

**Minutes of the
Santa Fe County
Independent Salary Commission
Special Meeting
June 3, 2026
Santa Fe, New Mexico**

This meeting of the Santa Fe County Independent Salary Commission (“Commission or ISC”) was called to order at approximately 1:32 PM MDT by Chair Clifford M. Rees on the above-cited date at the Santa Fe County Administration Building, Old Santa Fe Trail Conference Room, 240 Grant Avenue, Santa Fe, NM.

This meeting was conducted as hybrid with people attending in person and online.

A quorum was achieved with the following members present:

Members Present:

Anna Hamilton
Chris Graeser (virtually)
Cliff Rees
Laura Liswood
Gus Martinez (excused)

Staff Present:

Valerie Aghaei Park
Sara Smith
Walker Boyd

C. Approval of Agenda.

The proposed agenda was adopted by unanimous vote following a motion by Commissioner Hamilton, seconded by Commissioner Liswood. **Motion unanimously adopted.**

D. Approval of March 4, 2026, Commission Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve minutes by Commissioner Hamilton, second by Commissioner Liswood. **Motion unanimously adopted.**

2. Miscellaneous Action Items

A. Discussion and Potential Adoption of a 2026 Independent Salary Commission Work Plan

Chair Rees referenced the draft work plan which was distributed to the Commission prior to the meeting and posted on the County Calendar event. He gave a brief background of the ISC’s work thus far.

Commissioner Hamilton asked Chair Rees if there will be an opportunity to discuss content of the work plan or whether it should be voted on first.

Commissioner Hamilton said regarding the fifth bullet of the revolving door that she suggests a revision to the wording to state “consider” instead of “addressing the issue.”

Chair Rees asked whether the Commission is comfortable with the draft plan as written or whether we are acting outside of our scope of work.

Commissioner Liswood asked County Attorney Boyd to remind them what their scope of work is as outlined in Santa Fe County Resolution No. 2025-054, Paragraphs 7-10. He stated that to the extent that the Commission adopts a work plan that includes studying job qualifications for each non-Commissioner elected, the answer may be that the requirements are set by State Legislature. The Commission could make recommendations that the State Legislature could consider for County Electeds’ salary limits.

Chair Rees suggested that the work plan be more detailed and suggested edits to the work plan that would reference state statutory and constitutional limitations.

Commissioner Hamilton noted that all the recommendations are related to non-Commissioner positions and suggested that we apply recommendations and suggestions across the Board. She would like to ensure that they look at job qualifications and accountability for all elected officials – not just non-Commissioner elected officials.

Commissioner Liswood asked what the qualifications are to run for elected office in Santa Fe County.

Human Resources (“HR”) Director Valerie Park said that it’s simply to prove that they are registered to vote, live in Santa Fe County, and are at least 18 years of age at the time of the General Election.

Commissioner Liswood asked whether the County is wanting to change this.

Commissioner Hamilton stated that she would like to document what exists in other counties and states across the country; and welcomes the research to understand how this is handled elsewhere.

Commissioner Liswood suggested that Chair Rees draft a plan that identifies that gap areas.

Chair Rees stated that if the ISC identifies areas of research, the Commission could request that the Human Resources Division complete the research.

Chair Rees asked the County Attorney what the process is to remove an elected official.

Commissioner Liswood read out the portion of the Resolution that identifies the Commission’s duties to recommend salaries to the Board.

Commissioner Hamilton stated that the third, fourth, and final bullets on the draft work plan suggests that additional work is needed. She is concerned with the word “audit” in the third

bullet point: “Future audits to justify the recommended salaries for each Non-Commissioner.” She proposed changing this to “Future evaluations.”

Chair Rees asked Ms. Park whether elected officials receive evaluations.

Ms. Park: They do not.

Commissioner Liswood asked if anything on the work plan exposes the ISC to legal liability. She is concerned that the County would be subject to lawsuits.

County Attorney Boyd stated that the ISC can recommend what they’d like and would not subject the County to lawsuits. If the ISC recommended the Board to adopt an ordinance that requires the Sheriff to have a bachelor’s degree, he would advise the Board not to adopt the ordinance as it’s an authority that they do not currently have under New Mexico law.

Commissioner Hamilton stated that the public values County Commissioners for very different reasons – historical roots in the area, knowledge of traditional practices, education, etc.

Chair Rees asked the legal authority under NM law to remove a County Commissioner from office or take any kind of disciplinary action; same legal analysis for the non-Commissioner electeds. If recall is the remedy for a district attorney; what is the mechanism to address issues against Commissioners?

Commissioner Hamilton looked it up on AI during the meeting.

