amount.
    - Return with a proposed budget adjustment after the fund information had been reviewed and reconciled.
- It was noted that the Property Valuation Fund receives revenue through designated property tax collections and is maintained separately from the General Fund.

  One-Time Expenditures and County Infrastructure

- Commissioners reviewed the County's proposed one-time expenditures, including equipment and infrastructure-related purchases.
- Finance staff stated that approximately $2 million was included to provide a reasonable cushion for anticipated price changes and updated vendor quotes.
- The budget included funding for equipment and infrastructure needs, including road-related equipment and materials.
- Deputy County Manager Jones agreed to provide more detailed descriptions for County infrastructure line items so that the purpose of each allocation would be clearly identified.
- Deputy County Manager Jones commended County departments for their responsible use of funds, noting that departments generally spent less than their total authorized budgets and demonstrated prudent use of taxpayer resources.
- A motion was made and seconded to approve Resolution 2026-24, approving the FY 2026–2027 Final Budget.

Motion: Chairman Schwebach motions to approve. Commissioner Jaramillo seconded.

- Roll Call Vote:
    - Schwebach – Yes
    - McCall – Yes
    - Jaramillo – Yes
    - **Motion carries**

c. MANAGER: Request approval to be fiscal agent for EMWT, a grant.

The Chair asked for clarification regarding the funding source and confirmed that the grant was associated with the New Mexico Water Trust Board.

Deputy County Manager Michelle Jones clarified that the document presented was the administrative contract for EMWT and addressed a highlighted section that had not yet been completed.

Deputy County Manager Michelle Jones informed Commissioner Jaramillo that the statutory language would be added to identify Torrance County as a legally established and existing county political subdivision in good standing under New Mexico law. The administrative contract would reference Section 4-30-1 NMSA 1978 as the County's statutory authority to serve as fiscal administrator.

The Chair stated that the County would serve as the fiscal agent for Water Project Fund Grant No. WPF-6568, in the amount of $14 million, for the construction of the McIntosh Water Project through EMWT.

The Chair asked whether the grant consisted entirely of State funding and whether any federal funds were associated with the project.

Deputy County Manager Michelle Jones confirmed that the grant funding was entirely State funding through the New Mexico Water Trust Board and that no federal funding was believed to be connected to the grant.

Deputy County Manager Michelle Jones further noted that the administrative documents referenced New Mexico statutes and confirmed that the funding was administered through State funding sources.

A motion was made to approve Torrance County serving as the fiscal agent for Grant No. WPF-6568, in the amount of $14 million, for the McIntosh Water Project.

Motion: Chairman Schwebach motions to approve. Commission McCall seconded.

- Roll Call Vote:
    - Schwebach – Yes
    - McCall – Yes
    - Jaramillo – Yes
    - **Motion carries**

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION

a. COMMISSION: Discussion regarding competitive sealed proposals during the contract negotiation process, closed pursuant to NMSA 1978; Section 10-151(H)(6). Teen court Coordinator

The Chair requested a motion to enter Executive Session at 10:11 AM to discuss competitive sealed proposals during the contract negotiation process for the Tean Court Coordinator position, pursuant to Section 10-15-1(H)(6) NMSA 1978.
The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jaramillo.

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

Motion carried, and the Commission entered Executive Session.

The Chair requested a motion to come back from Executive Session to discuss competitive sealed proposals during the contract negotiation process for the Tean Court Coordinator position, pursuant to Section 10-15-1(H)(6) NMSA 1978.
The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mcall.

- Roll Call Vote:
  - Schwebach – Yes
  - McCall – Yes
  - Jaramillo – Yes
  - **Motion carries**

8. <u>Commission:</u>

Following Executive Session, the Commission returned to open session and considered action regarding the competitive sealed proposals and contract negotiations for the Tean Court Coordinator position.

