

Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative

Thursday, June 26, 2025

3:00pm

Mid Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) Board Room

809 Copper Ave NW, Albuquerque NM 87102

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

3. Approval of Agenda

4. Approval of Minutes for Meeting- June 2, 2025

5. Discussion item:

- Report from Chair Freedman on contract negotiations with candidate for Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative Planning & Operations Director.

6. Announcement of July Meeting

7. Adjourn

This is an in-person meeting with a Hybrid option

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1 **Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative**

2 Monday, June 2, 2025

3 11:30 a.m.

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6 **Mid Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) Board Room**

7 **809 Copper Ave NW**

8 **ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87102**

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12 **A P P E A R A N C E S**

13
14 TALIA FREEDMAN, Chair

15 DAN MAJEWSKI, Vice Chair

16 IAN ROBERTSON, Secretary

17 LAWRENCE RAEL, Member

18 STEVEN ANAYA, Member

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20
21
22 BEFORE: PAUL BACA PROFESSIONAL COURT REPORTERS

23 500 4th Street, Northwest, Suite 105

24 Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102

25 TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

1 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Yeah, so we're going to call
2 the meeting to order. We'll start with roll call. I'm
3 Chair Talia Freedman.

4 VICE CHAIR MAJEWSKI: Vice Chair Dan
5 Majewski.

6 COMMISSIONER RAEL: Member Lawrence Rael.

7 COMMISSIONER ANAYA: Member Steve Anaya.

8 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Great. Do we have an
9 approval of the agenda? Anyone? Second. All those in
10 favor? Aye. Approval of meetings from the April 25th and
11 May 5th meetings?

12 COMMISSIONER RAEL: I move approval.

13 COMMISSIONER ANAYA: Second.

14 CHAIR FREEDMAN: All those in favor? Aye.

15 ALL: Aye.

16 CHAIR FREEDMAN: And we're going to have a
17 moment for Public Comment with two-minute limit per
18 person. I don't know that anyone has any comments, but --

19 Okay, we're going to move on with our
20 interview of Yasmine Armstrong. Hi, Yasmine.

21 MS. ARMSTRONG: Hi, very nice to see you.
22 Thank you very much for letting me join via Zoom today.

23 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Of course, you're welcome.
24 First question, am I pronouncing your name correctly?

1 MS. ARMSTRONG: Yes, thank you very much for
2 asking.

3 CHAIR FREEDMAN: You're welcome. From Talia
4 to Yasmine, I see you.

5 MS. ARMSTRONG: Understand.

6 CHAIR FREEDMAN: So, I think we'll just open
7 it up to -- first, if you would like to make a couple
8 comments, tell us what you'd like to about yourself, and
9 then we'll have some questions for you.

10 MS. ARMSTRONG: Sounds great. Thank you all
11 again. I'm Yasmine Armstrong. I think I'll start with kind
12 of giving you guys a quick rundown of what really
13 motivates me just in my professional career. And it's
14 really entrepreneurship and building incredible things,
15 including systems, communities, and investing in the
16 places that I live.

17 So I have built organizations and
18 sustainable processes for both public and private
19 partnerships. I have done that across my career. I have
20 worked across congressional lines, legislative lines.
21 I've raised money from both the state and our federal
22 congressional delegation.

23 I mean, at the end of the day, my passion is
24 really going into communities and building strong,
25 healthier communities. And that can be in different areas

1 and in different industries. But that's been really the
2 hallmark of my career is being the entrepreneur that
3 starts things and is able to grow sustainable projects
4 and organizations.

5 And that's really what gets me excited and
6 what I'm really committed to. Happy to walk through my
7 resume in more detail, but I really think that's kind of
8 the best way to start the conversation.

9 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Great. Thank you so much. I
10 think I'm just going to open it up and see if anyone has
11 any specific questions they want to start off with for
12 Yasmine. I think we've all reviewed your resume. Anybody
13 have specific burning questions initially? I have a
14 couple of my own.

