

**MINUTES
of the
FOURTH MEETING
of the
ECONOMIC AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY COMMITTEE**

**September 4, 2025
San Juan College
School of Energy, Merrion Room
5301 College Boulevard
Farmington**

The fourth meeting of the Economic and Rural Development and Policy Committee was called to order by Senator Angel M. Charley, chair, at 9:38 a.m. on September 4, 2025 in the Merrion Room of the School of Energy at San Juan College in Farmington.

Present

Sen. Angel M. Charley, Chair
Rep. Janelle Anyanonu
Sen. Jay C. Block
Rep. Alan T. Martinez
Sen. Shannon D. Pinto

Absent

Rep. Doreen Y. Gallegos, Vice Chair
Rep. Gail Armstrong
Sen. Pat Boone
Sen. Crystal Brantley
Rep. Nicole Chavez
Rep. Martha Garcia
Rep. Joshua N. Hernandez
Sen. Antonio Maestas
Rep. Marian Matthews
Sen. Micaelita Debbie O'Malley
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero
Rep. Linda Serrato
Rep. Sarah Silva
Sen. Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics
Rep. Martin R. Zamora

Advisory Members

Rep. Jenifer Jones
Sen. Steve D. Lanier
Rep. Rod Montoya
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez
Sen. William E. Sharer
Sen. Nicole Tobiassen

Sen. Heather Berghmans
Rep. Catherine J. Cullen
Rep. Meredith A. Dixon
Sen. Natalie Figueroa
Sen. David M. Gallegos
Rep. Anita Gonzales
Rep. Raymundo Lara
Rep. Charlotte Little
Rep. Stefani Lord
Rep. Tara L. Lujan
Rep. Patricia A. Lundstrom
Rep. Jimmy G. Mason

Rep. Mark B. Murphy
Sen. James G. Townsend

Guest Legislators

Rep. Mark Duncan
Rep. Andrea Romero

Staff

Erin Bond, Researcher, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Nancy Martinez, Bill Drafter, LCS
Sheila Keleher, Researcher, LCS

Minutes Approval

The minutes for this meeting have not been approved by the committee.

Guests

The guest list is in the meeting file.

Handouts

Handouts and other written testimony are in the meeting file and posted on the legislature's website.

References to Webcast

The time reference noted next to each agenda item in this document is cross-referenced to the webcast of the committee meeting, which can be found at www.nmlegis.gov, under the "Webcast" tab. The presentations made and committee discussions for agenda items can be found on the recorded webcast for this meeting.

Welcome and Introductions (9:38 a.m.)

Senator Charley welcomed everyone to the meeting, and members of the committee introduced themselves.

Welcome and Updates on the Local Economies (9:45 a.m.)

Nate Duckett, mayor, City of Farmington, and Warren Unsicker, director, Economic Development, City of Farmington, highlighted the strategic priorities and needs of the City of Farmington. In addition, Mr. Duckett gave an overview of upcoming major construction projects and the major construction projects that have been completed thus far.

Andrew DiCamillo, director, Community Development, City of Aztec, spoke about the arterial project around the City of Aztec to help with the flow of traffic and bring economic growth. He noted that there are other projects in place to make efforts to incentivize public-private partnerships to attract businesses, specifically retail shops, to the City of Aztec.

Mike Stark, county manager, San Juan County, said that a five-year strategic plan was developed at a time when the San Juan Generating Station closed down and emphasized the economic hardships that the community has faced.

Cynthia Atencio, mayor, City of Bloomfield, mentioned new retail establishments coming to the City of Bloomfield and noted that the city has a chamber of commerce. She also stated that the city has been in communication with the San Juan Water Commission for the purchase of land for the purpose of a water reservoir.

Kara Wood, Town of Kirtland representative, Four Corners Economic Development, said that prior to 2015, the community was unincorporated and decided to incorporate, as infrastructure and funding were unavailable. Infrastructure continues to be a huge need, specifically for broadband. She stated that the largest employer of the Town of Kirtland is the Central Consolidated School District and that the closure of the San Juan Generating Station had a huge financial impact on the town. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=ERDPC&Date=9/4/2025&ItemNumber=1>.

