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REGIONAL COALITION of LANL COMMUNITIES

City of Española – Los Alamos County – Rio Arriba County – Santa Fe County
City of Santa Fe – Taos County – Town of Taos – Ohkay Owingeh – Pueblo of Jemez

Jemez Pueblo Community Resource Center Building
37-197 Canal Street
Jemez Pueblo, NM 87024

December 11, 2015 | 1:30p-3:30p

Meeting Minutes

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Attendance

Chair, Commissioner Barney Trujillo, Rio Arriba County; Fabian Trujillo, proxy for City of Santa Fe; Councilor Steve Girrens, proxy for Los Alamos County; Mayor Alice Lucero, City of Española; Governor Raymond Loretto, Pueblo of Jemez.

A. Call to Order – Chair Trujillo

Chair Trujillo called the meeting to order at 1:47 p.m.

B. Confirmation of Quorum – Chair Trujillo

Executive Director Andrea Romero took attendance and Chair Trujillo confirmed there was a quorum.

C. Approval of Agenda – Chair Trujillo

Chair Trujillo asked the Board to review and approve the agenda as presented.
Councilor Steve Girrens moved to approve the agenda.
Governor Raymond Loretto seconded the motion to approve the agenda.
Chair Trujillo called for a vote to approve the agenda.
The Board voted unanimously in favor of approving the agenda.

1
2 **D. Approval of Meeting Minutes – Chair Trujillo**

3 Chair Trujillo asked the board to review and approve the meeting minutes as presented for
4 the RCLC Board meeting that was held on November 13, 2015.

5 Councilor Steve Girrens moved to approve the meeting minutes.

6 Fabian Trujillo seconded the motion to approve the meeting minutes.

7 Chair Trujillo called for a vote to approve the minutes.

8 The Board voted unanimously in favor of approving the meeting minutes.
9

10 **E. Discussion/Action Items**

11 **1. Briefing from NM Congressional Delegation**

12 Executive Director Andrea Romero stated that the Congressional delegations sent their
13 regards and asked to be excused from the December meeting as they had no reports for the
14 Board.
15

16 **2. Presentation by Dave Nickless, EM-LA, on Treatment of Remediated Nitrate Salts
17 (RNS)**

18 Mr. Nickless thanked the board for the opportunity to present on the supply of nitrate salts
19 to be remediated at LANL. Nickless informed the Board that he has been at LANL since
20 Fall 2008. Due to the WIPP event that occurred in February 2014, the particular waste
21 treatment, the nitrate salts, is now infamously characterized. A Los Alamos drum reacted in
22 the underground WIPP facility that came from Nitrate Salts waste stream. There is currently
23 a group of drums that is stored in Los Alamos that are of the same variety as the drum that
24 reacted in the underground.
25

26 The waste stream originally came out of TA-55, the LANL plutonium facility. One of the
27 main operations at that facility is to recover plutonium out of different waste materials and
28 residues. Most of the evaporative salts processed as part of the 3706 Campaign date back
29 to the mid 1980s. Most of the drums were stable for close to three decades until the errors
30 in the processing of the salts that led to the reaction at WIPP. The nitrate salts were mixed
31 with organic kitty litter, which as a chemical make up, caused the breach of drum 68660.
32

33 The waste stream uses nitric acid. Residue is taken that contains plutonium to be reclaimed
34 or recovered and is later purified. After the plutonium is leached out and recovered, a
35 spent acid is leftover. That spent acid goes to an evaporator in the plutonium facility. The
36 evaporator recycled the nitric acid as much as it could back into the process, and then it
37 was left with an evaporator bottom. After this process they were left with a concentrated
38 solution of nitrates. In the 1980s they cooled the supersaturated solution, and as the
39 solution cooled the salts would precipitate out. Those salts were scraped out into bags and
40 a number of bags were placed into 55 gallon drums. Those drums were stable in storage
41 for 30 years.
42

