

**CITY OF ALAMOGORDO, NEW MEXICO
CITY & COUNTY COMMISSION JOINT MEETING MINUTES
5:30 PM, SGT. WILLIE ESTRADA MEMORIAL CIVIC CENTER
800 E. FIRST ST. ALAMOGORDO, NM
June 23, 2025**

ALAMOGORDO CITY COMMISSION

**SUSAN PAYNE, MAYOR
SHARON MCDONALD, MAYOR PRO-TEM
CRYSTAL GUTHRIE, COMMISSIONER
STEPHEN BURNETT, COMMISSIONER
WARREN ROBINSON, COMMISSIONER**

**JOSHUA RARDIN, COMMISSIONER
MARK TAPLEY, COMMISSIONER
STEPHANIE HERNANDEZ, ACTING CITY
MANAGER
DARREL MORI, CITY ATTORNEY
RACHEL HUGHS, CITY CLERK**

OTERO COUNTY COMMISSION

**VICKIE MARQUARDT, COMMISSION CHAIRWOMAN
GERALD MATHERLY, COMMISSION VICE-CHAIRMAN
AMY BARELA, COMMISSION MEMBER**

CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Mayor Payne called the meeting to order at 5:33 PM. Roll Call was taken by the City Clerk for the City Commission. Commissioner Warren Robinson was absent. City Clerk Hughs announced there was a quorum present for the City Commission. Roll Call was taken by the County Clerk for the County Commission.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Invocation was given by Mayor Payne, and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Tapley.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**Mayor Pro-Tem McDonald moved to the agenda.
Commissioner Marquardt seconded the motion.
Motion with a vote of 9 - 0 - 0.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Josiah Vesey said he was a Communications Officer at TBRDA. He spoke on behalf of TBRDA and asked the City to look at what went wrong and to look at it as a learning opportunity.

Christine Padilla said she had worked with the County's 911 Center for nine years. She said that Director Barney brought technology, tools, and leadership to TBRDA.

Audrey Hann said she was a Floor Supervisor at TBRDA. She had previously submitted a letter that highlighted key concerns. She said she witnessed repeated unprofessional behavior from APD personnel, and there is a pattern of APD issuing directives counter to those in place by TBRDA and the Board. Technology was brought in at the request of APD which created more complexity and a demand on time with little operational benefit. There is a division between the City and the County.

McKayla Finnigan said she wanted to thank the City Commission for listening to their former dispatchers, police officers, firefighters, and citizens regarding the issues with the consolidated dispatch. You understood the facts and decided to stop the indiscriminate squandering of city taxpayer dollars with no city oversight. Your diligence is much appreciated.

Gilbert Garcia said he has worked with both the City and County and has only experienced professionalism. No matter what, we will get the quality of service that citizens expect.

Elaine Blythe said she supports 4H and the Extension Program. There needs to be adequate parking at the Otero County Fair, and anything that reduces that parking would be detrimental. During the Fair, the parking lot is packed

with people parking on side streets, which is incredibly dangerous. The City has an obligation to provide safe and adequate parking. I speak against anything that would decrease the parking lot.

Sid Gordon said the parking lot situation is a logistics nightmare. If the property were to sell, that business would be at a major disadvantage. That needs to be heavily considered before a decision is made.

Andrew Carroll said the Fairgrounds is the main Otero County evacuation site. We need it in times of disaster and emergency. It is also the high school's evacuation site. Cloudcroft High School wanted an MOU to use it as an evacuation site, too. We need the parking space for the Fair alone, which is the largest in Otero County. If the Fair does not have parking, you would be effectively shutting down the Fair.

Kyle Miesbauer said strangely, despite the overwhelming testimony and evidence, the County is willing to dissolve a multi-million-dollar agency to defend a controversial Director. The County Commission does not know the full extent of what is happening. When an employee brought overwhelming evidence of malfeasance to the HR Director, they were told it would not be investigated unless others came forward to corroborate their story, and they should just transfer. The current and former employees of TBRDA deserve better.

