

NMWWA Executive Board Meeting

June 5, 2026

Teams Online

CALLED TO ORDER: President, Javier Gutierrez at 9:00 am.

ATTENDEES:

- Javier Gutierrez
- Craig Byers
- Alyssa Chavez
- Andres Montoya
- Virgil Taylor
- Gene Salazar
- Alejandro Salas
- Brian Bennon
- Deborah Carpenter
- Robert Hays
- Mike Lopez
- Rose Martinez
- Marissa Medina

MOTION TO ACCEPT PREVIOUS MINUTES:

1. Virgil Taylor
2. Craig Byers, Motion carried.

PRESIDENTS REPORT – Javier Gutierrez

In the president's report, Marissa Medina, the newly appointed administrative assistant, was introduced. Marissa joined the team on May 7th. She provided a brief overview of her background and expressed her positive experiences thus far in her role, highlighting her enthusiasm for collaborating with the team. There was a discussion regarding her contact information. The need for an emergency contact number was acknowledged, with assurances that this information will be handled confidentially. Javier and the Board extended a warm welcome to Marissa, along with an invitation for her to reach out for assistance whenever necessary.

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The next item on the agenda is the sponsorship program. This initiative aims to provide financial assistance in terms of sponsoring individuals in the water and wastewater field, particularly targeting those who are non-certified and may require financial assistance for training. The plan is to partner with WIOA to sponsor these non-certified individuals for tuition and training. The sponsorship will cover educational opportunities, such as a four-day school, while excluding expenses related to travel and accommodation. The program will primarily focus on two key demographics: current employees of water utilities who are not receiving funding for their training and individuals engaged in the WIOA program, encompassing both youth and adults. It is suggested that NMWWA sponsor a limited number of participants from the area the school will be held at and begin sponsoring at the upcoming short school scheduled for September. Additionally, it may be beneficial to establish a committee to oversee the implementation of this initiative. There is also a need for comprehensive outreach strategies to ensure that eligible candidates are informed about the available sponsorship opportunities. This program represents a valuable opportunity to enhance the skills of individuals in the water and wastewater sector while addressing training needs that are currently unmet.

Gene proposed initiating the development of an application tailored for the sponsorship criteria. In response, Javier recommended the formation of a committee dedicated to the "NMWWA Sponsorship Program." Gene and Alyssa volunteered to participate, ensuring that Javier remains informed about all relevant developments.

Gene Salazar proposed a motion to sponsor at least two individuals for tuition fees, excluding travel and accommodation costs, who are non-certified in the water and wastewater sector. These individuals must meet the criteria outlined in the application currently in progress. Craig Byers seconded the motion, and it was carried.

Javier stated that Rose and Robert Hayes are organizing a WC section workshop on July 8th and 9th in Grants, as the previously free McKinley County Training Center is unavailable. They are seeking instructors for the West Central training school to revitalize the WC section. A draft schedule has been shared, but they still need to finalize the instructor list. Rose is also seeking instructors for the upcoming Central school in September.

Javier discussed the status of the website rebuild, which had previously been tabled after restoring the site. Rose indicated that the proposed rebuild would cost approximately \$2,400 and would modernize the existing platform. Some board members expressed that the current website is functional and suggested that instead of a complete overhaul, updates could suffice. A proposal was made to invite Tech Solutions for a presentation at the next meeting to aid decision-making.

The need for regular updates to address outdated information on the website was also emphasized, with a proposal to dedicate whatever time needed for this task. Rose committed to coordinating with Marissa to ensure that the site, including meeting minutes, remains current. The board agreed to consider these points further before making any final decisions on the rebuilding of the website.

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EXECUTIVE MANAGER'S REPORT – Rose Martinez

During the last board meeting, a request was made to make a transfer to the savings account in the amount of \$30,000, which has since been addressed. Additionally, the office lease has been extended for two years, resulting in a new two-year lease period. This will require us to consider renewal options again in a couple of years, depending on the circumstances. The office rent remains at \$700.

The Northern School was successful. The RDC program attended the first day and conducted a mini operator forum and surveys which entailed information on a broader operator forum at the Santa Fe Community College to discuss operator barriers and funding. RDC also provided a meal on the first day, which contributed to a positive turnout. 96 people registered to the Northern school, including 7 exhibitors.

The "General Comments" from operators were presented to the Board and received positive feedback. There were remarks about the clarification of dual certification, suggesting that the registration process and schedule could benefit from clearer class arrangements for dual certification.

A suggestion was made to have laptops available at the schools that would assist the operators facilitate immediate certification submissions and build upon previous support efforts and providing resources during events can significantly boost attendees' confidence and competency.

Rose had requested the need to acquire a desktop computer for office use for Marissa, in addition to the two laptops currently utilized for instructional use. A quote for the desktop and/or laptop with docking station, dual monitors, additional costs associated with Microsoft licensing and purchasing options will need to be evaluated, including direct procurement from manufacturers such as Dell or HP, compared to retail outlets like Amazon or Best Buy. This evaluation will help weigh the advantages of warranties and customer service. The goal is to implement effective setups that will significantly improve overall productivity.

Following a comprehensive discussion, the Board has reached a consensus to approve the purchase of a computer for Marissa. This decision is made at her discretion to enhance her work efficiency in any manner she deems most effective. The total expenditure is not to exceed \$4,000.

A motion was presented by Andres Montoya to acquire a computer for office use, inclusive of all necessary accessories for Marissa Medina, not to exceed a budget of \$4,000. Craig Byers seconded the motion, which subsequently carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT & BUDGET SUMMARY – Gene Salazar

(See attached) Gene Salazar presented the financial report. A motion to accept the financial report as presented was made by Craig Byers. Motion seconded by Virgil Taylor, motion carried.

