**New Mexico Civil Legal Services Commission**

Via Google Meets

April 16, 2025

New Mexico Civil Legal Services Commission Meeting Minutes

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call:**

Mark Fidel called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm, Wednesday, April 16, 2025. Commissioners present: Commissioner John Arango, Commissioner Mary Smith, Commissioner Julio Romero and Chairman Mark Fidel. A quorum was established.

1. **Approval of Agenda:**

Commissioner John Arango made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Mary Smith seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

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1. **Approval of Meeting Minutes of December 19, 2024, Commission Meeting:**

Commissioner John Arango made a motion to approve December 19, 2024, minutes. Commissioner Julio Romero seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

1. **Introduction of Guests:**

Mark introduced our new Commissioner Julio Romero. Chairman Mark Fidel acknowledged Commissioner Mary Smith will be leaving the end of this fiscal year.

Cristina Martinez, Special Services Bureau Chief; Sandra Ortega, DFA Program Manager; and Jeannette Gallegos, DFA LGD Deputy Director will be attending later in the meeting. Lisa Giandomenico, New Mexico Access to Justice Coordinator, Administrative Office of the Courts; Zachary Shandler, counsel to the Commission; Angelina Gonzales-Aller, Director of Advancement, Pegasus Legal Services; Bette Fleishman, Pegasus Legal Services for Children; Bonnie Escobar, Executive Director; Enlace Comunitario; Brwyn Downing, Executive Director, Senior Citizens Law Office; Karen Charim, DNA Peoples Legal Services; Diana Dorn-Jones, Executive Director, United South Broadway Corporation; Gary Housepian, Executive Director, Disability Rights New Mexico; Jennifer Landau, Executive Director, New Mexico Immigrant Law Center; Jesse Calero, New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty; Michelle Garcia, New Mexico Legal Aid; Rudy Sanchez, Executive Director, DNA People Legal Services, Sireesha Manne, Executive Director, New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty; Teague Gonzales, New Mexico Immigrant Law Center; Terrelene Massey, Executive Director, Southwest Women’s Law Center; Therese Yanan, Native American Disability Law Center.

1. **Review of FY2026 Budget:**

Commissioner John Arango stated the budget for FY26 will be 7.2 million dollars plus another 2 million dollars for a total of 9.2 million dollars. We also have 2 million dollars set aside for FY2027 and FY2028. We have in addition another 450,000.00 that we can draw out of the civil legal services fund, while still maintaining 200,000.00 in the fund to cover any shortfalls in filing fees. Jeannette shows the funding for FY26 is 9,240,000.00. John wanted to tell the Commission that the 2 million dollars is available in the current year 2025 or 2026.

1. **Review of possible use of excess FY2025 funds:**

Commissioner John Arango received a call from Immigrant Law Center that has 225 unaccompanied children they are representing and have just lost 1.5 million dollars which is a clear and immediate problem. They have spent all their civil legal services money. What they need is $150,000.00 which would help them get through the end of the fiscal year. Commissioner John Arango made a motion to make a withdrawal from the Civil Legal Servies Fund to cover the cost needed. Chairman Mark Fidel seconded the motion.

Commissioner Mary Smith has a concern, given the fact that the authority of this commission lies with the commission holding a properly convened public meeting. She is concerned that the provider reached out to one of the commissioners and asked for this to be considered. There are five commissioners and only one knew about this until five minutes ago. This situation excluded the other commissioners from any kind of serious consideration of the request. Commissioner Mary Smith is reluctant to support the motion given the fact that we have other providers who have other needs and who have also experienced cuts in federal funding. One of our providers is asking for money now with the excess funds that we may have and we don’t have any input from the other providers so with that, her inclination is not to support the motion because it is unfair and excludes the other providers from asking for additional funds. Commissioner Mary Smith asked if we could delay any action on this request until we have requests for additional funding from all our providers who are funded for FY2025. She is very uncomfortable taking that kind of step, she asked our counsel Zachary Shandler to weigh in on the legality of doing what’s being proposed. He is not prepared to issue a decision.

Chairman Mark Fidel asked Jeannette if the commission has a meeting on Monday 21st with the intention of reviewing and voting on requests that may come in by that date from any of the providers and we vote on that Monday, does that give the process enough time to be able to react by the 25th. Jeannette said probably not but would try to get it done.

Commissioner John Arango withdrew the motion and Chairman Mark Fidel who seconded it backed that yes.

1. **Discussion of next CLSC RFP (logistics not content):**

None

1. **Other Business:**

None

1. **Date for next Commission Meeting:**

The Commission agreed the next meeting will be held April time frame following the legislative session. April 21, 2025, 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm meeting.

1. Commissioner John Arango made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Julio Romero seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:09 pm.