

**NEW MEXICO HORSE RACING COMMISSION**  
**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**

Date: April 16, 2026

Place: NMRC Boardroom; 4900 Alameda Blvd., NE, Albuquerque, NM and on Microsoft Teams

Members Present: Chairman Billy Smith, Commissioner John Buffington, and Commissioner Bob Pitre.

NMRC Staff Participating: Executive Director Ismael Trejo, In-House Counsel Richard Bustamante, and Senior Paralegal David Dominguez.

<i>AGENDA ITEM</i>	<i>DISCUSSIONS/CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS</i>	<i>ACTION TAKEN</i>
<b>Public Session 1:</b> <b>I. Call to Order and Roll Call</b>	Meeting called to order at 9:02 a.m. by Chairman Smith. Roll call was taken and a quorum was present.	No Action Taken.
<b>II. Pledge of Allegiance</b>		Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
<b>III. Approval of Agenda</b>	Chairman Smith asked if there were any changes to the agenda today. No amendments were needed.	Motion to approve the agenda made by Commissioner Buffington. Commissioner Pitre seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.
<b>IV. Approval of Minutes:</b>	Chairman Smith asked if the minutes for the January 21, 2025, Special Meeting, February 04,	Motion to approve the January 21, 2025,

<i>AGENDA ITEM</i>	<i>DISCUSSIONS/CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS</i>	<i>ACTION TAKEN</i>
<p>A. Commission's January 21, 2025, Special Meeting</p> <p>B. Commission's February 04, 2025, Special Meeting</p> <p>C. Commission's February 28, 2025, Special Meeting</p> <p>D. Commission's April 23, 2025, Special Meeting</p> <p>E. Commission's March 19, 2026, Regular Meeting</p>	<p>2025, Special Meeting, February 28, 2025, Special Meeting, April 23, 2025, Special Meeting, and March 19, 2026, Special Meeting were reviewed, and if there were any changes. There were no changes.</p>	<p>minutes, February 04, 2025, minutes, February 28, 2025, minutes, April 23, 2025, minutes, and March 19, 2026, minutes made by Commissioner Buffington. Commissioner Pitre seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.</p>
<p><b>V. Commissioners' Reports</b></p>	<p>Chairman Smith recognized Zia Park's participation in helping Ruidoso Downs have its race meet. Chairman Smith also recognized the Downs at Albuquerque, Don Cook, and Paul Blanchard. Chairman Smith lastly recognized New Mexico State Senator George Munoz for obtaining the funding to run the race meet.</p>	<p>No Action Taken.</p>
<p><b>VI. Agency Director Reports</b></p> <p>A. NMRC Executive Director Report</p>	<p>Director Trejo discussed his attending of the ARCI annual meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana. The focus was on shifting culture, specifically with the quarter horse industry, and the goal to try to correct the optics that the public has with respect to quarter horse racing. Regarding drug testing, Director Trejo mentioned there is a program being developed that is going to use artificial intelligence to attempt to get ahead of what substances might be used by</p>	<p>No Action Taken.</p>

<i>AGENDA ITEM</i>	<i>DISCUSSIONS/CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS</i>	<i>ACTION TAKEN</i>
	<p>trainers, and to keep up with the illicit drug use in the horse racing industry. Another product that has come out is an alternative testing mechanism, which will cost \$3,000.00 a test. This process will be able to detect outlier drugs that a molecular structure may have changed. The test should make proof of improper drugs easier with the information it will give to testing laboratories. Director Trejo indicated the Commission will be participating in a committee that deals with paper training, following Director Trejo's presentation on paper training in Indianapolis. Director Trejo praised the Commission's investigators for their work identifying and prosecuting paper trainers.</p> <p>After a brief period of resolving Microsoft Teams technical difficulties, the meeting continued.</p> <p>Chairman Smith acknowledged Director Trejo on being voted the Regulator of the Year. Director Trejo acknowledged that he could not do it without all the Commission's staff, as they, too, deserve recognition.</p>	
<p><b>VII. NM Horse Breeder's Association Reports</b></p>	<p>There were additional technical difficulties, specifically, the audio picked up from New Mexico Horse Breeders' Association Director Mary Barber. As a result, not every word from Director Barber was heard on the recording.</p>	<p>No Action Taken.</p>

