

05/29/25

Rio Grande Boulevard Neighborhood Association Annual Meeting Notes

Thursday May 29, 2025, 6:00 PM -7:30 PM

Nahalat Shalom 3606 Rio Grande Blvd NW, Albuquerque, NM 87107

Welcome

Call to Order

Introduction of Attendees

Treasurer's Report

- Bank account balance is **\$1,403.53**.

Topic: Legislative Updates and Community Concerns

Speaker: State Representative Javier Martinez

Key Legislative and Policy Updates:

1. Tax Relief Efforts:

- A bill passed to return more money to New Mexicans via income tax reductions—particularly benefiting middle-income earners.
- Intent to reintroduce similar legislation next year without reducing public services.

2. Behavioral Health Investment:

- \$250 million down payment made for a statewide regional behavioral health plan.
- Goal: Increase access to mental health and addiction treatment, especially for the homeless and underserved.
- An additional \$100 million has been allocated to a behavioral health trust fund to support long-term services.

3. Child Welfare System Reform:

- New laws aim to better protect children in state care, especially infants and toddlers.
- Some legislation now requires mothers with substance use histories to attend treatment programs.
- An independent ombuds office has been established to allow families to report concerns outside CYFD.

4. Public Safety Legislation:

- New measures target fentanyl trafficking, auto theft, and gun violence.
- Acknowledgement that previous laws were ineffective—this is a more focused approach.

5. Capital Outlay Projects:

- Over \$2 million allocated to local projects including:
 - Valley High School pool improvements.

- Street and park enhancements near Candelaria and 12th Street.
- Drew Center and surrounding landscaping upgrades.

6. **Affordable and Transitional Housing:**

- \$250M/year continues to be invested through the NM Mortgage Finance Authority for building diverse, affordable housing.
- A separate \$75M targeted for transitional housing for 1,200 unhoused individuals, largely focused on repurposing motels.
- Clarified: No transitional housing is currently planned for the immediate neighborhood.

Community Questions & Concerns:

1. **Traffic Safety:**

- Multiple residents raised urgent concerns about speeding, racing, and unsafe pedestrian areas along Rio Grande Blvd.
- Request for increased enforcement and physical infrastructure like medians or speed bumps.
- Representative suggested collaboration with city council and district staff to pursue grants and improvements.

2. **Neighborhood Development & Zoning:**

- Questions about potential changes to building codes (e.g., bill 2469 on unlimited building heights and duplex permissions).
- Representative clarified those bills didn't pass committee and thus didn't advance.

3. **City & State Coordination:**

- Emphasis placed on partnerships between local government and state representatives for future improvements.
- Encouraged residents to advocate at both the city and county levels, particularly through their city councilor.

4. **Community Engagement:**

- Representative invited ongoing feedback, questions, and meetings—often meets constituents informally at local coffee shops and breweries.
- Encouraged direct communication via text for follow-up concerns.

Speaker: City Council District 2 Policy Analyst Nathan Molina

Key Updates and Initiatives

1. **Rio Grande Boulevard Traffic & Safety Study**

- The City has hired a consultant to study traffic conditions from **Edelweiss School to Candelaria Road** along Rio Grande Blvd.
- The study includes:
 - Speed and crash data collection
 - Field reviews to identify dangerous intersections
 - Community engagement through **public meetings starting later this summer (likely August)**

- Conceptual traffic calming and safety designs (e.g., medians, curb extensions, landscape improvements)
 - **Community input will be critical** to shaping the design proposals.
- 2. Speed and Noise Enforcement**
- **Speeding:** Council has requested Rio Grande Blvd be added to the list for new **speed enforcement cameras** (APD currently operates 20, with plans to double).
 - **Noise Cameras:** Three pilot noise cameras will be tested downtown. If successful, these may expand to other areas, including Rio Grande Blvd.
 - Cameras capture both vehicle sound levels and license plates.
 - Goal: Deter illegal mufflers and noise disturbances with enforceable penalties.
- 3. Nearby Infrastructure Projects**
- **Griego's Road Project (12th to 4th Street):**
 - Includes pedestrian refuge islands at ditch crossings (e.g., Hartwell Lateral, Drain Stream).
 - Already designed and included in the upcoming **\$375K general obligation bond package**.
 - **Speed Trailers Deployed:**
 - Two new **mobile speed trailers** have been purchased for the Valley Area Command.
 - One was recently deployed near **Grove and S Theatre** to address local complaints.
- 4. Roundabout Confusion at Rio Grande Blvd**
- Residents expressed safety concerns at the roundabout near the river due to inconsistent driver behavior (failure to yield, improper stopping).
 - City is considering **public education campaigns** and possibly additional signage to improve roundabout usage and safety.