15 COMMISSIONER ANAYA: Well, I think, Yasmine,
16 Commissioner Steve Anaya.

17 MS. ARMSTRONG: Hi, nice to see you.

18 COMMISSIONER ANAYA: And, you know, this
19 organization is a brand-new entity, a brand-new
20 collaboration between the county and the city. And so
21 this entity will be starting off brand new, trying to get
22 things in order here. So obviously, it's going to be you
23 and at some point, hopefully, you and some staff, if
24 you're successful here.

1 And so, I guess in knowing that, tell me a
2 little bit about how you would kind of approach it,
3 knowing that it's -- in a lot of places you go in and you
4 got staff to help you with something. And now it'll start
5 off being one person and then going from there. Can you
6 kind of tell us a little bit how you kind of approach
7 that?

8 MS. ARMSTRONG: Sure, Commissioner. I can
9 give lots of examples and scenarios in which I've done
10 that. So, for example, when I was recruited by Kathy
11 Winograd to start the CNM stimulus center, she brought me
12 in to really be the leader in the entrepreneurship
13 division. And it was just me in the beginning, which was
14 really fun. And you had the support of CNM on one side.

15 But we were trying to build an entirely new
16 idea and vision for the university to have these
17 entrepreneurship programs that were helping young
18 entrepreneurs, particularly in the South Valley. And so
19 that is something that I actually really enjoy and do
20 really well.

21 One of the things I look forward to is I
22 think it's really interesting to have a city and county
23 partnership. That seems to make a lot of sense. I know
24 both have done a lot of work. Both the city and the
25 county have done a lot of work on affordable housing.

1 But to make sure that they're talking to
2 each other and doing things in collaboration, I think
3 will really move this whole affordable housing initiative
4 forward. I mean, I like building things from the ground
5 up. It's what I enjoy. I like putting together the
6 strategic plan in collaboration, obviously, with all the
7 stakeholders. I like looking at and seeing what staffing
8 do we really need? What is really going to move the ball
9 forward? What areas of expertise do we need on the team
10 to really make the project successful?

11 So it's something I've done throughout my
12 career and it's something I really enjoy doing. I don't
13 have any concerns about starting off by myself and then
14 building up the organization. Everything from creating
15 systemic processes to making sure that the collaboration
16 and the communication is happening. Part of my background
17 is marketing and communications.

18 So making sure that we are interfacing with
19 the public in ways that are appropriate, as well as
20 getting the feedback that that you all would like to
21 have. And those are all things that are within my skill
22 set. And I enjoy doing that kind of work.

23 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Great. You were the Deputy
24 Director at the Regional Coalition of LANL communities.
25 That sounds very much like bringing different groups

1 together that need to communicate in a certain way
2 together and collaborate.

3 Can you talk a little bit about that and
4 maybe how you overcame any challenges that might have
5 been there in that kind of collaborative environment?

6 MS. ARMSTRONG: Sure. So that's a great
7 question, Talia. And that was really interesting work.
8 Because we were dealing with communities from Los Alamos
9 up to Española up to Taos that all had concerns with the
10 impact that LANL had on their communities.

11 And our goal -- and we held quarterly
12 meetings with elected officials from both the city and
13 the county from every single one of those areas. So our
14 goal was to bring all of those folks together to move
15 forward with common goals that we received input from all
16 of those members and from all of those communities.

17 We went across northern New Mexico and held
18 town halls and every community to get feedback from the
19 members of the community, as well as the elected
20 officials. It was quite similar in being able to bring
21 everyone to the table.

22 I think one of the things -- the biggest
23 takeaway that I learned there is that everybody had
24 important input and everyone wanted to be heard. And
25 really, our job was facilitators of that, right. And to

1 understand what each community needed and what they were
2 concerned about with LANL's impact on their community.

3 And they were different, as you can imagine.
4 They were different. And so that was also interesting. We
5 also coordinated trips for this entire group to go out to
6 Washington, D.C. to talk with our congressional
7 delegation about needs, about potential legislation that
8 they wanted for LANL to support their communities.

