

CONNECT NEW MEXICO COUNCIL MEETING

Virtual

Thursday, July 17, 2025, 1:30 p.m.

1. Welcome & Call to Order – Renee Narvaiz

The meeting of the Connect New Mexico Council was called to order by Renee Narvaiz, at 1:37 pm, on Thursday, July 17, 2025, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Ms. Narvaiz introduced herself and reviewed general rules and procedures regarding the meeting.

Members Present

Luis Reyes, Chair	Katherine Crociata
Jason Clack	Jim Ruybal
Eli Guinnee	Godfrey Enjady
Launa Waller	Joseph Navarrete

Members Absent

Nora Sackett	Steve Grey
Leonard Manzanares	Isaac Bush
Mona Martinez	

Others Present

Renee Narvaiz, IT, Public Information Manager
Jeff Lopez, OBAE Director
Aquiles “Alex” Trujillo, OBAE Deputy Director
Natalie Runyan, GIS
Cass Brulotte OBAE Counsel
Neala Krueger, Sandeep Taxali, Richard Govea, Eric Rodgers, Monica Riehl, Katherine Irvin, Matejka Santillanes, Jay Santillanes, Kitty Clemens, Mitch Hibbard, Jerry Smith

2. Approval of Meeting Agenda – Renee Narvaiz

MOTION: Ms. Narvaiz called for a motion to approve the Agenda for today’s meeting. Ms. Crociata so moved, seconded by Mr. Guinnee. There being no opposition the Agenda was approved.

3. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – Renee Narvaiz

MOTION: Ms. Narvaiz called for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 15, 2024 minutes. Ms. Waller so moved, seconded by Mr. Clack. There being no opposition these minutes were approved.

MOTION: Ms. Narvaiz called for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 19, 2024 minutes. Mr. Navarrete so moved, seconded by Mr. Clack. There being no opposition these minutes were approved.

MOTION: Ms. Narvaiz called for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2024 minutes. Mr. Clack so moved, seconded by Mr. Navarrete. There being no opposition these minutes were approved.

MOTION: Ms. Narvaiz called for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 19, 2024

minutes. Mr. Clack so moved, seconded by Ms. Waller. There being no opposition these minutes were approved.

MOTION: Ms. Narvaiz called for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2025 minutes. Mr. Clack so moved, seconded by Ms. Waller. There being no opposition these minutes were approved.

MOTION: Ms. Narvaiz called for a motion to approve the minutes of the May 15, 2025 minutes. Mr. Navarrete so moved, seconded by Mr. Clack. There being no opposition these minutes were approved.

4. Chair Updates/Comments – Luis Reyes

Chair Reyes welcomed all the Council members, industry representatives and public participants. He commented that he does not have any major updates to share other than what hopefully all interested parties have been following with respect to changes accompanying the new administration and potential impacts to rural internet/broadband across New Mexico. Chair Reyes also welcomed the new leadership for OBAE, Mr. Jeff Lopez as Director and Mr. Alex Trujillo, Deputy Director, who he invited to introduce themselves as well as give updates for the Office. He also expressed his hope that these gentlemen can provide plans and vision for overcoming issues that may arise moving forward with rural broadband in New Mexico. He added that he anticipates this Council and OBAE working strongly together moving forward, especially building bridges with other entities interested rural broadband, such as industry, the PRC, other agencies, and especially the pueblos and tribes of New Mexico.

5. Introduction of New OBAE Directors – Jeff Lopez, Alex Trujillo

Mr. Lopez stated that he is coming into OBAE directly from the office of U.S. Senator Ben Ray Lujan, where he has managed the senator's congressionally directed spending, which is the earmark process throughout the state. For the four years prior to this position he was the senator's senior policy advisor for his responsibilities as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Communications, Media and Broadband, which is the commerce subcommittee with jurisdiction over NTIA, which administers the BEAD grant, and the FCC which administers the Universal Service Fund programs and the mapping effort, as well as oversight of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. He noted that because of this background he is very familiar with the bipartisan infrastructure law which created BEAD, the Affordable Connectivity program and the Diversity Act. He stated that he is very honored and privileged to now be in a position to administer some of these programs he helped negotiate in Congress. Mr. Lopez added that he was born and raised in Santa Fe, so it is nice to be back in New Mexico, delivering on some of the promises made previously and connecting the community he grew up in.