<i>AGENDA ITEM</i>	<i>DISCUSSIONS/CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS</i>	<i>ACTION TAKEN</i>
	<p>New Mexico Horse Breeders' Association Director Mary Barber reported the following: Through Sunday, April 05, 2026: Sunland Park had 86 thoroughbred overnights, 64 quarter horse overnights, 18 quarter horse trials, 12 thoroughbred stakes and 9 quarter horse stakes. The total contribution to the races came to \$1,841,000 dollars, resulting in \$63,000 dollars less than in 2025. There was an average of 3.94 races per day. There were 98 thoroughbreds and 91 quarter horses, and they were plus 45 for three-a-day. The average field size for thoroughbreds was 8.29. For the quarter horses, the average field size was 9.11, and the combined average field size was 8.64.</p>	
<p><b>VIII. Executive Session:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Martinez and Hernandez v. NMRC (Pending Litigation)</li> <li>B. Lynyle Benn (Licensing)</li> <li>C. Zia Park LLC v. NMRC and Western Gaming, LLC (Pending Litigation)</li> <li>D. San Juan Board of County Commissioners v. NMRC (Pending Litigation)</li> <li>E. Mescalero Apache Tribe v. NMRC (Pending Litigation)</li> </ul>	<p>Chairman Smith called for a motion to enter into executive session. Vice-Chairman Buffington moved for the Commission to enter into executive session to discuss the items listed in the agenda, pursuant to Sections 10-15-1H(1), H(3) and H(7) of the Open Meetings Act authorizing closed sessions for matters related to issuance, suspensions, renewal or revocation of a license; deliberations on adjudicatory proceedings and pending or threatened litigation.</p>	<p>Motion to enter into Executive Session made by Commissioner Buffington. Commissioner Pitre seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.</p>
<p><b>Public Session 2:</b> <b>IX. <u>Unfinished/New Business and/or Action Items:</u></b></p>		

<i>AGENDA ITEM</i>	<i>DISCUSSIONS/CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS</i>	<i>ACTION TAKEN</i>
<p><b>A. Request for Approval of 2026 Ruidoso Downs Stewards</b></p>	<p>Director Trejo requested the approval of the following stewards for the 2026 Ruidoso Downs race meet: Presiding Steward Violet “Pinky” Smith; Steward Ron Frazier; and Steward Geoff Waxler. Substitute stewards will be Leasa Johnson, Elizabeth Garcia, Julie Kagno, and Julie Farr.</p>	<p>Motion to approve was made by Commissioner Buffington. Commissioner Pitre seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.</p>
<p><b>B. Regarding the Transfer of Funds from Zia Park’s Gaming Account to Ruidoso Downs Purse Account for Ruidoso Downs’ 2026 Race Meet at the Downs at Albuquerque</b></p>	<p>In-House Counsel Bustamante stated the Commission would like to entertain a motion that acknowledges the transfer of \$2,000,000.00 from Zia Park’s gaming account to the Ruidoso Downs purse account for the Ruidoso Downs 2026 race meet at the Downs at Albuquerque.</p>	<p>Motion to acknowledge was made by Commissioner Buffington. Commissioner Pitre seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.</p>
<p><b>C. IMO: Lynyle Benn Licensure</b></p>	<p>In-House Counsel Bustamante stated, after reviewing the documents submitted by Lynyle Benn, the Commission would like to entertain a motion to restore Mr. Benn’s training license to good standing, such that he can again participate in New Mexico racing.</p>	<p>Motion to approve was made by Commissioner Buffington. Commissioner Pitre seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.</p>