9 So we did all of that work. It was
10 incredibly rewarding. But there were times that were
11 challenging just because there were differing
12 expectations and differing needs amongst the communities.
13 But we navigated it incredibly well, and we were very
14 successful while we held that contract.

15 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Great. Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER RAEL: Yes, I'm interested in
17 knowing a little bit more about your work in Santa Fe
18 with the Governor and the Board of Finance and the
19 legislature, just because one of the successes that we'll
20 need to -- well that we want to have is obviously is
21 engaging the legislature for additional funding, as
22 hopefully as we spend what we have, but also ensuring
23 that there's good communication to create a regional
24 collaboration with Bernalillo County.

1 So tell us a little bit about your
2 experiences with that and any insight you might have in
3 terms of how you think we might be successful going
4 forward.

5 MS. ARMSTRONG: Sure. So, you know, I began
6 my career actually working directly in the governor's
7 office, and so I was doing communications work
8 specifically for Governor Bill Richardson. And so that
9 was a really fantastic opportunity to get to work not
10 only across state agencies, but also with the
11 legislature.

12 And there's always some interesting tension
13 between the governor's office and legislators. But at
14 that point in my career was fantastic because I really
15 learned how to communicate really well with legislators,
16 not only articulating what the governor's priorities
17 were, but also understanding what their priorities were.

18 And that actual skill set has carried out
19 throughout my career. So most recently I am the Chief
20 Development Officer for Casa Kids in Roswell, New Mexico.
21 And I was able to secure two hundred thousand dollars
22 from the legislature to be to launch a whole new trauma
23 informed program because we work with abused and
24 neglected kids.

1 So, the ability to communicate with
2 legislators, to be able to have those relationships, to
3 understand that the relationships are incredibly
4 important when you're trying to get anything done in
5 Santa Fe was instilled in me very early on in my career.
6 And it is something that I have carried on since then.

7 The thing I love about New Mexico is
8 everyone is accessible and everyone is available, but
9 it's your job to make sure you put in the work so that
10 those relationships continue.

11 COMMISSIONER RAEL: Very good.

12 VICE CHAIR MAJEWSKI: Hi, Yasmine, thanks for
13 your time today. I'm Commissioner Majewski. Something
14 that does stand out in here is I don't see a ton of
15 housing specific experience. This is like very
16 specifically focused on housing.

17 So, yeah, just curious if you wanted to
18 share your thoughts on that or share maybe any housing
19 experience that maybe isn't reflected here on your
20 resume.

21 MS. ARMSTRONG: Sure. So recently, as I said,
22 when I've been the Chief Development Officer for Casa
23 Kids, we've been working closely with CYFD because as you
24 can imagine, there is child abuse and trauma and neglect
25 sometimes associated with homelessness.

1 So one of the programs that I went after as
2 the Chief Development Officer and was able to secure for
3 our organization was keeping families together. And it is
4 a program focused solely on families who are not yet
5 homeless but have the markers for homelessness.

6 And so what we do is we actually have an
7 extensive program working with our families to provide --
8 so, for example, a family will come to us and maybe
9 initially we provide 100 percent of the rent and then
10 they have to participate in our programs in very
11 specified ways.

12 And then we help them get financial literacy
13 resources. We help them do job hunting and do job skills.
14 And then slowly we reduce the amount of money, for
15 example, that we pay for rent for them.

16 What I can tell you in this process has
17 become quite clear to me that affordable housing is a
18 statewide problem. It is not just in Albuquerque and
19 Bernalillo County because we have had difficulty working
20 with landlords, securing housing for the families that we
21 are working with.

22 In looking at some of the work that has been
23 done by some of the other housing organizations in
24 Bernalillo County and the city of Albuquerque, I think
25 that there's still a lot of work to do. And I think that

1 the collaboration between the county and the city is the
2 way to move it forward.

3 So my experience, while it hasn't been
4 primarily in housing, I have some exposure and I think
5 it's a huge issue for Albuquerque and Bernalillo County.
6 And so I think this is really worthwhile and a place that
7 we should absolutely be putting a lot of time and energy.

