

**Observer Corps Report – Albuquerque City Council meeting
5 Aug 2024
Mary Mulvany/Janet Kirkpatrick**

The City Council held no meetings in July. All nine councilors were present at the and Aug 5 meeting, with the exception of Council President Lewis who was absent (excused) late in the meeting: Louie Sanchez – District 1, Joaquin Baca – District 2, Klarissa Peña – District 3, Brook Bassan – District 4, Dan Lewis – District 5, Nichole Rogers – District 6, Tammy Fiebelkorn – District 7, Dan Champine – District 8, Renée Grout, District 9.

The Aug 5, 2024 Albuquerque City Council meeting lasted over eight hours, adjourning at 1:18 am. Several community members speaking during the general comment period mentioned that the late meetings are a barrier to public participation. One wondered if the council meetings should be weekly to better address the many agenda items.

General Public Comment Items:

Shooting Range. Three community members spoke about the condition of the City's shooting range. They complained of dirty class rooms, mouse droppings, non-functional bathrooms, and unreliable air conditioning. The Parks and Recreation Director responded that progress is being made on a contract to upgrade the facility.

Homelessness. Ten community members spoke about a perceived lack of help and compassion for the unhoused/unsheltered people in our community. Several mentioned the weaponization of law enforcement during sweeps of encampments and likened it to forced displacement.

Election Threshold Proposition – Mayor's Veto Sustained

During the June 17 meeting the council passed a bill to place a proposition on the ballot in November to remove the required minimum number of votes required for election of a mayor or council candidate. The mayor vetoed this bill. At the August 5 meeting, Council President Dan Lewis made a motion to override the mayor's veto. Seven community members spoke in support of the mayor's veto. No one spoke in favor of overriding the veto.

Although the council originally passed the bill with enough yes votes to override the veto, the motion to override failed. Councilors Bassan, Champine, Grout, Lewis, and Sanchez voted to override the veto. Councilors Baca, Fiebelkorn, Peña, and Rogers voted to sustain the veto. Councilor Peña, provided no explanation about why she originally voted in support of the ballot proposition, but now voted against it.

Affordable Housing

The city council unanimously approved the West Mesa Ridge A Development Agreement with YES Housing, Inc. to utilize Housing Forward funds towards new construction of an affordable housing project. The project will provide 128 affordable housing units at 701 Coors Blvd NW. A link to the legislation: [EC-158](#)

Electric-Assisted Bikes on Open Space Trails

The city council considered a bill to allow e-bikes on trails where regular bikes are already allowed. Ten community members spoke in favor of the bill stating that e-bikes provide greater access to older or less-fit people and that e-bikes are capped at 20 mph. Nine people spoke against it, citing safety concerns and stated that there was not sufficient public notice of this bill and that the process lacked sufficient public input. Councilor Bassan defended the process stating that the bill had been worked in committee for months and that she had spoken to several community groups.

The bill passed by a vote of eight in favor (Baca, Bassan, Champine, Grout, Lewis, Peña, Rogers, Sanchez) and one opposed (Fiebelkorn). The bill was sent to the mayor for signature. A link to the legislation: [O-24-14](#)

Albuquerque Minimum Wage Ordinance

Councilor Rogers proposed a bill which would make the city's minimum wage law consistent with the state law. The current Albuquerque minimum wage is \$8.50, but Albuquerque employers must pay the state minimum of \$12. Councilor Grout proposed an amendment to Rogers' bill that would also make the Albuquerque minimum wage for tipped employees consistent with the state's minimum. Albuquerque's current minimum wage for tipped employees is \$7.20, but the state's minimum is \$3. This could result in a loss of pay for tipped employees if employers choose to implement the reduction. Five members of the community spoke in favor of Councilor Grout's amendment. All five were restaurant owners.

Councilor Rogers moved to withdraw her bill, but this attempt was voted down. Councilor Peña moved that vote on the bill be deferred to the August 19th meeting because the amendment reducing the minimum wage for tipped employees had not previously been announced and those potentially impacted had no time to speak against it. The deferral motion passed by a vote of five in favor (Baca, Bassan, Fiebelkorn, Peña, Rogers) and four opposed (Champine, Grout, Lewis, Sanchez). Link to legislation: [O-24-21](#)

Bike and Scooter Rentals

Councilors unanimously voted to pass an ordinance reducing fees for shared bike and scooter businesses to operate in the city. The ordinance outlines fees, maintenance requirements, and tracking of the bikes/scooters. Six people spoke in favor of the ordinance, including a representative of a major rental business; and no one spoke against it. Councilor Fiebelkorn, who introduced the bill said she expected a rental operator to apply within the week if this passed. Link to legislation: [O-24-23](#)