

MINUTES
of the
THIRD MEETING
of the
ECONOMIC AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY COMMITTEE

August 11-12, 2025
University of New Mexico-Valencia
Student Community Center
280 La Entrada Road
Los Lunas

The third meeting of the Economic and Rural Development and Policy Committee was called to order by Representative Doreen Y. Gallegos, vice chair, at 9:11 a.m. on August 11, 2025 at the Student Community Center at the University of New Mexico (UNM)-Valencia in Los Lunas.

Present

Sen. Angel M. Charley, Chair
Rep. Doreen Y. Gallegos, Vice Chair
Rep. Janelle Anyanonu
Rep. Gail Armstrong
Sen. Jay C. Block (8/12)
Rep. Nicole Chavez
Rep. Martha Garcia
Sen. Antonio Maestas (8/12)
Rep. Alan T. Martinez
Rep. Marian Matthews
Sen. Shannon D. Pinto (8/11)
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero
Sen. Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics
Rep. Martin R. Zamora

Absent

Sen. Pat Boone
Sen. Crystal Brantley
Rep. Joshua N. Hernandez
Sen. Micaelita Debbie O'Malley
Rep. Linda Serrato
Rep. Sarah Silva

Advisory Members

Rep. Catherine J. Cullen
Sen. Natalie Figueroa
Rep. Anita Gonzales (8/11)
Rep. Jenifer Jones (8/11)
Rep. Charlotte Little
Rep. Tara L. Lujan (8/11)
Rep. Patricia A. Lundstrom (8/11)
Rep. Rod Montoya
Rep. Mark B. Murphy (8/11)
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez (8/11)
Sen. William E. Sharer
Sen. Nicole Tobiassen (8/11)

Sen. Heather Berghmans
Rep. Meredith A. Dixon
Sen. David M. Gallegos
Sen. Steve D. Lanier
Rep. Raymundo Lara
Rep. Stefani Lord
Rep. Jimmy G. Mason
Sen. James G. Townsend

Guest Legislator

Sen. Linda M. López (8/11)

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

Staff

Erin Bond, Researcher, Legislative Council Service (LCS)

Mark Edwards, Bill Drafter, LCS

Sheila Keleher, Researcher, LCS

Guests

The guest list is in the meeting file.

Minutes Approval

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

Handouts

Copies of all handouts and 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.

Monday, August 11**Welcome and Introductions (9:11 a.m.)**

Representative Gallegos welcomed everyone to the meeting, and members of the committee and staff introduced themselves.

Welcome and Updates on the Local Economies (9:17 a.m.)

Victoria Archuleta, senior economic developer, Economic Development Division, Village of Los Lunas, welcomed legislators and gave an overview of the rapid economic growth happening in Los Lunas, with the Meta data center being one of the driving forces. Ms. Archuleta outlined some of the major infrastructure projects, including the Interstate 25 interchange and Los Lunas boulevard project, to address traffic flow and congestion in the area. Martin Moore, city manager, City of Rio Communities, and Lawrence Gordon, mayor pro tem, City of Rio Communities, discussed opportunities being created to attract small businesses to the area as well as current capital investment projects and the ongoing challenges establishing water and sewage infrastructure. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=ERDPC&Date=8/11/2025&ItemNumber=1>.

Workforce Training Collaboration (10:07 a.m.)

Samuel Dosumu, Ph.D., chancellor, UNM-Valencia, welcomed the committee to the UNM-Valencia campus and spoke about the branch campus' Workforce Training Center, which has partnerships with the business community and school districts and offers professional certifications in various trades. Tracy Hartzler, president, Central New Mexico Community College, gave an overview of the workforce training programs that tie in with statewide and regional economical development plans. Steven Saucedo, vice president for workforce development, New Mexico Junior College, addressed the Government Results and Opportunity Program Fund and how it has removed many of the cost barriers for workforce training programs. Randy Krall, chief executive officer (CEO), Telemetry Insight, and Arjun Bhakta, internet of things director, Telemetry Insight, explained how the data analytics company serves oil and gas companies by providing a remote monitoring device for wells to collect data and analyses, contributing to higher production. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=ERDPC&Date=8/11/2025&ItemNumber=2>.

Report from the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) (11:38 a.m.)

Jeff Lopez, director, OBAE, presented an update on broadband access and rural development across the state. Mr. Lopez reviewed federal programs and state funding, as well as the Statewide Education Network, which supports the installation and maintenance of critical education technology infrastructure. He noted that the United States Department of Commerce terminated the OBAE's legal grant agreement for \$8.7 million, which would have supported digital equity, digital literacy and digital opportunity, in May of 2025. As a result, the state now faces the challenge of finding alternate funding sources. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=ERDPC&Date=8/11/2025&ItemNumber=3>.

Introduction to the NMexus Center (1:06 p.m.)

