

**MINUTES
of the
THIRD MEETING
of the
LAND GRANT COMMITTEE**

**August 14-15, 2025
32 New Mexico Highway 531
Tierra Amarilla**

The third meeting of the Land Grant Committee was called to order by Representative Linda Serrato, chair, on August 14, 2025 at 9:29 a.m. in the Community Building at the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced.

Present

Rep. Linda Serrato, Chair
Rep. Miguel P. García
Rep. Susan K. Herrera
Rep. Stefani Lord (8/14)
Rep. Matthew McQueen (8/14)
Sen. Anthony L. Thornton (8/14)

Absent

Sen. Leo Jaramillo, Vice Chair
Sen. Angel M. Charley
Sen. David M. Gallegos
Sen. Antonio Maestas
Rep. Angelita Mejia
Sen. Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics
Rep. E. Diane Torres-Velásquez

Advisory Members

Rep. Catherine J. Cullen
Rep. Rod Montoya

Rep. Anita Gonzales
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson
Sen. Linda M. López
Rep. Jimmy G. Mason
Sen. Micaelita Debbie O'Malley
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez

(Attendance dates are noted for those members not present for the entire meeting.)

Staff

Ian Keller, Staff Attorney, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Mark Edwards, Bill Drafter, LCS
Lisa Morrison, Staff Attorney, LCS

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.

Thursday, August 14

Welcome and Introductions (9:29 a.m.)

Representative Serrato welcomed everyone and asked committee members and staff to introduce themselves.

Welcome to the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced and Update (9:40 a.m.)

Steve Polaco, president, Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced, and Melvin Apodaca, board member, Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced, provided a history of the land grant-merced and talked about current projects, including one in coordination with the San Joaquin del Rio de Chama and Juan Bautista Baldes land grants-mercedes and the Department of Game and Fish on the recent Laguna del Campo acquisition and the community center building in Tierra Amarilla.

Update from the San Joaquin del Rio de Chama Land Grant-Merced (10:33 a.m.)

Leonard Martinez, president, San Joaquin del Rio de Chama Land Grant-Merced; Gerald Chacon, secretary of land and water, San Joaquin del Rio de Chama Land Grant-Merced; and Monica Rodriguez, secretary, San Joaquin del Rio de Chama Land Grant-Merced, provided a history of the land grant-merced, highlighted projects, including the Canon de Chama irrigation project and a Youth Conservation Corps project, and discussed the impacts to the land grant-merced from the Laguna Fire. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=8/14/2025&ItemNumber=2>.

Rural Health Care Facilities (11:40 a.m.)

James Kiser, chief executive officer, Holy Cross Medical Center; Len Horan, executive director, La Clinica del Pueblo de Rio Arriba; and Matthew Probst, P.A.-C., director of rural community engagement, Office for Community Health, University of New Mexico, highlighted that the Holy Cross Medical Center cares for all patients regardless of the patients' ability to pay but operates at a loss and expressed concerns about future Medicaid cuts across the country. They talked about how rural communities need cardiac services, how many people in impoverished communities do not seek care and how they are succeeding with a mobile unit and physical therapy services. They also mentioned that physicians are from the local community, that the success of an organization is with its providers and the people and that they advocate bringing health care to communities. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=8/14/2025&ItemNumber=3>.

Rural Health Outcomes (1:10 p.m.)

Alex Castillo Smith, deputy secretary, Health Care Authority (HCA), and Trinidad de Jesus Arguello, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., P.M.H.N.-R.N.-B.C., F.C.B.H.T., board member, Holy Cross Medical Center, and founder and administrator, Compostela Community and Family Cultural Institute, indicated that the HCA ensures that accessible, high-quality health care and safety net services are available and that childhood poverty is declining due to investments made by the authority. They highlighted that stagnant wages are a consistent factor of generational poverty, that recent federal changes will create more stress on the vulnerable and that New Mexico has the highest rate in the country of job losses caused by Medicaid and federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program funding cuts from the 2025 federal budget reconciliation bill. They also expressed support for community health workers who are from the community and can communicate community concerns to health care providers. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=8/14/2025&ItemNumber=4>.

Update from the Abiquiu Land Grant-Merced (2:20 p.m.)

Victoria Garcia, president, Abiquiu Land Grant-Merced, highlighted how the land grant-merced used capital outlay funding for building renovations and the purchase of property on which the land grant-merced has plans for an ice cream store, a playground, a hair salon and a potential recreational vehicle campsite. She also discussed a potential geothermal project.

Use of New Technologies to Assist Rural Communities (3:14 p.m.)

Manuel Luna, coordinator, Small Local Public Body Assistance Program, Office of the State Auditor, and Jeremy Klass, chief, Recovery and Mitigation Bureau, Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department, presented on the need for land grants to take advantage of new technologies, such as satellite capabilities. They discussed that the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department assists communities with disasters and helps identify projects for Federal Emergency Management Agency funding. They also mentioned that they can work with quasi-state entities on state reimbursement programs and are trying to work with local partners to capture needs, including insurance needs. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=8/14/2025&ItemNumber=6>.

New Technologies for Rural Communities (3:42 p.m.)

Enrico Pontelli, Ph.D., dean of arts and sciences, New Mexico State University (NMSU); Lara Prihodko, Ph.D., associate professor, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, NMSU; and Marcus Krohn, Ph.D., manager, Unit System/Tech Support, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, NMSU, highlighted that artificial intelligence (AI) follows the steps that a human would take to solve problems and stated that if NMSU does not prepare students for AI, the university is not doing its job. They stated that NMSU will be offering a Bachelor of Science in AI and the institution is receiving national

attention. They discussed applying AI to agriculture by expanding research areas and NMSU coursework at the master's degree level and the university's work on precision ranching, machine learning, large language models and virtual reality. They provided an update on the university's extension data repository and how AI pulls information from extension data found in the NMSU network. They also talked about an AI-enhanced 4-H curriculum for youth aged 8 through 18 years in rural New Mexico, how the curriculum introduces youth to careers in AI to ensure its ethical use and how AI data is validated with extension sources. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=8/14/2025&ItemNumber=7>.

Public Comment (4:37 p.m.)

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

Recess

The meeting recessed at 4:45 p.m.

Friday, August 15

Tour of the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced (9:00 a.m.)

Members of the committee and staff toured the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:37 p.m.