43 Research was done at New Mexico Tech in Socorro that called for the addition of zeolite,
44 the active ingredient in “kitty litter”. For every liter of nitrate salt present, at least 1.2 liters
45 of zeolite, or kitty litter, had to be added. The mistake that was made in this process was
46 substituting a modern, organic, “green” kitty litter in lieu of the zeolite, or inorganic kitty
47 litter.
48

49 All of the remediated nitrate salts that LANL currently has in storage are at the Waste
50 Characterization, Reduction and Repackaging Facility (WCRRF). They were, of course, not

1 remediated correctly, which caused the breach in 68660. WCRRF will likely be facility that
2 will be used to remedy the problem by reprocessing waste.

3
4 Looking forward, LANL has looked at a number of different technologies and processes
5 that could be used to fix the problem. Nitrate salts are considered oxidizers, which
6 means they will react with most organic materials, which creates a problem if they are in
7 the environment as they were in 68660. Nitrates also have the ability to provide oxygen.
8 The unique property of oxidizers means that a fire involving an oxidizer cannot be
9 extinguished in a traditional means, e.g. by cutting off the supply of oxygen, because the
10 nitrate provides oxygen salts itself. The nitrate salts acted as the oxidizers and the organic
11 kitty litter as the combustible material in the drum that reacted at WIPP in a process
12 referred to as "thermal runaway".

13
14 **LANL has narrowed the options down to two processes to remediate the drums that were**
15 **initially processed incorrectly. The most simple and effective of the two options that will**
16 **reduce the potential for the rest of the waste to ignite is the addition of zeolite (an**
17 **inorganic material) to the drums, the material that should have been used in the first**
18 **place. Another process, a wet process, would be the addition of cement or grouting**
19 **material making a cement matrix. Other options include incineration, vitrification, types**
20 **of chemical reactions. Any of these processes would of course have to be permitted by**
21 **the state of New Mexico.**

22
23 Temperature plays a very important role in the safe handling and treatment of this waste.
24 The waste is cooled prior to treatment, and the rates of how fast the reactions occur is
25 based on the temperature. The waste is currently stored in a facility that is designed to
26 handle contamination at Area G. The plan is to keep the waste cooled as it is stored and
27 then to get it even colder prior to processing. It will then be transferred to the WCRRF and
28 treated there.

29
30 One of the initial errors in the packaging of the nitrate salts was that LANL didn't have the
31 proper permits to do so. That is part of the reason the state took enforcement action against
32 the Lab. Moving forward the lab will be fully engaged in with NMED to ensure that the
33 proper permitting is in place. There are a variety of specialists at the lab who are making
34 sure that the lab is processing and storing the waste properly, and NMED officials are
35 sitting in on these meetings.

36
37 Before the Lab moves forward there will be an independent review of the procedures and
38 the people that ensures that the lab is prepared to move forward safely and effectively. It
39 will take some time and effort to be ready for that review but it is essential to go through.

40
41 There are currently two buckets of waste that need to be treated: one is Remediated Nitrate
42 Salts (RNS), and the other is Unremediated Nitrate Salts (UNS). The plan is to treat the RNS
43 first and the UNS thereafter. This treatment will eliminate the possibility of ignition in the
44 nitrate salts drums and clear the waste so that when WIPP reopens the drums can be
45 moved along with the other TRU waste already up at the hill back into the underground
46 and move forward with the closure of Area G.

47
48 Other national labs have been able to learn from the mistakes made at LANL, and errors
49 that occurred during the treatment of the nitrate salts have been used to improve standard
50 operating procedures in other parts of the lab.