He then gave an update on the Office of Broadband, noting that the Office is now in the second week of the third round, the benefit of the bargain round for the NTIA/BEAD process. The original deadline had been for tomorrow, 07/18/25, for applications, which has been extended until 11:59 p.m. on Monday, 07/21/25. He asked that everyone work with stakeholders to get as many prequalified entities through completion of this application as possible, which will help make final determinations over the coming months. The final plan is due to NTIA by September, with the hope of being approved shortly thereafter to secure the \$675 million total for completing many of the plans to provide service in rural areas, connecting the underserved and unserved broadband serviceable locations, households and businesses throughout the state. He added that Andrew Wilder, the BEAD coordinator, is unable to attend today due to illness. Director Lopez noted that many in attendance have been joining Mr. Wilder's office hours over the past week and a half. He asked that if anyone has issues with the application process to please

make the Office aware of those as the deadline is Monday.

Director Lopez also reported that the Office is continuing to administer the American Rescue Plan Act Capital Projects Fund, the ARPA-CPF grant and that these awards are in performance and reimbursements need to be completed by next September, the end of the fiscal year, September 30, 2026, so these grants are being actively administered, working with previous grantees to make sure these funds are spent down, and this is on a good path.

Director Lopez reminded the Council that the Connect New Mexico Funds were transferred from the Connect New Mexico Council to the Office of Broadband for administering the awarding of these funds. The reauthorization of the Connect New Mexico Funds was received, allowing the Office of Broadband to administer this grant, and this expires at the end of June 2026. He noted that the Office is working with grantees from both the capital projects under this fund as well as the Connect New Mexico projects and the Student Connect projects.

He reported that there are still funds available through the GWEP program, with \$1.9 million remaining, which is designated for grant writing and technical assistance, capped at \$100,000.00, per grant. These funds are also available to organizations which have previously received funds through this program as they are still eligible for a round two grant. He reminded everyone that this funding is available to local governments, tribal governments and rural electric co-ops.

He then asked Deputy Director Trujillo to introduce himself and provide more details about the work the Office is doing.

Deputy Director Trujillo stated that many in attendance already know him as he has been working with or for the Office of Broadband since the latter part of 2022, either as a project manager or contractor. He stated that he is excited to begin this new position, and like Director Lopez, he was born and raised in New Mexico, hailing from Belen. He reiterated what Director Lopez had stated about working closely with this team to effectively get the BEAD funds distributed in an equitable way. He noted that with respect to the NTIA process there was a major update yesterday, with NTIA and their technical teams recognizing that there is not a single technology that can serve all geographic and topographic areas in every state across the country, and that each state should use their own technical advisory teams to assess each application individually; that there is not a single solution for any state. They specifically called out technologies such as unlicensed fixed wireless and low earth orbit satellites, and stated that all technologies should be considered when evaluating the benefit of the bargain round. He commented that this is a good thing for everyone, as there are areas with very complicated “footprints”, mountains, valleys, rough terrain, etc. He noted that this was the process that had already begun in New Mexico, trying to balance wireless and satellite, and the costs associated with those, along with the priority of fiber, and that things will continue down this path, this being the reason for the application deadline extension. Mr. Trujillo concluded his report and asked if there were any questions.

Chair Reyes also asked if there were any questions for Mr. Lopez or Mr. Trujillo. There were none.

6. Update: BEAD/OBAE – Eric Rodgers

Mr. Rodgers stated he believed Mr. Trujillo was going to report on this.

Chair Reyes asked if Mr. Trujillo had anything additional to report. Mr. Trujillo stated that the major item to report was the new announcement from NTIA regarding alternative technologies

along with the extension of the deadline as previously reported.

Chair Reyes had a question about the schedule after applications are received. Mr. Trujillo responded that there will be a one-week period in which the applications will be evaluated with the technical team and during this period there will be outreach to each of the applicants to go through the curing process. Mr. Trujillo added that this is under a very tight deadline, so most of the Office will be dedicated to this process. The goal is to have this finished by 08/27/25, with negotiations completed, awards issued by September and the final proposal submitted to NTIA by 09/08/25.

Chair Reyes asked if NTIA will just accept the assessment by OBAE or will they also take the applications through a vetting process. Mr. Trujillo stated that NTIA will go through a vetting process to evaluate the technology and the actual capabilities of the operator, basically the same process OBAE goes through. He added that because New Mexico has a very strong team doing the OBAE vetting that this review will be written up in a very strong fashion for submission, and the stronger their reviews are the better they will be received by NTIA and this should reduce the time needed for the NTIA vetting process.

