



## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES (BOT) (minutes)**

### **TOWN OF MESILLA**

#### **REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**MESILLA TOWN HALL, 2231 AVENIDA DE MESILLA**

**MONDAY, MAY 11, 2026**

**WORK SESSION – 5:00 P.M.**

**REGULAR MEETING – Immediately Following Work Session**

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#### **TRUSTEES**

Russell Hernadez, Mayor  
Stephanie Johnson-Burick, Mayor Pro Tem  
Trustee Cadena, Trustee  
Trustee Garcia, Trustee  
Trustee Nevarez, Trustee

#### **STAFF**

Ben Azcarate, Marshal  
Lorenzo Astorga, Public Works Director  
Greg Whited, Fire Chief  
Eddie Salazar, Econ & Com Development Director  
Gloria S Maya, Town Clerk/Recorder

#### **PUBLIC**

Andrea Bryan	Greg Lester
Crystal Whited	Gary Tindal Jr
Trina Witter	Catherine Walkinshaw
Eric Walkinshaw	Robert Williams
Gary Tindal	Lori Miller
Amanda Bonen	Karla Padilla
Dahlia Garas	Jimmy Nevarez III
Cole Morris	Davie Salas

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## 1. BUDGET REVIEW

Mayor Russell Hernandez called the Work Session to order at approximately 5:11 p.m. and stated the purpose of the work session was the FY2026-2027 Preliminary Budget Review.

Discussion began with review of increases and suggested increases discussed during the previous work session, including pay increases, additional positions, and compensation for Planning and Zoning Commissioners. Staff also discussed increases in agreements and contracts, primarily due to insurance cost increases.

The Mayor explained that \$500,000 from reserves was proposed to be transferred from the General Fund into investment accounts to generate interest revenue. The proposed transfers included:

- \$200,000 into General Fund investments
- \$100,000 into Town Hall Fund investments
- \$100,000 into Wastewater Fund investments
- \$100,000 into Solid Waste Fund investments

The Mayor explained these investment accounts are through NMFA and state investment programs and would allow the Town to earn interest while retaining access to the funds when needed.

Discussion followed regarding the Corrections Fund and closure of the Municipal Court. Trustees asked whether the Town would still be responsible for jail expenses after arrests. Staff clarified the County and Magistrate Court now assume those responsibilities. Questions were also raised about unresolved citations and pending cases. Staff stated pending cases had either transferred to Magistrate Court or were being dismissed through attorneys.

The Board discussed the reallocation of Municipal Court personnel expenses into the Law Enforcement/Public Safety Department.

Trustees questioned attorney fees and legal expense budgeting. Staff explained legal fees remain budgeted under General Fund Executive Legislative and that legal costs for code enforcement and ordinance updates were anticipated.

Discussion occurred regarding deputies contacting Town attorneys. Trustees requested confirmation that officers were instructed not to directly contact Town attorneys without authorization. Staff stated they would confirm with Marshal Supervisor Ben Azcarate.

Staff reviewed:

- Forecasted revenues
- Transfers

- Personnel expenses with a proposed 6% increase
- Operating expenses
- Required 12% reserves

The Board reviewed revenue trends and discussed strong Gross Receipts Tax collections and expenditures remaining below budgeted percentages.

Discussion followed regarding:

- Community Center and Plaza rental revenues
- School Resource Officer (SRO) funding and negotiations with LCPS
- Colonias grant applications totaling approximately \$2 million
- Required grant matches
- Capital projects and infrastructure planning

Trustees discussed the need for asset management planning for roads, water, and sewer infrastructure. Staff stated they were working with engineers and IWorqs software regarding infrastructure asset management and prioritization.

The Board discussed overtime and on-call compensation for Public Works employees and Marshal's Department staff. Trustees expressed concern that Public Works employees were on call without additional compensation. Staff stated overtime and on-call compensation would be reviewed further before final budget approval.

Discussion also included:

- Fire Department volunteer stipends
- Planning and Zoning Commissioner stipends
- Budget restructuring
- Consolidating utilities and phone expenses into Finance Department budgeting
- Enterprise versus General Fund accounting practices

Trustees complimented staff on creating a more realistic budget using actual year-to-date expenditures and revenues.

The Mayor stated no action would be taken during the work session and explained that preliminary budget approval would occur during the regular meeting.

Additional discussion occurred regarding road infrastructure prioritization and potential implementation of infrastructure asset management systems.

The work session concluded at approximately 6:00 p.m.

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# **REGULAR MEETING**

## **2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Russell Hernandez.

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## **3. ROLL CALL & DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM**

Town Clerk/Treasurer Gloria Maya called roll.

**Present:**

- Mayor Russell Hernandez
- Mayor Pro Tem Stephanie Johnson Burick
- Trustee Garcia
- Trustee Cadena
- Trustee Nevarez

Quorum was established.