Melinda Allen, president and CEO, New Mexico Partnership, and Amar Vakil, executive director, NMexus Center, outlined the goals for global business expansion in New Mexico through public-private partnership. Acting as an incubator, an accelerator and a launching pad for job creation and innovation, the NMexus Center serves as a unique model for foreign direct investment. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=ERDPC&Date=8/11/2025&ItemNumber=4>.

Geothermal Energy in New Mexico (1:54 p.m.)

Tom Solomon, electrical engineer and facilitator, Geothermal Development Working Group, and co-coordinator, 350 New Mexico, presented an overview of geothermal energy, noting that New Mexico is rated sixth in the country for geothermal potential. Mr. Solomon outlined the legislative and funding goals of the working group in promoting long-term development of advanced geothermal electricity. Logan Stephens, vice president and head of

development, XGS Energy, gave a brief description of the advanced geothermal and technological work the company does, using oil and gas industry practices to access hot dry rock. Shari Kelley, Ph.D., senior geophysicist and field geologist, Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources (NMBGMR), New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (NMIMT), addressed the June 2025 report on "The Future of Geothermal in New Mexico" published by Project InnerSpace, in collaboration with the NMIMT and the NMBGMR. The report outlines how New Mexico, given its abundant geothermal resources, has the potential to be at the forefront of the global geothermal transition to cleaner energy. Jackson Grimes, director of global engagement, Project Innerspace, discussed some of the initiatives being brought forth, including geomap tools, state reports and plans to leverage oil and gas technology and infrastructure. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=ERDPC&Date=8/11/2025&ItemNumber=5>.

Aquifer Mapping and Monitoring (3:01 p.m.)

Stacy Timmons, associate director, Hydrogeology Programs, NMBGMR, NMIMT, gave an overview of the aquifer mapping and monitoring program, the water data initiative and the water education program. The impact of climate change on New Mexico's water resources was also addressed. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=ERDPC&Date=8/11/2025&ItemNumber=6>.

Surface and Ground Water Use (3:49 p.m.)

Linda Guenley, member, Valencia Water Watchers, discussed the fact that the Rio Grande has run dry again in Albuquerque and Belen, leaving farmers without irrigation water. The Valencia Water Watchers recommend that legislators fund regional water councils, as well as aquifer mapping and water data initiatives. Maurice Hall, Ph.D., P.E., senior advisor, Climate Resilient Water Systems, Environmental Defense Fund, addressed the importance of ground water for rural communities, given that it is the only source of water for communities outside the major river corridors. Dr. Hall emphasized the critical need for proactive approaches to ground water management since ground water resources across the state are being threatened by persistent drought and increasing temperatures. Dr. Hall also encouraged legislative recommendations to prepare for water resilience and long-term water security in the state. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=ERDPC&Date=8/11/2025&ItemNumber=7>.

Public Comment (4:17 pm.)

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

Recess

The meeting recessed at 4:18 p.m.

Tuesday, August 12

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 9:09 a.m.

Battery-Charged Fences and Security System Use by Businesses (9:10 a.m.)

Representative Martinez and Luis Farias, government relations director, AMAROK Security, addressed the need for a standard permitting process for businesses to install security systems to deter commercial property crime. Mr. Farias gave a brief description of AMAROK's battery-charged perimeter security fencing and the technology behind it. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=ERDPC&Date=8/11/2025&ItemNumber=8>.

Approval of Minutes (9:37 a.m.)

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, and without any objections, the committee approved the minutes of the July 7-8, 2025 meeting.

Economic Impact of Spaceport America (9:37 a.m.)

Scott McLaughlin, executive director, Spaceport Authority, and Francisco Pallares, D.E.D., director of business development, Spaceport Authority, presented an overview and update on the status of the Spaceport, along with Virgin Galactic activities and operations. Discussion also focused on current projects, business development and future goals to maximize the economic impact of space tourism flights. Lucinda Vargas, Ph.D., associate director, Center for Border Economic Development, New Mexico State University (NMSU), and Chris Erickson, Ph.D., director, Center for Border Economic Development, NMSU, discussed the economic impacts of Spaceport America for Doña Ana and Sierra counties and the state. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=ERDPC&Date=8/11/2025&ItemNumber=9>.

Zoning Policy and Housing Affordability (10:41 a.m.)

Alex Horowitz, project director, Housing Policy Initiative, The Pew Charitable Trusts, addressed New Mexico's housing shortage and how the state's rental costs have increased by 58% since 2017, outpacing the 29% national increase. Mr. Horowitz noted that the state's housing inventory is currently one-half of its 2018 level, resulting in an increase in the median costs of homes and contributing to unaffordable rental costs and increasing homelessness. Mr. Horowitz also noted that many states have passed legislation to remove regulatory barriers, including reforming building codes and zoning restrictions, which has resulted in an increase in

housing inventory. In comparison, New Mexico has not passed legislation that would address the severe housing crisis in the state. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=ERDPC&Date=8/11/2025&ItemNumber=10>.

Tour of Meta (12:00 noon)

Members of the committee and staff toured Meta's Los Lunas Data Center.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.