

State of New Mexico
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor

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Cabinet Secretary

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Deputy Secretary

Toby Velasquez
Director State Parks Division



New Mexico State Parks Advisory Board Meeting
Tuesday, April 30, 2024 @ 11:00 AM
1312 Basehart Rd, SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106 and
via Webex

1. Call to Order
 - a. Chair Selena Connealy called the Parks Advisory Board (Board) meeting to order at 11:13 a.m.

2. Roll Call
 - a. Chair Connealy called roll.
 - i. Board Members Present:
 - ✓ Selena Connealy, Chair
 - ✓ Patrick Killen, Member
 - ✓ Stephanie Bestelmeyer, Member
 - ✓ Rodney Paris, Member
 - ✓ CJ Wiegel, Member
 - ✓ Thomas Garcia, Member
 - ✓ Eileen Everett, Member

 - ii. Board Members Absent:
 - ✓ Judith Polich, Vice-Chair
 - ✓ Pat Walsh, Member

3. Election of Officers
 - a. Discussion and Action:
 - i. Chair Connealy provided a brief opening statement and opened the floor for nominations.
 - ii. Member Paris made a motion for current Chair Selena Connealy to remain in this leadership position. The motion was seconded by Member Killen. The motion carried.
 - iii. Member Paris made a motion for current Vice Chair Judith Polich to remain in this leadership position. The motion was seconded by Member Everett. The motion carried.

4. Approval of Agenda
 - a. Chair Connealy requested a motion to approve the agenda as drafted and posted. Member Paris made the motion to approve the agenda, the motion

was seconded by Member Bestelmeyer. The motion carried.

5. Approval of Minutes:

- a. After a brief discussion, Chair Selena Connealy requested a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Member Killen made the motion to approve the minutes as amended; the motion was seconded by Member Paris. The motion carried. [Reference attached approved Meeting Minutes.]

6. Open Meetings Act Resolution

a. Discussion and Action:

- i. Member Garcia discussed his preference that the Board possibly find support for bringing back virtual meetings as an option to establish a quorum. Member Garcia quoted a segment of the Open Meetings Act (OMA) that he feels enables participation by virtual meeting and/or conference calls. Member Garcia and other members agreed that this would be beneficial when a Board member cannot attend a meeting in person. Director Velasquez provided the position he has received from department legal counsel on this OMA related discussion, and it requires that Board members be present in person to establish a quorum. Chair Selena Connealy said she would work with Director Velasquez to discuss this interest with the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department Office of General Counsel to further express this Board interest. Member Paris made the motion to approve the OMA resolution as drafted; the motion was seconded by Member Wiegel. The motion carried with Member Garcia voting nay. [Reference attached approved OMA Resolution.]

7. Director's Report

a. 2024 Legislative Session –

- i. Director Toby Velasquez provided an overview regarding legislative outcomes related to the division's Fiscal Year 25 Budget Request. The division received \$1.7 million in 200 Personnel Category and less than \$500 thousand in 400 Operations Category funds. In addition, he discussed the Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) request. Director Velasquez stated that the ICIP agency request was \$10 million, and the agency received \$16 million (three fiscal year use period). Usually, the agency receives \$2 to \$ 4 million, but the agency was more aggressive with the request knowing the ARPA funding is expiring next year. Director Velasquez stated that the State Parks Division was recognized by the legislature for the good work of using the ARPA funds. Director Velasquez went on to state that the division is an enterprise agency, so we generate approximately 75% of our own operating budget, the remaining 25% is provided by the General Fund. Director Velasquez emphasized that the cost for daily park operations increases annually. Director Velasquez highlighted the passing of Senate Memorial 1, a Wild Friends bill related to citizen science activities and outdoor education programming.