Resident Questions and City Responses

- **Speeding and Dangerous Driving:**
 - Multiple residents described racing, overtaking on double yellow lines, and pedestrian hazards.
 - APD and City staff acknowledged the urgency and will continue to deploy resources and move enforcement tools around problem spots.
- **Noise Complaints:**
 - Loud mufflers and modified exhaust systems are frequently reported.
 - Current ordinances exist, but enforcement is limited. The goal is to supplement with automated noise cameras and fines.
- **Traffic near New Developments:**
 - A new apartment complex near Los Anaya's and Rio Grande Blvd raised concerns about increased traffic.
 - Staff took note and will bring this to Councilor Baca for review, including whether traffic calming is needed in adjacent areas.
- **Concern About Speed Limit Increases:**

- A pending city transportation plan may increase speed limits on parts of Rio Grande Blvd, despite neighborhood efforts to reduce them.
- Staff committed to gathering more information and ensuring community concerns are heard before changes are finalized.

Speaker: Colin Baugh

Topic: Water Management, River Health, and Community Engagement

Macro-Level Issues: Water Debt & Regional Water Management

- **Elephant Butte Reservoir & Compact Debt:**
 - New Mexico is in water debt (approx. **124,000 acre-feet**) under the Rio Grande Compact.
 - Storage at Elephant Butte is restricted until this debt is resolved.
 - Negotiations with Texas are ongoing, and progress appears to be underway.
 - Comparatively, the Colorado River Basin has more severe debt issues, so there is **hope for resolution** here.
- **Historic River Channel Problems:**
 - Since the 1970s, part of the Rio Grande has diverted ~200 cubic feet/second into the **Elephant Butte floodplain wetlands**, not the compact-counted channel.
 - This water loss has affected New Mexico's compact obligations.
 - MRGCD is advocating for **structural improvements** and has support from **Senator Heinrich and other federal staff** to fix this.
- **Alternative Water Storage in Albuquerque:**
 - MRGCD has secured federal approval to explore **alternative storage options** closer to Albuquerque—an important policy shift that could increase local resilience.

District-Wide Efficiency and Equity Initiatives

- **Improving Irrigation Efficiency:**
 - Projects like **ditch restoration and reshaping** have led to major water savings (e.g., 4 hours saved per cycle in the North Valley).
 - MRGCD is investing in **local-scale upgrades** to boost conservation and equity across the system.
- **Equity Concerns:**
 - Colin emphasized how smaller-scale, community-led projects (like those in the North Valley) deserve support, even if they serve fewer acres than large commercial farms.

Community Engagement and Youth Education

- **Reclaiming Forgotten Ditches and Lands:**
 - Local volunteers are reopening locked gates and reclaiming overgrown acequias.
 - MRGCD is working with **Audubon Society, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps**, and others to restore waterways and vegetation.
- **Education Initiatives:**

- Schools like **Adobe Acres Elementary** and **Polk Middle School** are working with MRGCD to bring irrigation and environmental education onto campuses.
- APS is supportive, and a **district-wide garden program** is in the works.
- **Youth Leadership & Stewardship:**
 - MRGCD sees youth as future stewards of the valley and wants to involve them early in restoration, climate resilience, and land use planning.

