

**Observer Corps Report – Albuquerque City Council meeting
15 May/5 June 2023
Mary Mulvany/Janet Kirkpatrick**

Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative – Update. At the June 5th meeting councilors voted unanimously to place a resolution on the June 21st agenda which, if passed, would approve the Joint Powers Agreement to establish the Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative with Bernalillo County.

Outcome of Previous Council Action:

Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Air Quality Control Board (AQCB)

R-23-128. At the May 1 meeting the council approved a resolution declaring a position on AQCB's Petition 2022-3. The petition would change the AQCB's rules to require consideration of health, environmental, and equity impacts when evaluating permit applications. The resolution was sent to the mayor for signature or veto. As explained by city staff at the May 15th council meeting the mayor signed a letter approving the resolution, but the signed resolution was not properly delivered to city council. Because the proper procedure was not followed, it is recorded as not signed by the mayor. The resolution was enacted because it was not vetoed.

[R-23-128 Text](#)

May 15/June5 Discussions and Actions:

ABQ Ride/Transit

At the May 15 meeting council members engaged in discussion of whether the Zero Fares program contributes to crime and safety concerns on the bus. APD Chief Medina shared that during a recent shoplifting sting (Operation Sticky Fingers) one third of the people arrested used the bus to get to and from the stores.

The ABQ Ride director shared that staffing shortages include a 36% vacancy rate for drivers and a 70% vacancy rate for vehicle maintenance positions.

Housing

O-22-54. Amendments to Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO). This ordinance includes proposed zoning changes as part of the Housing Forward Initiative. Changes include allowing duplex and detached accessory dwelling units in R-1 zoned residential areas, allowing only limited kitchens in dwelling units, amending height restrictions, and reducing parking space requirements. Forty-six members of the public spoke in favor of this ordinance and 25 spoke against it. Those in favor spoke of the need to increase affordable housing. Those opposed mentioned the accessory dwelling units (casitas) would ruin the character of neighborhoods and that the proposal was not sufficiently studied. The council voted to postpone the vote on the IDO amendment until the June 21st meeting. [O-22-54 Text](#)

Change to City Council/City Manager Government Format

P-23-1. Proposition to place on the November 2023 ballot a change to the city's form of government. This would change the current city council/mayor format to a city council/city manager format. Under the city council/city manager format the mayor would sit on the city council and a professional city manager would be appointed by the council. Councilors Grout and Sanchez put forth the proposition. Councilors discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the two systems. Two members of the public spoke in favor of the proposed city

council/manager form of government. Four members of the public spoke in favor of retaining the current city council/mayor form of government.

Prof. Tim Krebs from the political science dept at UNM spoke on the disadvantages of the council/city manager form of city government:

1. It puts executive power into the hands of an unelected city manager.
2. Large cities need a strong mayor. Of the cities in the US with populations over 500,000 all but 14 have council/mayor form of government.
3. Council/mayor forms produce more citizen engagement.
4. Minority voters participation falls off with council/manager government.

Proponents of the council/city manager form of city government pointed out that the council/mayor system is less efficient because the city administration does not work collaboratively with the council. They also pointed out that there is greater continuity with a council/city manager because programs would not be subject to the differing priorities of each mayoral administration. Additionally, senior staff positions would be hired rather than political appointees who depart with the changing administration.

The deadline to get the issue on the ballot is August 29th. The city administration encouraged the council to make a decision prior to the council's July hiatus. [P-23-1 Text](#)

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