WORK SESSION

1. Tularosa Basin Regional Dispatch Authority.

Commissioner Marquardt said they wanted to have this meeting to clear the air. The City has already turned in a letter stating they wish to move away from TBRDA effective March 2026. This meeting was to let people who wished to speak, speak.

Mayor Payne said she was listening to the dispatchers tonight as she did in the past, and it is interesting that everyone seemed to know every personnel issue at TBRDA and why personnel left. I thought personnel records were confidential. I have concerns about personnel issues being discussed at public meetings. If I were a dispatcher, I would be concerned. If it happened to previous dispatchers, it could happen to you. My opinion is that we turned in our letter, and there is nothing more to discuss.

Commissioner Barela said she called this meeting to be transparent. I met with Chief Kunihiro and learned some things I thought would be repairable. There were rumors regarding dispatcher week and how the Alamogordo Police Department would not support it. I spoke to officers, and not one had that view. They completely supported our dispatchers. I think there are misunderstandings and misconceptions. We will be a good team after we get over this.

Commissioner Matherly said we brought in a new Director for the Dispatch Center. He is a smart, educated man who comes from a business with rules you followed. One of the problems in Alamogordo is that everyone does what they want to. They fight the system. I take my hat off to the Director who has done a fabulous job. If he did not do a good job, would centers all over the state be asking him over to show them things? I had to call 911 recently. They were very professional and there within four to five minutes. Our Center is state-of-the-art. We should be proud of it, not trying to break it down and destroy it.

2. Property and parking lots at the Fairgrounds.

Acting City Manager Hernandez said we had previously brought this topic up at an Executive Session in a City Commission Meeting. Per the direction of the City Commission, they wanted to have a joint meeting to discuss possibilities at the Fairgrounds. Two possibilities were brought to the City Commission at that Executive Session. One was to sell the front part of the City parking lot, give the rest to the County, and work with businesses regarding parking at the Fair and Burning of the Bull. The other option was to reimagine the Fair and move it to a bigger location for bigger things. The City has property, specifically the landfill off the bypass, that can be offered government to government, to help develop it, so the County could sell its piece of the Fairgrounds. The County and City could develop pieces of the landfill to make the Fair bigger. The landfill is about one hundred and fifty acres, whereas the current location is about thirty-one acres. Tonight is the opportunity to discuss the direction we want to go.

Commissioner Marquardt said she was relieved the City did not want to sell the whole parking lot, but even selling a piece of it would cause problems. We already do not have enough parking out there. This rumor about the City selling the parking lot goes around every year. We all get worried about it. We can work with the City for an agreement, in

writing, that we are not going to sell the parking lot. The hospital has property behind where the rides are, and I talked to them about doing something with that, but I do not know how much it would cost for something like that. It would be a huge cost to the County, even if the land were donated. We do not have a deal with them; This is just an idea. Is the City thinking about selling the first half? Acting City Manager Hernandez said the rumors start because we get approached regularly. We are upgrading the Fairgrounds intersection to a four-way stop, which is Phase 1 of connecting to the bypass. No one I have spoken to is interested in the entire parking lot; they just want the front piece and access. I cannot recall exactly, but from where Pepper's was, make a straight line. That would leave a big piece to give to the County. Commissioner Marquardt said regarding the landfill, we already know the highway out there is a mess. I think it would be extremely expensive to make that a usable property. I know that Roosevelt County is in the process of upgrading its fairgrounds, and they are up to \$28,000,000. They are not rebuilding it; they are just redoing it. I am hoping we can work something out so we do not lose our parking lot. The Fair is a huge historical event and the largest we have in the County. The idea of people parking at the mall and crossing White Sands Boulevard scares me. That is not a safe alternative for parking, and we should not encourage it. I would feel we are almost liable. Commissioner Matherly said that the parking lot is a designated Emergency Command Center. Last year, during the Ruidoso fires, that parking lot was totally full. I have heard they were going to take off two hundred and fifty feet of that parking lot, which is a lot. Then, there is access to get into and out of the parking lot during a fair. It is bad all around. They also do CDL testing out there. I have a letter of support for the Fair here. Almost sixty thousand people went through those gates last year. Where will they park? How will old people who park half a mile down the road get there? This whole deal is bad. Do you realize how much money the Fair brings in for and from businesses? I cannot believe the City would consider putting a damper on another recreational facility. You have to think of all the people who would be affected. I was told that maybe Alamogordo could donate property, but who would come up with the \$25,000,000 to \$30,000,000 to rebuild that facility? The County does not have that kind of money. I do not think the City does either. So I do not understand this. Acting City Manager Hernandez said that when I get these offers, I have an obligation to bring them to the City Commission. I am not pushing this. The Commission makes the decision. Mayor Payne said that it is the Acting City Manager's job, and you would want your County Manager to come to you and present options. Commissioner Matherly said he would not expect anything less from our County Manager. This has been going on for years. Mayor Payne said she thought Commissioner Matherly was misunderstanding this entire thing. The County called this. We were done with this issue. I am not sure where any of this came from.