1
2 Mayor Alice Lucero asked Mr. Nickless if he knew of the reopening date at WIPP. Mr.
3 Nickless stated that a date had not been determined yet, but they're working hard and
4 would like to have the facility open by the end of the calendar year 2016. They're
5 determined to not let schedule pressure force WIPP to reopen before it is ready.
6

7 Councilor Steve Girrens asked Mr. Nickless what the shelf life of one of the drums of
8 nitrate salts is before the drum is no longer reactive. Mr. Nickless stated that that answer is
9 unknown. This waste stream was created inadvertently and it's hard to say how long the
10 salts will be reactive over time. It currently appears that the reactivity is decreasing over
11 time but there isn't a definite answer regarding a so-called "shelf life". This waste stream
12 will have to be handled again at some point to determine its continued safe storage and
13 transportation.
14

15 Chair Trujillo asked Mr. Nickless how long he estimated the new treatment would take,
16 and Mr. Nickless estimated that around one drum a day could be remediated. There are
17 currently 60 drums to be treated. This is only an estimate, though, as a final remediation
18 plan has yet to be decided on. He reaffirmed, though, that trying to stick to deadlines on a
19 schedule was not the priority, and safety and effective treatment are the most important.
20

21 **3. Presentation by Gil Vigil , Executive Director of Eight Northern Pueblos on 2016** 22 **Strategic Objectives**

23 Gil Vigil thanked the Coalition for the opportunity to present and Governor Raymond
24 Loretto for hosting the meeting at Jemez Pueblo. He introduced Jovanna Archuleta, his
25 deputy director at Eight Northern and a member of Nambe Pueblo. Mr. Vigil is a member
26 and former Governor of Tesuque Pueblo.
27

28 Mr. Vigil stated that the Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council (ENIPC) exists to serve not
29 only the people of the Eight Northern Pueblos, but also the people of all of northern New
30 Mexico. Their office is intended to serve Native Americans, but they will frequently see
31 non-natives at their door. Their policy is, however, that if they are unable to help a non-
32 native directly, they will work to find the resources to help them some other way. They do
33 not want to totally turn anyone away.
34

35 ENIPC was established in 1961 and it is a consortium of the Eight Northern Pueblos of
36 Nambe Pueblo, Picuris Pueblo, Pojoaque Pueblo, San Ildefonso Pueblo, Ohkay Owingeh,
37 Tesuque Pueblo, Santa Clara Pueblo, and Taos Pueblo. At the time it was established,
38 tribes didn't have the capacity to run their own administrations, and they looked to the
39 Council as a consortium for guidance. The governors of the pueblos are able to come
40 together to develop programs for pueblo members.
41

42 The Council backs runs the Peacekeepers Domestic Violence program, providing services
43 to victims who are Native American or who are being victimized by a Native American
44 and to offenders who are Native American or who are victimizing a Native
45 American. They seek to raise awareness of domestic violence by offering the following
46 services advocacy support, training and awareness programs, crisis intervention, and legal
47 assistance.
48

49 The Council also runs the Office of Environmental Technical Assistance (OETA) to assist 22
50 Pueblos and Tribes in New Mexico and Texas in promoting the enhancement of

1 environmental resources, environmental health and in the protection of tribal lands from
2 environmental hazards and pollutants. The Council also promotes higher education and
3 sponsors scholarships, WIC, employment training, and programs that aid pueblo members
4 in obtaining health insurance, as well as others.

5
6 The Circle of Life Behavioral Health program provides adult and adolescent outpatient
7 services as well as maintaining the New Moon Lodge, an inpatient facility with up to
8 fifteen beds for adult Native American males. The New Moon facility is always full,
9 demonstrating the dire need for residential behavioral health treatment. Unfortunately
10 there is no facility for females at this time. The Butterfly Healing Center in Taos maintains a
11 bed capacity for 15 Native American male and 10 females from the various tribes.

12
13 There are gambling addiction services as well as Medicaid application and public
14 assistance services. The Council has offices in Albuquerque, Espanola, and Taos. The
15 Council provides childcare assistance programs in six of the pueblos. They fund six
16 families that take care of children in the pueblos, and also offer a Head Start program to
17 provide early childhood education to the children of the northern Pueblos.

18
19 The Council's Food Distribution Program is a federal program that provides nutritional
20 foods to low-income native and non-native households residing on a reservation and to
21 households living in approved areas near a reservation that contain at least one person
22 who is a member of a federally-recognized tribe.