8 VICE CHAIR MAJEWSKI: Thank you.

9 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Great. Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER RAEL: Maybe one other follow-
11 up, Yasmine, just in a practical sense. Tell us a little
12 bit about relationship building amongst city and county
13 governments, and the work. And just from, again, going
14 back to your respective position in the Senate. I mean,
15 you saw some of that occur with Board of Finance and
16 other, or legislature, etcetera, that you had to work
17 with when you were with the governor. What's the secret
18 sauce in your mind? I suspect it's relationship building,
19 but nothing you're able to [inaudible 0:14:17].

20 MS. ARMSTRONG: I mean, I think it's what I
21 what I learned my first week working in Governor
22 Richardson's office. People want to see the whites of
23 your eyes. But part of it is that relationship building
24 and being in the room with folks and being at all of the
25 important meetings and making sure that you're showing up

1 and making sure that you have a presence and that the
2 person in this position will represent what the
3 Commission wants incredibly well.

4 So that also means good communication
5 skills, being able to articulate what the Commission
6 wants this this regional housing coalition to really do
7 and be able to communicate that really well across the
8 board. But part of it is just being there in person and
9 having those relationships and talking with folks.

10 I mean, that is one of the most fun parts of
11 the work that I did when I worked in the governor's
12 office, because there's some incredible people across New
13 Mexico and I really enjoy that piece of the work.

14 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Great. Thank you so much.
15 And do you have any questions now? Well, I think if we
16 don't have any other questions, thank you so much. We're
17 going to be going into closed session after this. And
18 then -- I do actually sorry, have one question. Do you
19 have any very specific salary expectations going into
20 this?

21 MS. ARMSTRONG: Sure. Great, great question.
22 So based on my experience and the work that I've been
23 doing and all of that. I'm probably looking in the range
24 of 130, 140 is the range of salary that I would that I am
25 looking for at this point.

1 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Okay. All right. Well,
2 that's good to know. We're going to -- like I said, we're
3 going to go into closed session. And then I will be
4 reaching out to you in the coming days.

5 MS. ARMSTRONG: Sounds great. Thank you all
6 so much for allowing me this time. I really enjoyed
7 talking with all of you.

8 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Of course. And actually, do
9 you have any other questions for us?

10 MS. ARMSTRONG: I do have a quick question.
11 So, in kind of reviewing the information, the scope of
12 the job and all of that, has the Commission set forth --
13 I know there are goals, but is the strategic plan in
14 place yet? Or is that something that would be the
15 responsibility of the person in this role to really
16 develop?

17 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Yeah, that's also an
18 important question. So we do not have a fleshed out
19 strategic plan. We have obtained some very good clarity
20 on what we can and can't do at this point with a
21 consultant. So really important. And I think the main
22 thing to know is right now, the primary activities that
23 we'll be able to engage in are research, education,
24 reaching out to stakeholders, talking to city council and
25 county commission and the legislature and governor's

1 office about what the needs are and what the objectives
2 are.

3 But I think a lot of it will be research,
4 education, public relations, community outreach and
5 fostering that collaboration. It will currently not be
6 actual development of housing.

7 MS. ARMSTRONG: Got it. Well, that sounds
8 very exciting. So that sounds great.

9 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Great. Well, thank you so
10 much.

11 COMMISSIONER ANAYA: Yasmine, we do have kind
12 of a framework, as Talia said, our Chair. We've got a
13 framework we've been kind of working with the last the
14 last couple of months that actually is a pretty good
15 framework. If you're successful, how soon could you
16 start?

17 MS. ARMSTRONG: Sure. That's actually a great
18 question. So I am in the process of moving from Roswell,
19 New Mexico, up to Albuquerque. So beginning of July would
20 probably make the most sense just based on that. But if
21 you needed me to start sooner or just doing like meetings
22 and stuff like that, I could absolutely consider that.

23 But we are we're in the process of moving
24 back home to Albuquerque, which we are very excited
25 about.

1 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Great. Sounds good.