Update from San Juan College (11:32 a.m.)

Toni Hopper Pendergrass, Ph.D., president, San Juan College, introduced Alicia Corbell, dean, School of Energy, San Juan College and gave an overview of programs and community partnerships offered at San Juan College. She discussed facility upgrades on the campus and the challenges related to the need for student housing. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=ERDPC&Date=9/4/2025&ItemNumber=2>.

Strengthening New Mexico's Economy Through Survivor-Centered Policies (12:19 p.m.)

Cynthia Amezcua Zamudio, state policy and advocacy manager, FreeFrom; Alexandria Taylor, executive director, New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Inc.; and MaryEllen Garcia, chief executive officer, The New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence, gave a presentation on economic justice and sustainability. Ms. Zamudio said that 73% of survivors of gender-based violence reported losing a job or income. Ms. Taylor gave an overview of the *New Mexico Crime Victimization Report* and stated that 67% reported that being unhoused is a major risk factor for experiencing violence. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=ERDPC&Date=9/4/2025&ItemNumber=3>.

Creative and Cultural Industries of New Mexico (1:17 p.m.)

Shani Harvie, director, Creative Industries Division, Economic Development Department (EDD), shared that the mission of the EDD is to enhance economic opportunities for New

Mexico families by nurturing a vibrant, creative economy. She also talked about upcoming grants to support organizations with creative entrepreneurs and returning and enhanced programs for existing creative businesses.

Michelle Laflamme-Childs, executive director, Arts Division, Cultural Affairs Department, said that New Mexico Arts is the smallest division of the largest historic preservation division. She noted that the Arts Division, with support from statewide, regional and national partners, continues to serve New Mexico residents in rural communities.

Lancing Adams, acting secretary, Tourism Department, gave a presentation on the economic impact of tourism. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been significant economic growth. Over the past 13 years, the New Mexico True campaign has seen sustained success, averaging 40 million annual visits and \$7.75 billion in visitor spending over the last five years. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=ERDPC&Date=9/4/2025&ItemNumber=4>.

Update on New Mexico State Parks (2:32 p.m.)

Toby Velasquez, director, State Parks Division, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, and Kramer Winingham, D.E.D., program director, Arrowhead Center, New Mexico State University, gave a presentation on the economic impact of state parks for fiscal years 2019-2024. Dr. Winingham stated that the report identified visitor spending and park-related expenditures as the two main economic benefits of New Mexico state parks. The benefits were evaluated using economic impact analysis and economic contribution analysis. Mr. Velasquez talked about the state park general fund and the expenditure contribution. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=ERDPC&Date=9/4/2025&ItemNumber=5>.

Agriculture and Food Systems (3:20 p.m.)

Jason New, director, Marketing and Development Division, New Mexico Department of Agriculture, gave a presentation on the meat value chain coordination and the New Mexico livestock industry.

Erin Ortigoza, manager, Food, Hunger and Agriculture Program, EDD, discussed focus areas for fiscal year 2026. She said that the Food, Hunger and Agriculture Program is designed to support the intersection of economic development in New Mexico's food and agricultural sector with increased food security for New Mexico residents.

Perla Gethering, associate director, Economic Council Helping Others, Inc. (ECHO Inc.), introduced Tami Jenkins, director, ECHO Inc. Food Bank, said that ECHO Inc.'s mission is to provide resources and education to individuals and families to improve their lives, specifically in

San Juan County. The emergency program provides both financial and practical assistance to help residents navigate difficult times. Ms. Jenkins said that if the federal Community Services Block Grant budget is cut, it will impact programs and activities that help alleviate hardships in communities across the state.

Jaqueline Montoya, project manager, Harvest Food Hub and Kitchen, San Juan College, said that the Harvest Food Hub and Kitchen's mission is to grow and sustain the capacity of food systems and have a positive impact on the economy. She said that there are 115 businesses supported through food and farm safety training, allowing for sales to institutions and food banks. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=ERDPC&Date=9/4/2025&ItemNumber=6>.

Public Comment (4:27 p.m.)

A list of individuals who made public comment is available in the meeting file.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 4:36 p.m.