Commissioner Barela asked if everyone appreciated the bypass that goes over the landfill. That would be where the future Fair proposal is. It feels like the TBRDA situation was held over our heads in limbo of the decision for the Fairgrounds parking lot. I have an email here that states, "Although I feel extremely uncomfortable sending this email without the City Commission knowing it." It is inappropriate. I do feel there are City and County Commissioners who do not know the extent of every conversation that has happened. There are a lot of decisions being made that are not going through the City Commission. I hope this meeting changes that direction and involves the City Commission in more of these decisions. I have a letter of termination here from the City of Alamogordo concerning TBRDA. Not one City Commissioner's autograph is on here. I do not know who is running the City. Mayor Payne said that the City Commission voted on the letter for TBRDA. We all knew about it. Commissioner Barela said I was aware of that, but I do not think everyone was aware of this letter. Mayor Payne said we were. We voted on it and knew about it. Acting City Manager Hernandez said I sent that email, and I let the Commission know that it was sent in either a weekly report of the Executive Session. I said that although I feel extremely uncomfortable sending this email, Sheila's post put me in a difficult position. I was trying to clear the air with County Attorney RB Nichols and the County Manager. I wanted to say that we did not intend to sell the parking lot before I went to the City Commission. I wanted to let them know the options I was giving to the City Commission. Commissioner Matherly asked how the City Commissioners felt on this. Commissioner Rardin said as far as the parking lot, we need to keep it in the short term, the next couple of years. In the next five to ten years, we need to sit down with a plan. The Fairgrounds has been outgrown. It is inevitable. We have talked about this six or seven times since 2009. I think we cannot do that to the County; it is a huge event. For the time being, we need to leave it the way it is. Within the next five to ten years, we need to talk about how we will move it, how we will do it, and where it might be. Or we may not even want that direction, and we will leave it where it is. It needs to stay where it is for the next two to three years. Commissioner Matherly said he agreed with that. Commissioner Tapley said that when we got out of the meeting, none of us said we needed to sell it right now. We do need to have something to look at in the future. As for right now, I think we all feel the same about where it stands. Commissioner Rardin said we could put a resolution on the City Commission's agenda stating we would not sell the parking lot for a certain number of years. I feel the conversation needs to be had with the Fair Board, the County Commission, and the City Commission. We all need to be involved because of the huge impact. I do not remember the size of our parking lot. Acting City Manager Hernandez said that, in total,