23
24 Gil Vigil gave credit to Jovanna Archuleta for the development of the Art & Farmers Market
25 that was held back in October. It was the first annual event and they are planning on
26 holding another this year. They are working on a grant that will allow for the funding of
27 advertising for the second Market.

28
29 For future endeavors, Mr. Vigil expressed concern for the veterans of northern New Mexico
30 and the pueblos. He has attended several veterans conferences focused on providing
31 assistance to veterans, but there is too much bureaucracy to deal with and the veterans get
32 frustrated trying to see anything done. The Council is looking to open an office and employ
33 Veteran Services Officers (VSOs) to help the veterans to obtain the benefits they deserve
34 without having to fight with bureaucracy in order to do so. The Council believes it is very
35 important to help veterans utilize the services they have earned when they chose to serve
36 their country.

37
38 Mr. Vigil also stated that the Council is working on compiling a portfolio that he would like
39 to present to the RCLC when it is complete. That portfolio will present the history of the
40 ENIPC and the goals, objectives, and strategic plans of the Council as well as future
41 endeavors. He assured the board that he was staying in touch with Andrea and that he was
42 looking forward to working closely with her and the members of the RCLC.

43 44 **4. Board Member Action Items**

45 **a. Review Calendar of Engagement Opportunities**

46 Chair Trujillo asked the board to review the proposed 2016 potential opportunities for
47 travel and engagement. The Board had requested this schedule of potential engagement
48 opportunities at the November board meeting.

49 50 **5. Updates**

1 **a. Budget and Executive Director Services RFP Update from Brian Bosshardt**

2 Brian stated that the only change in the RCLC budget was payment for one month of
3 Executive Director Services. Behind the budget update is a copy of the RFP for the board
4 members to review. Proposals are due to Los Alamos by December 22. The proposals will
5 then be distributed to board members and the January meeting can potentially be used for
6 interviews depending on the number of proposals received.

7
8 **b. Executive Director Update from Andrea Romero**

9 Andrea informed the board that a lot was accomplished at the intergovernmental meeting
10 in New Orleans that took place before the Thanksgiving holiday. The groups that
11 participated include the Energy Communities Alliance that the RCLC is a member of, the
12 Environmental Council of the States, the National Association of Attorney Generals, the
13 National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Governor’s Association, and the
14 State and Tribal Government Working Group. Governor Loretto was in attendance and
15 Andrea included a list of priorities that were decided upon during the meeting. The five
16 major areas were decision-making, budget commitments, communication, process
17 improvements, and waste storage and disposal.

18
19 The ECA also held a meeting to talk about what they would be working on in the coming
20 year. The main areas of focus were engaging local governments and increasing budgets for
21 cleanup.

22
23 Mayor Alice hosted a meeting with Senator Martin Heinrich on the SCMC issue at the
24 Espanola City Council chambers where attendees heard from contractors, practitioners,
25 government advocates and Sen. Heinrich regarding the reality of contracting issues and
26 efforts to combat additional funds leaving New Mexico for SCMC procurement. Senator
27 Heinrich reiterated his commitment to addressing this issue and ensuring that we do try to
28 keep our procurement local and follow the progress on the changes.

29
30 Finally the board members had expressed interest in being participating players in the
31 Manhattan Project National Historical Park and Andrea attended a meeting about how that
32 park will be designated and what is going on so far in regards to planning. Andrea will
33 continue to liaise with those planners and keep the board informed. Governor Loretto
34 mentioned that at the intergovernmental meeting he learned from some of the Native
35 American tribes in Washington that they were displeased that they were not included in
36 the planning of the parks. He felt that the situation was similar in northern New Mexico
37 and he expressed his wish that the local tribes would participate more.

38
39 **G. Adjournment**

40 Chair Trujillo stated that no one was present for public comment and adjourned the
41 meeting at 3:33 p.m.

42 Attest:

43
44
45 _____
46 Commissioner Barney Trujillo, Chair

47
48
49 _____
50 Andrea Romero, Executive Director