Linear Park & Green Space Vision

- **Proposed North Valley Linear Park:**
 - Plan for a continuous green corridor from **just north of Candelaria to Griegos**, potentially connecting:
 - **A dog park**
 - Community gardens
 - Trails behind Smith's to **open space areas**
 - A **community engagement event** was scheduled for **June 10**, location TBD.
- **Long-Term Vision:**
 - Reinvent neglected parcels into **safe, usable public green space**
 - Align with the city's "green space within 10 minutes" initiative
 - Address wildfire risk by managing overgrown easements

Tree Removal & Biomass Use

- **Tree Safety and Land Stewardship:**
 - MRGCD is actively responding to public safety concerns about dead/dying trees along ditches.
 - Rather than clear-cutting, they are exploring sustainable practices:
 - **Tub grinding** to create biochar
 - **Replanting with native trees, shrubs, and grasses** that improve water retention

Speaker: Brittany Martinez – Crime Prevention Specialist

Topics: Crime prevention, open space restoration, city development updates, board elections, and variances.

Coverage Area: North Valley & North Valley Command Center

Crime Stats (Jan–Apr):

- Low crime overall in neighborhood boundaries (Montano to Indian School).
- Top service calls:
 - Suspicious persons/vehicles: 30 calls
 - Audible alarms

Community Reminders & Offers:

- Report concerns (e.g. speeding, illegal parking, junk vehicles) directly to her or the substation.

- Speed trailer requests are available.
- Neighborhoods can request signage for speed reduction.
- Suspicious activity and illegal dumping can be reported via the 242-COPS line or APD app.
- Encouraged use of neighborhood feedback to inform police patrol priorities.

Speaker: Joe Strange & Dustin Chavez – Albuquerque Open Space Division

Topic: Updates on **Candelaria Nature Preserve**

- **Topic: Updates on Candelaria Nature Preserve**
- **Property Overview:**
 - 167 acres total (North, Central, and South Tracts).
 - Currently focused on North Tract restoration (~100 acres).
- **Restoration Efforts:**
 - Transitioned from agriculture to habitat restoration due to prior pesticide use.
 - Ongoing work includes crop plans, water management, and soil restoration.
 - 2025 Crop Plan now available online.
- **Public Engagement:**
 - Monthly public tours (next: July 25).
 - Volunteer days Mon–Fri (seasonal flexibility).
 - Educational programming in English and Spanish.
 - Tree nursery and “climate-resilient” demonstration site opening soon.
 - Wildlife: Over 120 species observed; active coyote dens monitored.
- **Concerns Raised:**
 - Excess vehicle traffic/parking inside the preserve.
 - Staff assured vehicle access is limited to Open Space personnel and stored at designated yards.
 - Improvements in public access and parking are forthcoming.

Neighborhood Updates: Eleanor & Board

- **Variance Discussions:**
 - 2722 Rio Grande: Developer proposed 7 homes on 1.2 acres; reduced to 5 after neighborhood input.
 - 2611 Rio Grande: Odd-shaped lot—buffer reduction request approved after compromise.
 - Sidewalk variance near Cos: Approved due to land constraints and historical precedent.
- **Citywide Concern: IDO Changes**
 - Recent city council vote bypassed public hearing process.
 - Resulted in reduced neighborhood power on appeals and allowed increased building heights and density.

- A lawsuit has been filed by the North Valley Coalition and others.
- Motion to donate \$250 to support the lawsuit was discussed but tabled due to unclear details.

Board Elections

- **Re-elected:** David (President), Karma (Board Member)
- **Open Seats:** 2 vacant board member positions remain
 - No nominations received; will revisit later.
 - Anyone interested in working on the Candelaria Preserve subcommittee is encouraged to join efforts without formal board membership.

Announcements & Events

- **Upcoming Event:**
 - **National Night Out:** August 5th, 2025
- **Call for Volunteers:**
 - Particularly for **tree planting grants**, which require local follow-up for planting and maintenance.
 - Median planting projects being explored as heat-reduction and traffic-calming strategies.

Meeting Adjourned

Next Steps: Continue community engagement, explore open board roles, follow up on city planning impacts, and maintain advocacy around open space protection.