Chair Reyes asked if there were any more questions from the Council. There were none. Chair Reyes thanked Mr. Trujillo for his report.

7. Discussion of Unfilled Council Member Positions – Luis Reyes

Chair Reyes asked Ms. Narvaiz or Mr. Clack if they had a list of open positions and what agencies need to be represented. Ms. Narvaiz stated she had received a list from the Governor's office and it would take her a moment to retrieve that to share with the Council.

Ms. Narvaiz stated that in the update she received from the Governor's Office they mentioned they had received the appointment letter for Mr. Ruybal and they are awaiting an email from Secretary Monette from IAD to determine who she will be assigning to her role. Ms. Narvaiz also stated there are two other positions open, one for Ms. Sekaquaptewa and the other for Mr. Tico Charlee, however, she has not received a full notice that Ms. Sekaquaptewa has left the Council, but she has not attended meetings for several months. There is also a designee for Economic Development who has also not attended many meetings over the last few months. Ms. Narvaiz stated that she is working with the Governor's Office to fill the vacant positions, and again stated that the positions that have not been consistently represented are EDD, Ms. Sekaquaptewa's position and Mr. Charlee's position. Chair Reyes asked who would appoint the positions for Ms. Sekaquaptewa and Mr. Charlee. Ms. Narvaiz replied that she believed this would be Secretary Monette from IAD. Mr. Clack confirmed this, stating that IAD has three appointees to the Council. Chair Reyes asked Ms. Narvaiz to confirm that she is working with the Governor's Office to fill these positions. Ms. Narvaiz confirmed that she is working with the staff member in the Governor's Office to make sure the Council's membership is current, especially in reference to any expired terms or terms expiring soon. Chair Reyes asked if Ms. Narvaiz was aware of any member whose term is expiring soon. Ms. Narvaiz responded that she does not have that information. Chair Reyes asked if any of the Council members were aware of their term expiring soon. No one responded. Ms. Waller noted that Ms. Rosales had sent out a Council Member list a couple of months ago, which outlined all of the members and when their terms expired, and wondered if Ms. Narvaiz had that list. Ms. Narvaiz replied that she does not have that list and asked Ms. Waller if she could share that with her. Ms. Waller responded that she will forward this to Ms. Narvaiz now. Ms. Narvaiz thanked Ms. Waller for this. Ms. Narvaiz also noted that she is not sure who will be taking over the position for Ms. Mona Martinez and/or Mr. Viorica, who previously served in that position, so this position is also open. Chair Reyes asked Mr. Clack if he was taking the position

previously held by Mr. Viorica. Mr. Clack replied that he is the designee for DoIT and Mr. Viorica previously represented the Public Schools Facility Director or was the designee. Ms. Narvaiz confirmed this. Chair Reyes thanked Ms. Waller for providing this list to Ms. Narvaiz.

Chair Reyes asked if there was any further discussion regarding Council Member positions. There was none.

8. Working Group Updates – Luis Reyes

Chair Reyes asked if there were any working group updates available.

Tribal Working Group:

Mr. Enjady reported that the Tribal Working Group continues to meet each month, with Ms. Poston deciding to take the Co-Chair position along with him. He added that Ms. Quintana has been helping out quite a bit on the OBAE side and expressed his appreciation for the work these members have been doing. He stated that Director Lopez spoke at their last meeting. He reported that NTIA Round One of TBCP is still moving forward with many tribes coming out of the permitting phase and getting into construction now, and this is also the status across the country as well as in New Mexico.

Chair Reyes asked Mr. Enjady what effects the Ruidoso flooding has had. Mr. Enjady replied that the Mescalero Apache reservation had a few homes that were inundated with mud on the Eight Canyon side, but on the Ruidoso side there have not been too many problems. He reported that there were three members of a family from Ft. Bliss, Texas, a military family, who were lost in the flooding and there has been a GoFundMe page set up to help this family, and encouraged those interested to search this out. He added that another man was lost in this flood, but did not know any details about him or his family. He also reported that there were swift water rescues that took place just this morning in the area, and expressed his appreciation for the safety groups who have come in to help in these efforts. The tribal fish hatchery was also flooded and they lost 80% of the fish, with cleanup underway there, which will take quite a bit of time. Mr. Enjady expressed his appreciation to Chair Reyes for asking about this. Chair Reyes asked if anyone had further questions for Mr. Enjady. There were none.

