

Los Alamos County Parks & Recreation Board Meeting Update - September 2024

By James Wernicke
Parks & Recreation Board Chair



The Rose Garden would be more aesthetically pleasing protected with a fence than wire cages.

NOTE: The October Parks & Rec Board meeting has been canceled. The next meeting will be on November 14, 2024.

The September 2024 Los Alamos County Parks & Recreation Board meeting began with public comments addressing concerns over difficulties with the gate at the North Mesa RV lot storage and a request for an electronic gate, citing safety issues and rising rental fees over the years. Additional public comments received before the meeting noted grass clippings covering

cemetery memorial markers and bench damage at Ashley Pond. County staff are addressing these issues.

Rose Garden Deer-Proof Fence Proposal

Kersti Rock from the Los Alamos Garden Club proposed installing a [deer-proof fence](#) around the Los Alamos Memorial Rose Garden. Established in 1956, the garden has suffered significant damage due to an increase in the local deer population, particularly since recent wildfires have driven wildlife into town. The current solution of using wire cages to protect the roses is labor-intensive and unsightly. Rock proposed a more permanent solution: an eight-foot-high steel fence designed to blend with the garden's aesthetics while providing durable protection. The estimated cost for the project is \$42,000. The proposal has been approved by both the Los Alamos Historic Preservation Advisory Board and the State Historic Preservation Division. The Board supported the project, emphasizing the importance of preserving the garden as a historical and community asset.

End-of-Year Review

CSD Senior Management Analyst Chelsea Ashcraft provided an [end-of-year review](#), highlighting CSD's accomplishments in FY2024. Key achievements included the county's full compliance with [CAPRA accreditation standards](#), improvements to [playgrounds](#) and [athletic fields](#), [golf course renovations](#), and completion of the [White Rock skatepark](#). The department also expanded its offerings in social services, including a youth opioid prevention summit and new community health initiatives. Additionally, the department made significant strides in accessibility improvements, environmental stewardship, public engagement efforts, and extensive volunteer engagement, totaling over 11,500 hours.

The department will focus on several key projects, including developing a master plan for the North Mesa Recreation Area. Other [upcoming projects](#) include the [Brewer Arena renovation](#), continued ADA accessibility improvements, and efforts to enhance recreational offerings for residents. The department also plans to continue engaging the community in these discussions to ensure that future projects reflect the needs and desires of Los Alamos residents.

BMX Track Project and Future Biking Facilities

CSD Director Cory Styron gave an update on the [BMX track project](#). Initially approved by the county in 2019 with a budget of \$100,000, the BMX track project has faced several challenges. The track would need to be staffed and managed to meet current standards, significantly increasing ongoing costs. Recent public meetings showed limited support for the project. Given the high costs of building and maintaining a BMX track—estimated to be close to \$1 million—the Board discussed the possibility of shelving the project in its current form.

However, there was strong support for exploring alternatives such as a pump track or mountain bike skills park, which could offer similar recreational opportunities without the high operational costs. These facilities would also cater to a broader range of users. The Board emphasized the importance of community engagement in determining the best location and design for new

biking facilities, ensuring minimal conflict with other recreational users, particularly the nearby stables.

Stable Rules and Regulations Update

The Board also reviewed a proposed update to the [stables rules and regulations](#), specifically regarding the definition of adequate animal shelter. The new rule specifies that all equines must have access to a weatherproof roof large enough to cover them from sun, rain, wind, and snow. The rule also requires that the ground under the shelter remains free of constant mud or standing water and that a windbreak be provided to shield the animals from adverse weather. This clarification was developed in response to concerns about inconsistent shelter standards and aims to ensure more humane treatment for all animals housed at the stables. The Board supported the update, which will help enforce more consistent animal care at the stables.

Chair Updates

Chair Wernicke shared updates on recent events and community involvement. They praised the success of the White Rock skatepark, particularly for beginners, and highlighted volunteer efforts, including the trimming of locust on Mitchell Trail. They also expressed interest in unique projects for trails, such as interactive natural features, to attract more users to lesser-known areas. Upcoming events such as Ullr Fest, the Homecoming Parade, and Public Lands Day were also mentioned.

Staff Updates

Recreation Superintendent Katherine Hudspeth provided updates on various projects, including the [Brewer Arena ADA audit](#), the ongoing work at the golf course, [Fall Activity Guide](#), outreach events at the state fair and Balloon Fiesta, and preparations for [Halloween events](#). Progress on Ashley Pond shade structures and the ice rink was also reported. Additionally, the staff emphasized the importance of upcoming volunteer projects related to open space and trails. Visit volunteerlosalamos.org to sign up.

Working Group Updates

The [Los Alamos Open Space & Trails \(LOSTWG\)](#) recruited one new member and two potential members, after delays due to working group status uncertainty. They sought public input for the Trails and Open Space Plan, contacting the Open Space Specialist and Sites Southwest for updates and publicizing a community meeting. LOSTWG developed a County Adopt-a-Trail program and a [trail assessment reporting form](#), which was tested on two trails. They also participated in a volunteer trail work party and identified a Scotch thistle infestation, which was removed by the Youth Conservation Corps following their urgent request.

The [Equestrian & Livestock Working Group \(ELWG\)](#) has made progress in recruiting new members but noted potential volunteers are hesitant due to unclear responsibilities. They submitted recommendations on the Boards and Commissions Handbook and began reviewing County website information, though accessing and sharing this data has been challenging.

ELWG plans to review arena rules and address conflicts between arena use policies and other events. Members have been involved in county activities, such as the Baling Twine Working Group and BMX track discussions. ELWG requested more flexibility to respond to issues as they arise rather than waiting for assigned tasks. Chair Wernicke formally tasked ELWG with responding to issues as they arise while working closely with staff and board liaisons.

Council Liaison Communications

Council Liaison Ryti commented on their experiences with the BMX track project from 2019 and the importance of ensuring community representation. They also mentioned [affordable housing ordinance updates](#), a quality of health survey, ecomment, the new road diet, recreation access through Los Alamos Canyon, and the strategic planning session scheduled for November.

In conclusion, the September 2024 Parks & Recreation Board meeting underscored the department's commitment to improving the quality of life in the county. The discussion on the BMX track and future biking facilities highlighted a shift in focus towards more accessible and sustainable recreational options, ensuring that future projects align with community needs. Due to staff scheduling conflicts, there will be no Parks & Recreation Board meeting in October. The Board will meet on November 2 for a special tour to several parks and recreational facilities across the county.

This article was written with the assistance of an AI language model to enhance the clarity and cohesiveness of the author's original work.