

**Valencia Association of Local Elected Officials (VALEO)
Los Lunas Transportation Center
101 Courthouse Road SE, Los Lunas, NM 87031
Tuesday, February 18, 2025 @ 6:00 pm**

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLIEGENCE:

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 pm by Gerard Saiz, County Commissioner District 1. Charles Griego, Village of Los Lunas Mayor, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Commissioner Saiz asked all that were present to introduce themselves. The Attendees were:

Joseph Bizzell, County Commissioner District 4
Dante Berry, County Commissioner District 5
Gerard Saiz, County Commissioner District 1
Jhonathan Aragon, Valencia County Manager
Mike Milam, Valencia County Clerk
Dwayne Merritt, American Red Cross
Sheryl Gordon, American Red Cross
Charles Griego, Village of Los Lunas Mayor
Gregory Martin, Village Administrator of Los Lunas
Brenda Green, Chief Deputy County Clerk and former Union County Clerk

REVIEW OF PAST MINUTES:

Commissioner Saiz asked if there was any discussion regarding the previous minutes. There were none. Commissioner Saiz deemed the minutes to be approved as presented.

NEW BUSINESS:

Commissioner Bizzell introduced Dwayne Merritt, American Red Cross Disaster Program Manager and Sheryl Gordon. Mr. Merritt gave an overview of his background. He currently oversees northern New Mexico from Valencia County to Colorado comprising of 16 counties and they deal with response, recovery and preparedness. Sheryl Gordon is one of his shelter leads. They have a national dispatch service that can be contacted twenty-four hours a day.

Mr. Merritt stated that approximately 3% of the population affected by a disaster will go to a shelter. They will provide cots, food, safety and make sure they are warm.

Mr. Martin asked if there was an established shelter location within Valencia County. Mr. Merritt stated that they had used the Los Lunas schools and the recreation center in Belen. Mr. Merritt asked those present if they could identify locations where people could be sheltered. He would then survey those locations to find out if they are handicapped accessible, what areas of the location can be used, find where the utility turn offs are and will measure out the square footage to determine the number of people it can shelter so that they are prepared if a disaster occurs.

Mr. Merritt stated that they try to have a shelter open within approximately two hours but distance to the incident is also a factor. They also have partner managed shelters in which they will train staff and volunteers to be able to open shelters and allow the Red Cross more time to load their trailers and get to the shelter.

Mr. Aragon asked if in regards to potential shelters, are they looking for square footage of the facilities. Mr. Merritt stated that they first look at how many people they may need to shelter.

Mr. Bizzell asked if there were already agreements in place in Valencia County or do we need to get with the Village of Los Lunas and the City of Belen to see about using their high schools. Mr. Merritt stated that it could be decided as a group as to which facilities would be used. Mr. Bizzell stated that they wanted to work together to make sure that the constituents are taken care of and would like to see things in place as soon as possible. Mr. Merritt stated that we first needed to get the agreements signed and have backup plans in place.

Mr. Bizzell asked what happens if you have an emergency somewhere else, can you still supply Valencia County if needed? Mr. Merritt stated that he would never commit all of his team out of the area. He can also pull from other areas of New Mexico and Arizona. He would be able to guarantee at least ten people for seventy-two hours. He can also pull from other states as necessary and can train the city workers and volunteer fireman to be shelter staff. They also provide counselors, nurses, medical staff and spiritual care on site. Names of people in the shelter are not released for security reasons.

Mr. Bizzell asked if they had any agreements with Sara Gillen, the Valencia County Emergency Manager. Mr. Merritt state that if they do, they would probably need to be renewed. He does get supportive communities information from Ms. Gillen regarding what support may be needed.

FUTURE VALEO MEETING SCHEDULE:

- May 20, 2025, Hosted by Rio Communities
- August 19, 2025, Hosted by the Village of Los Lunas
- November 18, 2025, Hosted by the City of Belen

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Saiz at 6:45 pm.