

Attention Acequia Commissioners and Mayordomos: Guidance on COVID Precautions
New Mexico Acequia Association
Updated 12/2/2021

New Mexico has one of the highest rates of COVID-19 cases in the country. COVID-19 case numbers, hospitalizations, and deaths have all increased in recent weeks due to the spread of the Delta variant. Acequia communities are vulnerable because of our elder population. In response to the new Omicron variant, the CDC has strengthened its recommendation saying, “The recent emergence of the Omicron variant (B.1.1.529) further emphasizes the importance of vaccination, boosters, and prevention efforts needed to protect against COVID-19.”

Prevention efforts include the following:

- Avoid large, indoor gatherings.
- Wear masks.
- Maintain social distancing.
- Wash or sanitize hands frequently.

Many acequias have asked for direction on whether to hold their annual membership meetings. It is important to point out that although acequia statutes state specific dates for scheduling of annual meetings, there is also language that allows for meetings to take place “as soon as practicable thereafter.” Also, in response to a State of Emergency by the Health Secretary in 2020, the Attorney General issued guidance recommending that local governments could postpone meetings or could hold them virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, NMAA is offering the following guidance. **This is not legal advice. Please consult with an attorney on specific questions regarding your particular situation. You may contact our office or consult with your own attorney.**

- Avoid indoor meetings.
- Membership meetings can be postponed until pandemic conditions improve.
- If there is urgent business, such as deadlines for funding applications or project management, commissioners can hold special commission meetings, provided that the meetings are compliant with the Open Meetings Act (OMA) and that COVID-19 prevention measures are taken.
- Membership meetings should be held virtually via online platforms until current conditions related to the pandemic improve provided that meetings are compliant with the OMA.
- Consider outdoor meetings if weather allows, provided that the meetings follow the OMA and that COVID-19 prevention measures are taken.

The NMAA can provide assistance in hosting online meetings via Zoom including technical assistance with the online meeting and ensuring the meeting is OMA compliant. Please contact us if you need assistance with this. If you have any questions, please contact Serafina Lombardi at serafina@lasacequias.org.