there are about thirty-one acres between County and City property. Commissioner Rardin said it is prime real estate in town. When it was originally developed, it was on the edge of town. I have been here my whole life and have gone to the Fair nearly every year. However, logically speaking, it is inevitable that it may have to move in the future. In the short term, it needs to stay where it is because it is not feasible to move now. Commissioner Matherley said if we could get an agreement like that, it would be up to the County to figure out a funding deal. It's not something we can just come up with next year. People do not realize how much that facility would cost to replace. You could not build that in a year. Every year, it will just cost more and more. The County needs to figure out how to get that funding done. This must be thought out in great detail before something is done. Mayor Payne said the landfill proposed earlier is just one option. The City owns lots of land around itself. There are also many grants out there. If the current Fairgrounds property were appraised, I think you would be surprised by its value. Acting City Manager Hernandez said our parking lot was appraised at \$1,200,000 at a little over three acres. Mayor Payne said that leaves around twenty-eight acres. I think the County needs to consider our offer, but maybe not right away. To me, it makes sense to expand the Fairgrounds. As Commissioner Matherly said earlier, it was sixty thousand people. Even with the extra three acres, that is a lot of people. Realistically speaking, keeping the Fair at the Fairgrounds long term does not make sense. The area we discussed is one hundred and fifty acres, and you have thirty-one acres now. I think it is worth considering if you can find grants and funding. It will relieve congestion during those times. It can be a meeting site, CDL training, Burning of the Bull, all those things, and more. I think the funding is out there, but you need to be diligent and seek it out. We could have a spectacular fair.

Commissioner Marquardt said so we are clear, we understand the City is not selling the parking lot at the Fair. We could maybe get something in writing that says until the Fairgrounds is moved to another location, we are safe in saying we have that parking lot. Coming up with that kind of funding will take a while. Just so these rumors do not start every year. Mayor Payne said to be clear, we as the City have already talked about this. I am not sure why people keep thinking we are ready to sell the parking lot. Commissioner Marquardt said that is why we want something in writing. Mayor Payne said yes, we have had those things in writing before. We would have to talk about it as a City Commission and come up with a time limit before we bring it back out again. I agree with Commissioner Rardin that the Fair has outgrown its current location. In the best interest of the Fair and safety, a goal should be made. Again, the City will provide the property, and we will do our part. Commissioner Matherly said he also agreed with Commissioner Rardin regarding the growth. It is a nightmare to get out on White Sands Boulevard. It would be great on the outskirts of town, but I would not agree with the old landfill. Location can be discussed later, but we need time to find funding. Mayor Payne said she recommended that the County get its property appraised. Commissioner Rardin said the County needs the funding for a facility first, and then selling the property could help pay for the initial investment. Do we want to do a resolution or a statement? We could say we will not sell it for two years. We could also look at private-public partnerships regarding moving it to get the costs down. Mayor Payne said all seven City Commissioners agree we cannot sell the parking lot. Commissioner Rardin said we need to do something in writing and make it official. Commissioner Marquardt said they would appreciate that. The County is in the middle of building a courthouse, so we need some grace on that. Acting City Manager Hernandez said to make a suggestion, if the resolution could have a time limit for a design within five years. Is that reasonable for the County? County Attorney RB Nichols asked how the City felt about contributing the money from the sale of the parking lot to the Fairgrounds as a sign of goodwill. Acting City Manager Hernandez said she would put that money back into economic development, but there are certain things we could do to help prepare the land. Commissioner Barela said that, looking at the budget and what the County has going on with the judicial complex building, it is just not feasible. I think it should be in writing for ten years, during which the property will only appreciate in value. If the City decides to sell the parking lot, that \$1,200,000 should go into the trust to move and rebuild the Fairgrounds. Mayor Payne said she did not agree with that. The City is already offering a one hundred and fifty acre piece of property. That should be the City's contribution. These are taxpayer dollars, not our personal accounts. I cannot imagine the taxpayers thinking that is okay. Commissioner Rardin said it would be for them as well. Most of that can be discussed at a later time. The purpose tonight is to get something in writing so the County does not think we will sell the parking lot out from under them. I would like something on the next possible City Commission agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro-Tem McDonald moved to adjourn at 6:32 PM.

Commissioner Marquardt seconded the motion.

Motion passed with a vote of 9 - 0 - 0.

ATTEST:



Mayor Susan Payne



City Clerk Rachel Hughs

(Prepared by Dylan Aleshire, Deputy Clerk)
Approved at the Regular Meeting held on July 8, 2025.