- b. State Park Fees Adjustments –
 - i. Field Operation Bureau Chief Jared Langenegger gave an update on the status of the proposed fees after the public information sessions were held across the state. Bureau Chief Langenegger emphasized that the division wanted to give the public a chance to be heard on how they felt about the new fee study and proposals. Based on the public feedback the division received, the division has made thoughtful and responsive adjustments to the proposal and will soon schedule another round of public information sessions in advance of the next Notice of Rulemaking. [Reference attached Microsoft PowerPoint presentation.]

- c. Fiscal Year 2025 Budget –
 - i. Director Velasquez stated that the division received more support than ever for ICIP funding and emphasized that the division was aggressive with our budget request to improve agency financial resiliency.

- d. Land & Water Conservation Program –
 - i. LWCF Program Coordinator Neal Denton and Field Support Program Bureau Chief Dr. Robert Stokes provided a brief program update and presentation. [Reference attached Microsoft PowerPoint presentation.]

- e. Position Vacancy Status –
 - i. Director Velasquez gave an update on position vacancies, there is currently a 25% vacancy rate for full-time equivalent positions across the agency and a 41% vacancy rate for law enforcement required positions. Director Velasquez stated that there is no lack of effort for recruiting vacant positions, and that the agency continues to prioritize recruitment and retention strategies. Bureau Chief Miche Bove Garcia stated that she has and continues to attend job fairs.

Chair Connealy asked for a motion to take a brief break so that Board members and public attendees could take a break, get prepared meals, and then continue with the Board meeting. Member Everett made the motion; and Member Paris seconded the motion. The motion carried and the Board took a brief break from 1:51 p.m. – 2:05 pm.

8. President's Report and Committee Reports

- a. Board Member Per Diem & Travel –
 - i. Due to issues with several Board members' W-9 forms not yet being approved, several members are still waiting for their per diem reimbursements. Director Velasquez and Bureau Chief Garcia believe that these issues have been resolved but encourage Board members to communicate any other issues they may encounter

with per diem reporting and reimbursement. Director Velasquez explained that per diem checks/warrants expire if not cashed within 12 months of issue.

- b. Board Member Recruitment –
 - i. Chair Connealy and Bureau Chief Garcia discussed their coordination regarding and in support of an interested candidate that is being reviewed for appointment by the Governor’s Office of Boards and Commissions.
- c. Committee Reports
 - i. Climate Change: Director Toby Velasquez stated the parks have been working with contractors to put up the signs for climate change.
 - ii. Outdoor Classrooms: Member Eileen Everett asked what the status is of hiring outdoor educational teachers. As of now State Parks is still in the process of doing so.
 - iii. Law Enforcement: No Law enforcement matters to discuss currently.
 - iv. Public/Private Partnerships: Member Patrick Killen spoke about the Great Outdoors fund going to support the new fishing dock at Brantley State Park. Patrick was happy to have worked closely with that project.

9. Closing Discussion

a. New Business -

- i. No new business was put forth by Board members.

b. Next Meeting Date -

- i. Chair Connealy briefly discussed future meeting options and there was general interest in keeping the meeting location in the Albuquerque area. Chair Connealy stated that she would work with Director Velasquez on dates and follow up with Board members to determine their availability.

10. Public Comment:

- a. Member Everett suggested that the Board consider offering Public Comment early on the agenda so that public members would not have to wait through the entire meeting for the opportunity to comment. There was discussion supporting exploring the option to have a Public Comment section early and late on future agendas.

Three members of the public attended the meeting, one in person and two virtually. One of the virtual participants did not rejoin the meeting after the short lunch break. The second virtual public participant was given the opportunity to provide comment via WebEx and phone call and was not responsive, we assumed this individual had tech issues and moved on. Mr. Jim Wagner attended in person and commented on a job

well done regarding the revised State Parks fees proposals, he said he loved state parks, has been to most of them and would continue to visit the remainder. Mr. Wagner expressed disappointment with the conditions of some state parks and agreed that it was necessary to thoughtfully adjust state park fees.

11. Adjournment:

- a. Chair Connealy entertained a motion to adjourn. Member Stephanie Bestelmeyer made a motion to adjourn; the motion was seconded by Member Killen. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

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