SCHOOL & WORKSHOP COMMITTEE REPORT– Javier Gutierrez

Javier discussed the development of a training curriculum for basic water and wastewater education, guided by the standards (NTK) set forth by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED). It is important for instructors to effectively address essential topics, such as disinfection, within the one-hour training format. However, flexibility may be allowed for instructors to divide the content into two parts if necessary. In order to support the instructors in their course planning, Javier suggested that specific sections of the NMED guidelines be provided alongside the curriculum. This will ensure that the classes are aligned with key educational objectives while maintaining efficient use of training time. J.J. also suggested emailing instructors the portion of the guidebook they will be teaching as these resources provide structured information to enhance the training.

Brian Bennon discussed upcoming changes in certification levels for water and wastewater operators in New Mexico. The current system combines levels for distribution, treatment, and collections, but there are plans to standardize and advance these categories from level one to four. The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) plans to draft rule changes and will engage training providers through focus groups and train-the-trainer programs. Brian addressed transparency and collaboration throughout this transition, with a commitment to support training and information sharing as the process unfolds.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES REPORT – (alternates with finance committee)

No Report

IET WATER PROGRAM REPORT – Alyssa Chavez

Alyssa provided an update on the IET Water Program report, which is not yet a final draft but is mostly complete aside from the inclusion of videos and images. She created a volunteer order to gather her own pictures and videos for calibration and sampling procedures. The main content is in the PowerPoint presentation, and she's willing to share it with JJ, Deborah, and others who are interested. Alyssa updated several sections to align with the latest EPA guidelines and addressed outdated quiz questions, noting some confusion about whether to include them as study material. She plans to check sample tests to ensure appropriate questions are covered. All corrections and updates are documented, and she emphasized that the wording has been significantly revised from its previous form. Alyssa anticipates having the final draft ready by next week and is waiting for Brian to review it for any necessary edits. She is open to scheduling another meeting to discuss.

Brian stated the materials Alyssa provided are extensive, and the review process is taking time. His feedback indicates they align well with previous discussions and are of high quality, with the PowerPoint containing over 200 slides. Alyssa mentioned that the updated criteria and resources have been particularly helpful for training wastewater operators for certification exams. There was a discussion about the potential for combining water and wastewater training, especially regarding sampling, lab safety, and disinfection processes, as some topics are relevant to both

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fields. However, it's noted that there are limitations due to the specific focus of certain trainings. A meeting is suggested in two to three weeks to discuss corrections and next steps, though there's no immediate rush as additional materials like pictures and videos are still needed. Waiting for further review from Terry and Brian is also proposed before proceeding.

SECTION PRESIDENT'S REPORT

CT SECTION: Craig Byers reported \$6,383.89 in savings and \$1,454.98 in checking, totaling approximately \$7,834.

SW SECTION: Due to technical difficulties, financials are based off the financial report emailed to Rose with \$28,083.58 in the checking account and \$2,188.18 in the savings. They have a workshop coming up this month and plan a golf tournament and a meet and greet at the workshop with the proceeds of the golf tournament to go to scholarships at the annual school in January.

NMED REPORT – Brian Bennon

Brian discussed several important updates from the operator forum held in Santa Fe. Notably, five new operator candidate guidebooks have been published and are now accessible on the NMED website under the section titled "Certification Exams, Renewal, and Equivalencies." This allows users to download materials for both drinking water and wastewater. Additionally, they have removed outdated criteria tables to streamline access to the guidebooks. The NMED has successfully concluded its training courses, which were designed to address certification requirements. The initial course demonstrated a 44% improvement in participant knowledge. Brian added that their team, consists of three staff members, is currently engaged with a variety of tasks. He anticipates the opening of two additional certification coordinator positions in the near future. As of now, there are 2,314 active certifications, including 140 individuals holding double Level 4 certifications and 193 with only water sample technician certifications. The NMED is actively involved in numerous initiatives.

Brian stated they are in the initial stages of collaborating with contractors to gather pertinent information as they prepare to commence a rulemaking process later this fall. Their efforts include surveying utility classification systems utilized across various states nationwide, aiming to identify commonalities among them. The subsequent phase of this initiative will involve developing a recommended model for measuring and establishing utility classifications. They will also conduct comparative analyses of this proposed model against existing systems. This process represents a crucial initial step in drafting the necessary revisions to the rules. They will communicate the findings of our survey and any relevant developments as they become available. Brian also shared his screen to show where to navigate to the main webpage dedicated to utility operator certification to explore the site together in order to find the "apply for exams" section. The NMWWA Board members offered their assistance in guiding operators to and through the NMED's website along with room fees and proctors for in person testing in the future when the in-person testing becomes available.

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DACC WATER TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM REPORT – Alejandro Salas

Alejandro stated he's coordinating with Brian and Santa Fe Community College regarding the upcoming changes and adjusting the curriculum for student certification. Brian stated they are working on standardizing water technician programs between Dona Ana and Santa Fe Community College.

OTHER BUSINESS

A suggestion was made to provide instructors with shirts featuring New Mexico Water and Wastewater logos during training sessions. Suggestions included collared shirts or polos, long sleeve button up and optional pockets with extra sizes ordered for new instructors, preferably black. They will get quotes for the shirts and aim to distribute them by September, with a follow-up discussion planned for August.

The Board discussed sending the nominations earlier so the touring committee doesn't travel during dangerous weather. Rose will work on a flyer and send out the nomination information as soon as possible.

The next NMWWA Executive Board meeting is scheduled for August 14, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:03 p.m. was made by Craig Byers. Motion seconded by Deborah Carpernter. Motion carried.