<u>The Chair requested</u> that the evaluation committee present its recommendation and provide a summary of the proposals reviewed and the selected candidate.
Deputy County Manager Michele Jones introduced Kat Dillon, Chief Procurement Officer (CPO), to present the evaluation committee's recommendation.

<u>Kat Dillon, CPO</u>, reported that:

- The County issued a competitive solicitation for the Tean Court Coordinator position.
- The County received two responsive proposals.

- Following the evaluation process, the committee selected Judy Zamora Gutierrez as the recommended contractor.
- The proposed contract term is one year, with the option to extend the agreement for up to three additional one-year terms.
- Each extension would be subject to annual review and approval.
- The proposed contract amount is $42,640 annually.
- The Chair confirmed that the contract would be renewed or extended on an annual basis, subject to the terms and conditions of the agreement.
- A motion was made to approve the contract with Judy Zamora Gutierrez for the Tean Court Coordinator position.

- **Motion**: Chairman Schwebach motions to approve the contract with Judy Zamora Gutierrez for the Tean Court Coordinator position. Commissioner Jaramillo seconded.

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

- **Motion carried**, approving the contract with Judy Zamora Gutierrez for the Tean Court Coordinator position.

b. COMMISSION: Discussion regarding competitive sealed proposals during the contract negotiation process, closed pursuant to NMSA 1978; Section 10-151(H)(6). DWI Coordinator (REMOVED FROM AGENDA)

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9. <u>Announcement of the next Board of County Commissioners Meeting:</u>
August 12, 2026, 9:00 AM

Discussion of Public Comment Regarding the Proposed Project and Potential Economic Development Opportunity

- **<u>The Chair addressed concerns</u>** raised during public comment and clarified that the proposal currently being considered by the County is not an AI center or data center. The Chair stated that the proposal remains in the preliminary stages, no contract has been signed, and no commitment has been made by the County. The County is currently evaluating the possibility of a project that may bring employment opportunities to the area.

- **<u>Kieran "Buttercup" Byron</u>** reiterated concerns regarding the potential health, environmental, agricultural, and community impacts of any future project. Drawing on professional experience as a paramedic, firefighter, and worker in mining and industrial environments, Byron emphasized:

  - The importance of protecting the health and well-being of Torrance County residents.
  - The need for an environmental or impact assessment before any project is approved.
  - The importance of allowing residents to make informed decisions regarding their continued residency and the future of the community.
  - Support for a possible public referendum or other process allowing residents to express their position.
  - The importance of protecting ranching and agriculture, which were described as central to Torrance County's identity and economy.
  - Support for job opportunities only if they provide long-term employment that is appropriate for the County's educational and workforce demographics.
  - The need for the community to evaluate both the potential benefits and potential risks together before making a decision.

- **The Chair** reiterated that the information presented to the County did not describe an AI center or data center. The Chair stated that the Commission has shared the information available at this early stage and will continue to provide information as additional details become available.

- **The Chair** acknowledged that approximately 450 signatures had reportedly been collected in opposition to the project but stated that the Commission would need to review the petition and understand exactly what proposal or project the signatures addressed.

- **Ernest Ortiz** stated that residents do not have sufficient information to determine whether the proposal involves an AI facility, a ballistic manufacturing operation, or another type of project. He expressed concerns regarding:
  - Limited water resources and existing infrastructure.
  - Potential impacts on State Trust Land.
  - The use and protection of land currently associated with agricultural activities.
  - Public access, hunting, and land-use requirements.
  - Potential conflicts between the proposed project and existing State Trust Land lease provisions.