2 COMMISSIONER RAEL: And Yasine, I guess maybe
3 a follow up on both of those points. Kelly O'Donnell is
4 the consultant we hired, and I think you've worked with
5 Kelly.

6 MS. ARMSTRONG: I love Kelly. Yeah, she's
7 fantastic. I worked with her when I worked for Governor
8 Richardson.

9 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Great.

10 COMMISSIONER RAEL: Right. And so she's a
11 really good resource as it relates to just what's
12 happened here in the last three or four or five months of
13 our [inaudible 0:18:44].

14 MS. ARMSTRONG: Okay, fantastic.

15 COMMISSIONER RAEL: So it'll be good to have
16 you and Kelly knowing each other and knowing the work
17 that you both have done would be helpful. As we
18 deliberate the decision today. Anyway, thank you very
19 much.

20 MS. ARMSTRONG: Okay. Great. Yes. Thank you.

21 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Thank you so much. We will
22 be in touch.

23 MS. ARMSTRONG: All right. Thank you all.

24 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Okay. We are going to go
25 into closed session. So I have to read my little speech,

1 I move that the committee convene in closed session to
2 discuss the qualified applicants for the position of
3 Executive Director. As authorized by the Limited
4 Personnel Matters exception of the Open Meetings Act
5 contained in Section 10-5-182 of that Act. Do I have a
6 second?

7 COMMISSIONER ANAYA: Second.

8 CHAIR FREEDMAN: This requires a roll call
9 vote. I will call the name of each member present and
10 please vote when your name is called. Talia Friedman
11 Chair. Dan Majewski. I mean, aye. Dan Majewski.

12 VICE CHAIR MAJEWSKI: Aye.

13 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Ian Robertson.

14 SECRETARY ROBERTSON: Aye.

15 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Lawrence Rael.

16 COMMISSIONER RAEL: Aye

17 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Steven Anaya.

18 COMMISSIONER ANAYA: Aye.

19 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Okay. The motion having
20 passed, we will now retire to closed session. So then I
21 think we just pause.

22 Okay. So we're returning into open session.
23 So the time is now 12:00, actually like 11 59. I move
24 that we return to open session. The discussion which took
25 place during the closed session was limited to the

1 Personnel Matters Exception of the Open Meetings Act
2 contained in Section 10-15-1 H2 of the Open Meetings Act.

3 Do I have a second to approve the return to
4 open session.

5 COMMISSIONER ANAYA: Second.

6 CHAIR FREEDMAN: And to improve this
7 statement regarding the contents of the discussion? We
8 have a second from Steve. Roll call. Talia Friedman. Aye.
9 Dan Majewski.

10 VICE CHAIR MAJEWSKI: Aye.

11 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Ian Robertson.

12 SECRETARY ROBERTSON: Aye.

13 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Lawrence Rael.

14 COMMISSIONER RAEL: Aye.

15 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Steven Anaya.

16 COMMISSIONER ANAYA: Yes.

17 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Okay. We are back. And now,
18 do I have a motion to authorize me, as the Chair, to
19 enter contract negotiations with the qualified applicants
20 for the position of Executive Director?

21 COMMISSIONER RAEL: I so motion.

22 SECRETARY ROBERTSON: Second.

23 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Okay. All those in favor.
24 Aye.

25 ALL: Aye.

1 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Awesome. That is
2 announcement of the next meeting is --

3 COMMISSIONER RAEL: Before we adjourn, you
4 will raise with us with us as it relates to how the
5 recommendations go. Is that right?

6 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Yes. So, in terms of not
7 risking a rolling quorum, what I will do is email our
8 contacts through the county and -- Mr. Cog, and then they
9 can send an announcement out to everyone.

10 COMMISSIONER RAEL: Perfect. Okay, great.

11 SECRETARY ROBERTSON: Yeah, it looks like our
12 next scheduled meeting will be on the 26th, Thursday, the
13 26th.

14 CHAIR FREEDMAN: Yes. So, thank you. So, next
15 scheduled meeting is June, Thursday, the 26th at 3:00
16 p.m. at Mr. Cog and on Zoom. And with that, we are
17 adjourned.

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