County Attorney Boyd stated Sections 10-4-1, et seq., NMSA 1978 addresses this question.

Chair Rees asked County Attorney Boyd whether there’s anything in the work plan that he believes is beyond the scope of their charge.

County Attorney Boyd noted two of the proposed work plan topics – official job accountability for each non-Commissioner elected official (bullet 2) and future audits (bullet 3) He can give more details on the removal of an elected official but the process does not involve the County Manager or the Board.

Chair Rees asked if it would be more productive to look at the work plan and identify what the ISC can do as opposed to what it can’t do.

Commissioner Liswood said in the process of recommending salaries, we ended up uncovering gaps and issues – there are no job role or responsibility identified for these positions.

Commissioner Hamilton suggested that the fourth and final bullets are within the ISC purview.

Commissioner Liswood agreed and stated that the second to last bullet is valid and important and that this could be recommended to be brought to the attention of the Board of

County Commissioners. She suggested that Ms. Park as HR Director could easily create a general roles and responsibilities document that describes what each elected office is responsible for.

Ms. Park agreed and said this is easy to complete.

Commissioner Liswood suggested that this could be provided to the newspaper and to the public to inform them as to what is expected and to potential elected hopefuls to understand what the job entails. She recommends delegating this to the HR Division Director.

Commissioner Graeser stated that he believes we are headed in the correct direction.

Chair Rees said that the work plan as drafted will require revisions between now and September 2, 2026. He acknowledged that the ISC recommendations are not due to the Board until December 2027; however, the Board may request additional information.

Discussion followed regarding the “revolving door” item on the work plan and it was determined via consensus that they would not address this in their work plan. Commissioner Liswood stated this should be removed from the work plan.

Chair Rees asked to see a revised version of the work plan based on today’s discussion.

Commissioner Hamilton motioned to retain the fourth and final bullets as the official work plan and the remaining bullets will be considered for recommendation to the Board and discussed at the next meeting.

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Graeser: Yes
Commissioner Hamilton: Yes
Commissioner Liswood: Yes
Commissioner Martinez: Excused
Chair Rees: Yes

Motion adopted.

B. Discussion and Potential Appointment of Two Additional Members Pursuant to County Resolution No. 2025-054. (Potential Action Items)

Chair Rees asked HR Director Aghaei Park whether there was a response to the March, 2026 recruitment public notice.

Ms. Park stated that there was no response from the public.

County Attorney Boyd stated the resolution identifies that there are 7 members and the existing members can appoint two additional members if the current membership is unable to fill

their positions. The Board appointed five members. The resolution contemplates up to seven. This Board has the authority to fill those vacancies but not the obligation. It is only in the event that the Board is unable to fill those positions.

Chair Rees said that we have made a good faith effort to fill the vacancies and we cannot draft people into these positions.

Commissioner Hamilton said that if the ISC is obliged to fill the positions, Ms. Smith and Ms. Park could go before the Board and explain what has been done to fill the positions

County Attorney Boyd read the resolution aloud and clarified that the language in the resolution actually is “may appoint.” He clarified that a quorum is the majority of the current appointed members. Paragraph 6 applies when there is a resignation of a current member. He stated that this is a moot point as there is no one asking to be appointed to the Commission.

Chair Rees asked how information is reported back to the Board on the activities of the ISC and membership of the ISC.

Commissioner Hamilton stated that County Attorney Boyd has made it clear that we do not need seven members. The ISC is obligated to report to the Board on the odd-numbered year and perhaps they could present the Board with a report at the end of this year on the activities and welcome direction from them as to whether additional members should be appointed.

Chair Rees stated that he thinks a five-member commission is ideal.

Commissioner Liswood suggested that we keep the recruitment solicitation on the ISC webpage as on ongoing open application.

C. Schedule the Next Independent Salary Commission Special Meeting

Wednesday, September 2, 2026, at 1:30 PM MDT.

Chair Rees motioned to hold the next Commission meeting on Wednesday, September 2, 2026 at 1:30 PM MDT. Commissioner Graeser seconded.

Motion was adopted unanimously.

3. Matters from the Public (Subject to Three (3) Minutes or Other Time Limit Imposed by the Chair)

Chris Mechels stated that the resolution the ISC is referencing is incorrect and is not the resolution that was adopted by the Board.

4. Adjournment

Commissioner Hamilton motioned to adjourn.

Chair Rees seconded.

Motion was adopted unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 2:57 PM MDT.

Approved by:

Clifford M. Rees, Chair, Santa Fe County Independent Salary Commission

Date: _____

Respectfully submitted by:

Sara Smith, Operations Manager, County Manager's Office

DRAFT