- **The Chair** acknowledged that the County did not yet have complete information regarding the final nature of the project and stated that many details remained unknown. The Chair explained that the property was identified as a potential site through discussions involving the New Mexico State Land Office.
- **Commissioner McCall** discussed public access to State Trust Land. Mr. Ortiz clarified that hunting may be permitted when conducted legally and during the appropriate season but expressed concerns regarding unauthorized activity, property damage, and misuse of leased land.
- **The Chair** addressed concerns regarding delayed meeting minutes and stated that the missing minutes referenced by Caleb Ortiz were not posted due to a clerical error. The Chair stated that members of the public may contact the County Clerk's Office regarding meeting records and clarified that prior references to IPRA requests related to allegations concerning closed or illegal meetings.
- **The Chair** acknowledged the concerns expressed by Loretta DeRusso Montoya and other residents regarding:
  - Water availability.
  - Noise pollution.
  - Environmental impacts.
  - Wildlife and agricultural resources.
- **The Chair** stated that water availability is a significant concern for the County and would be evaluated for this proposal and for any future development project. The Chair noted that the County continues to support water systems, water studies, and other water-related projects within its authority.
- **Loretta DeRusso Montoya** provided additional comments regarding the long-term effects of development on wildlife, agriculture, natural resources, and future generations. She emphasized:
  - The need to evaluate long-term impacts rather than only short-term economic benefits.
  - Concerns regarding the loss or displacement of wildlife caused by development.
  - The importance of preserving the rural character of Torrance County.
  - The value of agricultural education, including 4-H and FFA, and preparing young residents to become responsible stewards of the land.

- The need for increased public awareness and transparency as discussions continue.
- The importance of considering local education and workforce development when evaluating future job opportunities.

Clarification Regarding the Proposed "Project Mars"

- **Commissioner McCall** clarified that the County had been approached regarding a potential opportunity, not a finalized or approved project.
- **The Chair** stated that the information currently available describes the proposal as a possible Department of Defense manufacturing facility, rather than an AI center or data center.
- Based on preliminary information provided to the County, the proposed facility may:
  - Require relatively limited water use.
  - Create approximately 300 potential jobs.
  - Provide higher-paying employment opportunities.
- **The Chair** emphasized that these details remain preliminary and that no final agreement or commitment has been made.
- **The Commission** stated that, if discussions progress, the County would review the details of any proposed agreement and determine:
  - What the company is requesting from the County.
  - What commitments or obligations would be included.
  - Whether sufficient information is available to support a decision.
  - Whether the project would provide meaningful benefits while addressing potential environmental and infrastructure impacts.
- **The Chair** stated that an Executive Session may be necessary during the early stages of negotiations if confidential contract information must be reviewed. The Chair noted that future public meetings, agenda items, and public discussions could occur if the proposal advances.
- **The Chair** emphasized that nothing has been finalized or set in stone and stated that the Commission is listening to public concerns and gathering information.

Economic Development and Employment Discussion

- **The Chair** stated that the County is one of two counties in New Mexico and one of three states being considered as potential locations.
- **Commissioner Schwebach** stated that the proposal is currently an opportunity for the County to evaluate and that it would be responsible for the Commission to listen to the proposal and collect information before making a decision.
- **The Chair** discussed the County's economic challenges, including:
    - Limited local employment opportunities.
    - Young residents leaving the area to pursue careers elsewhere.
    - A reported poverty rate of approximately 20 percent.
    - Economic and workforce challenges affecting the long-term stability of the County.
- **The Chair** stated that the proposal may not ultimately be the answer but expressed support for further evaluating whether it could provide sustainable employment and economic development.
- **The Chair** emphasized the need to balance economic development with the protection of local resources, community values, and quality of life.

Public Participation and Commission Involvement

- **Caleb Ortiz** of the public questioned whether all Commissioners would be included in future discussions and expressed concern that only a limited number of individuals had participated in the initial meetings.
- **The Chair** explained that confidentiality requirements and the early stage of discussions limited the information that could be shared.
- **The Chair** stated that Ms. Reynolds signed a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) while representing the County and that the confidentiality requirements applied to information received during the preliminary discussions.
- **The Chair** stated that the County must avoid actions that could create an unintended quorum outside a properly noticed public meeting.
- **The Chair** emphasized that if the proposal moves forward:
    - Relevant matters would be placed on a future Commission agenda.
    - Public notice would be provided.
    - Public discussion would occur.