Mapping & Data Working Group:

Chair Reyes recognized Ms. Runyan who indicated she could report for this group. Ms. Runyan reported that since Mr. Mantos left the Council there has not been a Council member serving as Chair of this group. She stated that she kept the group meeting for a while and some of the latest topics discussed were the importance of understanding and representing public maps, what service is available, which was collected through the broadband data collection by the FTC, but also a comparison of what the end users are actually experiencing, services not available due to subscription cost, etc., and then use the OOKLA Speedtest Data and other sources, with the decision that it would be useful to present this information to the Digital Equity Working Group in an effort to investigate affordability and adoption issues. Another topic was how best OBAE can serve the permitting needs of the groups trying to plan for construction. She noted that any spare time the OBAE team has apart from the BEAD process, they are trying to assess a permitting tool that was published by NTIA, but so far the data does not appear to be specific enough to New Mexico, so getting more detailed information into some tool needs to be considered. At their last meeting the consensus was that facilitating knowledge and awareness of the existing tools might be a good function. She added that there had been some consideration for a permanent permitting staff person within OBAE and queried whether Mr. Trujillo had any further information to share about that.

With respect to continued meetings of this working group, Ms. Runyan stated that she had to halt meetings as there was no one following this with the many administration changes as well as her increased workload. She added that she has been reassured that OBAE will be adding other GIS staff later this Fall, so hopefully the working group can pick back up at that time. She encouraged the Council to let her know of any urgent needs that arise. Chair Reyes thanked her for this update.

Chair Reyes asked Mr. Trujillo if he had any comment to add to Ms. Runyan's report. Mr. Trujillo stated that there needs to be specific attention to the permitting portion of broadband, as part of the legislation that created the Office of Broadband. He added that some of the legislators had expressed the expectation that there be, at the very minimum, a database or a repository of information to help new or less advanced providers with this process. He stated that there is a current open position, which recently closed, with several applicants, for an urban planner, to help with this process and meet the requirement Ms. Runyan was referring to. He commented that Ms. Runyan has been working diligently to meet the mapping requirements associated with this permitting piece, without duplicating any existing commercial efforts and thanked her for this. He expressed his hope that there will be a more clear picture of this by the next meeting, and around the beginning of September there may be some additional job postings, specifically related to the OBAE specific GIS team, to help with the big data efforts needed to get all the information on the maps. He added that they will not only be mapping the broadband specific data, but also the tertiary data around this to help with economic development opportunities associated with broadband.

Chair Reyes asked if there were any questions for Ms. Runyan or Mr. Trujillo. There were none.

Ms. Narvaiz voiced a request to get a list of all the Working Groups, their Chairs and members, so she can update the website and make sure these groups get the help they need moving forward.

Chair Reyes asked what working groups are currently needed, noting that there had been a pole attachment and permit working group that has not met since Mr. Viorica left the Council, and posed the question of whether pole attachments are still an issue and whether this group is still needed. He also noted there had been a diversity, equity and inclusion working group. He asked the Council to determine if these working groups are still needed and whether the issues they were formed to address had been resolved.

Digital Equity and Inclusion Working Group:

Mr. Guinnee stated that the Digital Equity and Inclusion Working Group is still going strong, with good attendance, strong agendas and frequent presentations. He noted that at their last meeting there was a discussion about going forward and what the mission of this group would be, and in future months targeting specific subjects for discussion, having more breakout sessions, etc. This group is also considering a name change and might request a name change at the next CNMC meeting. Mr. Guinnee stated that the group still believes there is a need for them to continue to work as their function is valuable, even though some of the federal funding focusing on this area is no longer available, as they bring together stakeholders to facilitate collaboration and sharing of ideas and information. Mr. Guinnee stated he could not speak for any of the other working groups, but he likes the idea of doing a reset on the working groups and examining the original resolutions passed creating these working groups to see if these need updating and to see how working groups fit into the Council as a whole at this point. He suggested the possibility of a Council retreat to do this reset and planning with respect to the current mission of the Council and what working groups are needed.