<i>AGENDA ITEM</i>	<i>DISCUSSIONS/CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS</i>	<i>ACTION TAKEN</i>
<p><b>D. Request for Approval of SunRay Park Payment of Purses Pursuant to 15.2.3.8(D)(4)(a) NMAC</b></p>	<p>Director Trejo requested the ratification of approval of SunRay Park's payment of purses, pursuant to 15.2.3.8(D)(4)(a) NMAC.</p>	<p>Motion to approve was made by Commissioner Buffington. Commissioner Pitre seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.</p>
<p><b>E. Request for Approval of Ruidoso Downs Payment of Purses Pursuant to 15.2.3.8(D)(4)(a) NMAC</b></p>	<p>Director Trejo requested the approval of Ruidoso Downs payment of purses, pursuant to 15.2.3.8(D)(4)(a) NMAC.</p>	<p>Motion to approve was made by Commissioner Buffington. Commissioner Pitre seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.</p>
<p><b>F. Approvals of Sunland Park</b>  1. Request for Ratification for Approval to Amend Officials for March 28-30, 2026</p> <p>2. Request for Ratification for Approval to Amend Post Times to Run 12 Races on April 4, 2026</p>	<p>Sunland Park Director of Racing, Dustin Dix, requested the ratification of approval to amend its officials for March 28-30, 2026.</p> <p>Mr. Dix requested the ratification of approval to amend post times to run 12 races on April 4, 2026.</p>	<p>Motion to approve was made by Commissioner Buffington. Commissioner Pitre seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.</p> <p>Motion to approve was made by Commissioner</p>

<i>AGENDA ITEM</i>	<i>DISCUSSIONS/CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS</i>	<i>ACTION TAKEN</i>
<p><b>G. Approvals for Ruidoso Downs</b></p> <p>1. Request for Approval of 2026 Racing Officials</p> <p>2. Request for Approval of 2026 Post Times</p>	<p>Mr. Dix briefly stated Sunland Park did over \$140,000.00, one of its strongest on-track handles of the meet. On Easter, Sunland Park did over \$1,000,000.00 off-track, and added money to some of the stakes races at the end of its meet. Regarding final handle comparisons, Sunland Park, from its prior meet to this meet, was down only 1.81% on-track and 4.24% off-track. However, as an average per race handle, Sunland Park was up 11% on-track and 8.29% off-track.</p> <p>Chairman Smith asked how the new ownership of Sunland Park has been doing. Mr. Dix stated it is doing a good job with the casino, including renovations and has brought its food and beverage in-house once again.</p> <p>Don Cook, representing Ruidoso Downs, requested the approval of the 2026 Racing Officials.</p> <p>Mr. Cook requested approval of the 2026 post times.</p>	<p>Buffington. Commissioner Pitre seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.</p> <p>Motion to approve was made by Commissioner Buffington. Commissioner Pitre seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.</p> <p>Motion to approve was made by Commissioner Buffington. Commissioner Pitre</p>

<i>AGENDA ITEM</i>	<i>DISCUSSIONS/CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS</i>	<i>ACTION TAKEN</i>
<p>3. Request for Approval of 2026 Wagering Format</p> <p><b>H. Approvals for Zia Park</b></p> <p>1. Request for Approval of 2026 Nomination Blanks for the NM Classic Futurity and Derby Futurity</p>	<p>Mr. Cook requested the approval of the 2026 wagering format.</p> <p>Mr. Cook added they are anticipating a really hot summer, and there is a chance that some of the post times that were submitted today may have to be moved to the evening.</p> <p>Vice President and General Manager of Zia Park, Ken Goetz, requested the approval of the 2026 nomination blanks for the New Mexico Classic Futurity and Derby Futurity. Commissioner Buffington asked if there are any changes other than the dates. Mr. Goetz stated the nomination and supplemental fees went up \$500.00, and that is the only change from last year.</p>	<p>seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.</p> <p>Motion to approve was made by Commissioner Buffington. Commissioner Pitre seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.</p> <p>Motion to approve was made by Commissioner Buffington. Commissioner Pitre seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.</p>
<p><b>X. Adjournment</b></p>	<p>The meeting was adjourned after completion of items on the agenda.</p>	<p>Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Buffington. Commissioner Pitre seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.</p>



Chairman Billy Smith



Executive Director Ismael Trejo