Eastern Plains Council of Governments

Board of Directors Meeting

Minutes

Date	8/13/2025
Time	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Location	The Eastern Plains Council of Governments
Present	Fidel Madrid – Curry County, Helen Casaus – City of Clovis, Kathy Edwards – Village of Grady, Meadow Forget – Village of Melrose, Roamn Garcia – Town of Vaughn, Cynthia Lee – Village of San Jon, Jai Courtney – Village of San Jon, Renee Hayoz – City of Tucumcari, Fabian Munoz – Roosevelt County, Jo McVey – City of Portales, Clay Keisling – Union County, Russell Lees – Town of Clayton, Ernest Sanchez – Town of Clayton, Wade Holdeman – Fort Sumner Irrigation District, Allan Moss – Mesalands Community College, Sandy Chancey – EPCOG, Branden Goebel – EPCOG, Kristen Holmes – EPCOG, Celia Kirkland – EPCOG, Raymond Mondragon – EPCOG, Vincent Soule – EPCOG, Julie Surina – EPCOG, Jose Guzman – FWB, Dewight Bell, Steve Farmer – Santa Rosa
Absent	Town of Texico, Village of Fort Sumner, Guadalupe County, City of Santa Rosa, Harding County, Village of Mosquero, Village of Roy, Quay County, Village of House, Village of Causey, Village of Dora, Town of Elida, Village of Floyd, Village of Des Moines, Village of Folsom, Village of Grenville, Arch Hurley Conservation District
Note Taker	Kristen Holmes

1 - Call to Order

2 - Pledge of Allegiance and Salute to the New Mexico Flag

The meeting commenced with the Pledge of Allegiance and a salute to the New Mexico flag. All attendees participated in this ceremonial start.

3 - Introductions

Following the pledge, introductions were made. Each person stated their name and affiliation, ensuring everyone was familiar with the participants.

4 - Approval of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed and approved

Motion: Cynthia Lee – Village of San Jon
Seconded: Helen Casaus – City of Clovis
Decision: [Final]
There were no objections, and the Agenda was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

5 - Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting held on June 11, 2025, were reviewed and approved.

Motion: Helen Casaus – City of Clovis
Seconded: Cynthia Lee – Village of San Jon
Decision: [Final]
The minutes from the previous meeting held on June 11, 2025, were reviewed and approved by roll call vote.

6 - Guest Speaker

6.1 - New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD)

Chadette Pfaff, representing the Energy Conservation and Management Division (ECAM) of the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, presented on the Grid Modernization program. She explained that the program received $70 million from the State Legislature to support municipalities, state agencies, and other public bodies in implementing grid modernization technologies. The program aims to enhance the resilience of electric utilities to extreme natural events. Chadette outlined the program's goals, the timeline for funding opportunities, and the plan for regional workshops to support project development. She emphasized the importance of collaboration with local utilities and the benefits of grid modernization for community clean energy goals. Questions were raised about potential connections with the Sunzia Project and the involvement of public entities. Chadette agreed to follow up with interested parties offline and provide additional information as needed.

6.2 - Solstice Solar

Michael Meade from Solstice Solar presented on the company's efforts to provide affordable solar power to the 77% of Americans who cannot install rooftop systems. Solstice connects residents and community organizations to shared solar farms, offering financing innovations and subscriber management software for community solar projects. Michael explained the benefits of community solar, including the ability for utility customers to purchase shares in solar facilities to offset their monthly energy consumption. He highlighted that New Mexico has approved 200 megawatts for the community solar program, with 40 large-scale solar farm projects in the works. Michael detailed the financial benefits for municipalities and the low barrier to entry for participating in the program. He also addressed questions about working with developers and potential solar farm locations, specifically mentioning ongoing discussions with Curry County and Roosevelt County. Michael provided his contact information for further inquiries and agreed to send a PDF copy of his presentation to the meeting organizers.

7 - Approval of Financial Reports

The meeting transitioned to the review and approval of financial reports and budget adjustments. Jose provided an overview, noting that the fiscal year ended on June 30, and the presented information would be submitted to auditors. He reported that the organization continues to grow, which is positive news. Jose highlighted several budget adjustments, particularly in grant funds. For instance, the HRSA grant did not receive all budgeted funds, resulting in a $15,000 shortfall. Conversely, the growth funds were beneficial, allowing the organization to cover overages in other segments. Approximately $342,771 will be moved into the next year's budget.