Chair Reyes thanked Mr. Guinnee for his report and comments, and stated that he made an excellent point regarding the mission of the Council, which should be revisited. Chair Reyes stated he will coordinate with Ms. Narvaiz to accommodate these suggestions.

Chair Reyes asked members to seriously consider the pole attachment issue, as this is an area which does seem to be a bit contentious, with the permitting across state and federal lands holding up projects. He noted that he has heard there is some attempt being made to fast-track some of this at the national level, but he has not seen this yet in New Mexico, at least on the electrical co-op side of things. He again asked the Council to consider addressing this issue of pole attachments with respect to relationships with co-owners in areas being served. Are these relationships good enough that this issue does not require further attention?

Chair Reyes then asked if there were any further questions or comments.

Mr. Enjady noted that there has been a lot happening with respect to the NEPA process at the FCC under Chairman Carr's "Delete, Delete, Delete" initiative, trying to streamline unnecessary overreach and get permits moving faster. He reported that he attended a meeting yesterday, organized by the FCC, with the THPO offices and historic preservation groups discussing easing some of the regulations for tower siting. He noted that he thinks this may be a big issue, but this may start to move fairly soon, and this has been listed as a subject for the FCC meeting in August. This issue is regarding towers on or near reservations and the tribes were the main focus at this meeting. He expects there to be a meeting notice about easing those restrictions, but is not sure when this might happen, and it will be interesting to see how this is addressed at the August FCC meeting.

Chair Reyes thanked Mr. Enjady for this update and stated that he did not like seeing all this funding, BEAD, etc., being awarded and then held up because of permitting, pole attachment issues or make-ready issues, which should be resolved through the involved parties, but could also be addressed legislatively. Mr. Enjady noted the section 106 portion, which is a full-review, and that he is 320 days into this review at this time, and is still waiting for BLM to clear some of the last permits. He added that he is unsure how this could be accomplished in the 20 day time frame outlined.

Ms. Crociata said she felt there was a need to reconvene the PROPs working group, and as there is no longer a Chair for this, could this just be done administratively. She stated that it seems this issue does need attention as she recalls the legislation about this failing, and the issues surrounding this. She also suggested seeking engagement from affected providers.

Chair Reyes noted that Ms. Narvaiz had screen-shared the resolution forming this working group and queried if there was anything mentioned about appointment of a Chair. Ms. Narvaiz stated that it reads as though the Working Group would be chaired by one of the Council members, but this does not appear to need a vote from the Council. Chair Reyes called for a volunteer to lead this Working Group, or for members to participate in it, and if Council members are not prepared to come forward at this time they could contact him or Ms. Narvaiz. He expressed the need for this Working Group to get things moving forward on this issue.

Ms. Narvaiz stated that there may be a need to update the Council's resolution as the Working Groups noted are the four that were previously established. Chair Reyes stated he was not sure if there was still a need for the Grant subcommittee and was unsure how the pole attachment group was established. Chair Reyes noted there is work to do to update the resolution, find volunteers for the different committees and working groups, and bring this to the next Council meeting.

Mr. Enjady noted that he did not see the Tribal Working Group as one of the four committees listed. Chair Reyes agreed that this needs to be updated with formal action from the Council at the next meeting. Ms. Narvaiz stated she would work with Mr. Clack to edit this and get it sent out for review by Council members prior to the next meeting. Chair Reyes thanked her for undertaking this.

Ms. Runyan noted that in this resolution there was a designation of a notetaker for these groups, and it would be helpful to have notes criss-cross between the working groups. She added that the notes are supposed to be sent up the chain of command, but it might be worth finding a way to share these notes between the working groups, as there is always overlap. Ms. Narvaiz stated that this would be very helpful and she would like to collect that information, noting there is a SharePoint site she created some time ago for housing details, information and files from the different working groups. She noted that this site has not been maintained recently, so if members have information such as rosters for the different working groups, etc., they can share that with her and she can get that imported into this SharePoint. Chair Reyes thanked Ms. Runyan and Ms. Narvaiz.

Chair Reyes called for any additional questions or comments regarding the Working Groups. There were none.

9. Public Comment – Luis Reyes

Chair Reyes called for any public comment. There was none.

10. Adjournment – Renee Narvaiz

MOTION: Ms. Narvaiz called for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Waller so moved, seconded by Mr. Navarrete. There being no further business before the Council and no opposition the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.