    - Residents would have opportunities to receive information and provide input.

- **Commissioner Jaramillo** asked whether the details of the proposed project would be presented and discussed with the Commission as additional information becomes available.
- **The Chair** confirmed that the information would be discussed and considered as the proposal progresses.
- **Commissioner Jaramillo** asked whether all Commissioners would be included in receiving and reviewing future information regarding the proposed project.
- **The Chair** explained that, if the proposal advances to the point where the County must review a proposed agreement or make contractual decisions, the process may be similar to the Executive Session conducted earlier in the meeting. The Commission would review the proposed agreement, discuss the terms and conditions, and determine:
    - What documents or agreements the County would be asked to sign;
    - What commitments or obligations would be requested of the County; and
    - Whether the Commission had received sufficient information to make an informed decision.
- **The Chair** stated that an Executive Session would likely be necessary during the initial stages of the contract review and negotiation process, if permitted under applicable law.
- **The Chair** emphasized that the use of Executive Session was not certain at that time and would depend on how the proposed project and negotiations progressed.

Questions Regarding Employment and Emergency Services

- **Kieran "Buttercup" Byron** asked whether the approximately 300 potential jobs would be available to Torrance County residents or whether some positions would be filled by military personnel, technical specialists, or employees brought in from outside the County.

- **The Commission** acknowledged that these were important questions and stated that the employment structure and local hiring opportunities would need to be evaluated.

- **Byron** also emphasized the importance of a comprehensive impact report, including an evaluation of:

    - Emergency medical service capacity.
    - Fire and emergency response capabilities.
    - Specialized training requirements.
    - Potential exposure to hazardous or industrial materials.
    - Additional staffing, equipment, education, and budget needs.

- **Byron** offered professional experience and assistance related to emergency preparedness and the potential impacts of industrial or mining-related materials.

Deputy County Manager's Comments

- **The Deputy County Manager Michelle Jones** stated that she attended the initial meetings and was specifically informed that the discussions were confidential because the proposal was in its earliest stages.
- She confirmed that an NDA was signed and applied to those participating in the preliminary discussions.
- The Deputy County Manager Michelle Jones shared a personal example involving her daughter, Robin, who:
    - Graduated from Estancia High School.
    - Attended New Mexico Tech.
    - Worked in an explosives-related environment.
    - Earned a degree in civil engineering.
    - Relocated to Seattle and now works in nuclear engineering.
- The Deputy County Manager Michelle Jones stated that the example demonstrated how local residents often leave the County to pursue specialized employment opportunities.
- She expressed the opinion that a project of this nature could potentially provide employment opportunities at multiple levels, including:
    - Engineering and technical positions.
    - Administrative positions.
    - Building maintenance and custodial positions.
    - Employment opportunities for both college graduates and high school graduates.
- She described the proposal as a potential economic development opportunity that the County should evaluate before making a decision.
- The Deputy County Manager Jones acknowledged the concerns and speculation surrounding the proposal and stated that the confidentiality requirements made it difficult to address information that was incomplete or inaccurate.
- She concluded that the proposal could potentially provide meaningful employment opportunities and economic benefits for Torrance County if it were to move forward.
- The Chair thanked the public, Commissioners, and staff for their comments and participation.

Motion: Chairman Schwebach motions to adjourn. Commission McCall seconded.

- Roll Call Vote:
  - Schwebach – Yes
  - McCall – Yes
  - Jaramillo – Yes
  - **Motion Carries**

6. **Signing of official documents**

Meeting adjourned at 011:49 AM.

Ryan Schwebach – Chairman

Senaida Anaya– Chief Deputy Clerk

August 12, 2026

Date

Sylvia Chavez – County Clerk

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