The homeless shelter budget line item was removed due to the grant's unusable nature, and discussions with legislators for reauthorization are planned. Various projects, such as the Fort Sumner project, were completed, and funds will be carried over to the next fiscal year. The balance sheets and income statements were reviewed, showing a $10,000 profit for the year. The meeting noted that this would be the last year with the current auditor, and a new auditor will start in September.

Motion: Cynthia Lee – Village of San Jon
Seconded: Jo McVey – City of Portales
Decision: [Final]
The financial reports and FY25 budget final adjustments were reviewed and approved.

7.1 - Approval of Financials

7.2 - Approval of FY25 Budget Final Adjustments

8 - New Business

8.1 - Approval of Executive Director's Out of State Travel

The Executive Director, Sandy Chancey, requested permission to attend the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Annual Conference in Salt Lake City from October 13-18, 2025. Sandy emphasized the importance of attending this conference to learn about new programs and funding opportunities beneficial to their communities. A motion was made by Mayor Ramon Garcia of Vaughn to approve the travel request, seconded by Renee from Tucumcari. A roll call vote was conducted, and the motion passed unanimously.

Motion: Roman Garcia – Town of Vaughn
Seconded: C. Renee Hayoz – City of Tucumcari
Decision: [Final]
The Executive Director's request to attend the NADO Annual Conference in Salt Lake City from October 13-18, 2025, was approved by roll call vote

8.2 - Approval of Personnel Policy

Kristen Holmes, the Executive Assistant for EPCOG, presented proposed changes to the personnel policy, which had not been updated since 2021. Key updates included the introduction of a remote work policy, changes in salary payment procedures to reflect direct deposit, and new procedures for payroll and withholding changes to prevent spam and fraud. Other changes included updates to the retirement plan language, meal allowances, and purchase card usage policies. The policy now also includes provisions for video surveillance and electronic door access, reflecting recent security upgrades.

The discussion on the approval of changes to the personnel policy began with a brief overview of the necessity for these changes. It was emphasized that the policy now includes provisions for employee access through cards and cell phones, which must not be shared without notifying the executive director. This measure is intended to enhance workplace security and ensure that only authorized personnel have access to certain areas.

Motion: Jai Courtney – Village of Logan
Seconded: Roman Garcia – Town of Vaughn
Decision: [Final]
The personnel policy changes were approved unanimously by roll call vote

8.3 - Approval of Financial Policy

Kristen Holmes continued with updates to the financial policy, aligning it with changes in the personnel policy. These included adjustments to the purchase order process, increasing the petty cash limit from $20 to $50 for one-time purchases, and ensuring all financial transactions are properly documented and approved. The updates aimed to improve efficiency and accountability in financial management.

The financial policies, which had not been updated since 2021, were reviewed next. The changes primarily addressed current office processes and included several updates to reflect the new procedures. For instance, the general provisions now include small purchases except for professional services, and petty cash limits were increased from $20 to $50.

Additionally, the terminology was updated to reflect the use of purchase cards instead of credit cards, with specific provisions for their usage. This includes the addition of various allowable purchases, such as registration fees, office supplies, software subscriptions, and refreshment items for EPCOG-sponsored meetings, all requiring the executive director's approval.

The workflow for accounts payable and deposits was also updated, emphasizing the use of digital systems for uploading and confirming financial documents. The procedural changes aim to streamline the financial operations and ensure better control and accountability.

Motion: Helen Casaus – City of Clovis
Seconded: Roman Garcia – Town of Vaughn
Decision: [Final]
The financial policy changes were approved by roll call vote.

9 - Director’s & Staff Report

The Director's and Staff Report began with an update on the upcoming FY25 audit by Fox, Garcia, and Company, scheduled to start within the next month. It was noted that a new auditor would be required for the following year, necessitating the issuance of an RFP.

The report highlighted ongoing participation with the New Mexico Association of Regional Councils, where weekly meetings are dedicated to various topics such as housing and infrastructure. The executive director's efforts in gaining recognition in legislative committees were commended.

The receipt of the EDA planning grants was confirmed, and a pay request for three quarters' worth of grant funding had been submitted. Additionally, the council will receive $428,571 in capacity-building funds, with a focus on training in areas such as the Open Meetings Act, Governmental Conduct Act, and QuickBooks for municipal accounting.

The need for input on training requirements from board members and their employees was emphasized, with a request to identify any additional training needs. The council is also planning to contract with Emerald Health Partners for grant writing and research services.

Updates on ongoing projects included the administration of CDBG projects for various counties and the award of an HRSA grant for Union County Behavioral Health Services. The report concluded with an overview of the progress on HRSA grants, including outreach efforts and future funding opportunities.

The Director’s and Staff Report included updates on various activities and initiatives within the Eastern Plains Council of Governments (EPCOG). A new county manager, Drew Patterson, was introduced for Roosevelt County, and the significance of attending commission meetings within the seven-county region was emphasized.

Raymond Mondragon mentioned involvement with the Military Base Planning Commission, highlighting an upcoming meeting at Holloman Air Force Base in October and a recent meeting at Cannon Air Force Base. He also attended the Tucumcari City Council meeting on July 10th to express gratitude for the work done on the Route 66 grant, saving approximately $121,000.

Additionally, Raymond participated in the Military Veterans Affairs Legislative Committee meeting in Albuquerque, presenting legislative initiatives for the upcoming 30-day session in January. He also accompanied the Lieutenant Governor to Washington, DC, meeting with Pentagon officials and state senators to advocate for military installations in New Mexico, which employs around 17,000 enlisted personnel and supports 124,000 retired veterans.

The report included details of the Roosevelt Water Conference, where new smart meters and infrastructure replacements were discussed, along with presentations on water conservation and seeding programs. Dewight Bell shared a presentation on refining brackish water for agricultural and industrial uses and recharging the aquifer. Plans for another conference in October at the Kay Bailey Hutchinson Desalinization Plant were mentioned.

Further updates covered attendance at the Base Community Council meeting at Cannon Air Force Base, assisting House, New Mexico, with job descriptions and policy issues. Julie Surina attended the NADO Transportation Conference in Des Moines. She emphasized the importance of applying for grants, noting New Mexico’s unique funding opportunities.

Julie also reported on the Safe Streets and Roads for All grant application for six counties, excluding Curry County, and the DFA Matching Grant award. Haley Brown’s presentation on the matching grant at the SERPO meeting and Sandy’s presentation at the NERPO meeting were highlighted. Upcoming meetings and conferences, including the Outdoor Rec Conference in Gallup and the next SERPO and Circle meetings, were announced.

The Director concluded by reminding everyone about the upcoming 30-day budget session and the importance of not bringing reauthorizations to the Legislative Finance Committee, as stated by Senator George Munoz. The Director offered assistance with legislative matters and thanked everyone for their participation and support.

10 - Community Updates and Public Comments

The community updates and public comments segment began with a thank you note for Ray’s significant contributions to the town of Pon and Sandy’s influence with state authorities regarding compliance issues. The Mayor of Vaughn expressed gratitude for the support received in addressing IRS and taxation problems, reducing audit findings, and moving out of disclaimer status. The Mayor also acknowledged the help from Julie and the impact of the SERTPO program on street surface improvements.

Further comments included updates on a water project in San Jon, with hopes for funding and progress on park projects, including tennis and pickleball courts. Raymond Mondragon, the Vice Chairman of the Route 66 Centennial Commission, commended the village of San Jon for their signage efforts, and an announcement was made about filing a letter of intent for waterborne transport funding.

The Mayor of Vaughn detailed the challenges and progress of a water system project, including the need for compliance and resources.The project involves replacing a hundred-year-old water line, with costs estimated at $26 million.

The segment concluded with expressions of gratitude for the efforts of various individuals and organizations in supporting community development and infrastructure improvements. The Mayor emphasized the importance of starting projects correctly and being willing to do what it takes to achieve goals.

11 - Adjournment

The meeting was officially adjourned with a note of thanks to all participants. The Chairperson expressed appreciation for the contributions and efforts of the board members, staff, and community representatives.