**Department Heads Present:**

- Gloria Maya, Town Clerk/Treasurer
- Greg Whited, Fire Chief
- Eddie Salazar, Economic/Community Development Director

**Absent:**

- Ben Azcarate, Marshal Supervisor
  - Lorenzo Astorga, Public Works Director
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## **4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**Motion:**

Trustee Nevarez moved to approve the agenda as presented.

**Second:**

Trustee Garcia seconded the motion.

There being no discussion or objection, the motion carried unanimously.

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## **5. PRESENTATION**

### **a) PRESENTATION: BIKE TO SCHOOL PROCLAMATION**

Ashley Curry, Safe Routes to School Coordinator for Las Cruces Public Schools, addressed the Board along with George Pearson.

Ms. Curry thanked the Town for continued bicycle and pedestrian improvements throughout Mesilla. She discussed National Bike to School Day activities and stated approximately 14 to 16 children participated in the recent event.

She described a recent overnight bicycle camping trip at Mesilla Elementary School and praised the Town's multi-use trails and roadway improvements, stating children and families felt safer using the trails and roads.

Ms. Curry invited Trustees and the Mayor to participate in upcoming "Two Wheel Tuesdays."

Mayor Hernandez read the Bike to School Day Proclamation proclaiming May 5th as Bike to School Day in the Town of Mesilla.

The Mayor thanked the presenters for their work and support of the community.

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### **b) PRESENTATION: ALL HAZARD EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN – AMANDA BOWEN**

Amanda Bowen, Emergency Manager for Dona Ana County, presented the updated All Hazards Emergency Operations Plan.

Ms. Bowen explained the plan serves as the multi-jurisdictional framework for disaster response and coordination for:

- Wildfires
- Flooding
- Hazardous materials incidents
- Cybersecurity incidents
- Active threats
- Severe weather emergencies

She stated the previous emergency operations plan dated back to 2011 and no longer met federal preparedness standards.

Ms. Bowen explained the updated plan:

- Aligns with FEMA and NIMS standards
- Includes 10 functional annexes and 10 hazard annexes
- Meets ADA accessibility requirements
- Supports continuity of government operations
- Enables eligibility for state and federal disaster funding

Discussion occurred regarding:

- Flooding hazards in Dona Ana County
- FEMA recovery operations
- Emergency declarations
- Disaster funding
- Emergency Operations Center coordination
- Board responsibilities during emergencies

Ms. Bowen reviewed accomplishments of the Office of Emergency Management, including:

- Construction of a new Emergency Operations Center
- Response to federally declared disasters
- Family Assistance Center operations after the Young Park shooting
- Incident command training
- Hazmat response exercises
- Emergency preparedness exercises
- Interoperable radio deployment
- Grant management totaling approximately \$16 million

The Board discussed future approval and signing of the Emergency Operations Plan promulgation page.

Mayor Hernandez thanked Ms. Bowen for the presentation.

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### **c) PRESENTATION: FY2024-2025 AUDIT – BEASLEY MITCHELL**

Representatives from Beasley Mitchell presented the FY2024-2025 Audit.

The auditors stated the Town received an unmodified opinion, which is the highest audit opinion available.

The auditors reviewed:

- Entity responsibilities
- Internal controls
- Risk assessment procedures
- Audit findings

Three findings were discussed:

1. Cash reconciliation material weakness
2. Budget adjustment finding
3. Per diem reimbursement documentation finding

The auditors clarified the cash reconciliation finding did not involve missing funds or misuse of funds, but rather a software reconciliation issue involving approximately \$7,937.

Discussion occurred regarding:

- Municipal Court-related accounting
- Budget adjustment reports (BARs)
- Use of proper reimbursement forms
- Transition to electronic record systems
- Audit procurement requirements

The auditors complimented Town staff and leadership for reducing audit findings over the past five years.

Mayor Hernandez clarified that Office of the State Auditor approval no longer requires formal BOT resolution approval.

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#### **d) ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Jurado Family Donation to Assist with Fire Engine Rebuild**

Mayor Hernandez acknowledged a donation from the Jurado Family to assist with restoration and refurbishment of the Town fire engine.

The Mayor stated additional fundraising and donations had also been received for the project.

The Board expressed appreciation for the donation.

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## **6. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

### **Motion:**

Trustee Cadena moved to approve the Consent Agenda.

**Second:**

Trustee Nevarez seconded the motion.

Prior to vote, Mayor Pro Tem Stephanie Johnson Burick made a motion to amend Item 6(a) to reflect BOT Minutes from April 13, 2026, instead of April 27, 2026, because the April 27 meeting had been canceled.

**Motion to Amend:**

Mayor Pro Tem Stephanie Johnson Burick moved to amend Item 6(a).

**Second:**

Trustee Garcia seconded the amendment.

**Roll Call Vote on Amendment:**

- Trustee Garcia – Yes
- Trustee Cadena – Yes
- Trustee Nevarez – Yes
- Mayor Pro Tem Johnson Burick – Yes

Motion carried unanimously.

The Board then returned to the original motion for approval of the Consent Agenda as amended.

**Roll Call Vote:**

- Trustee Garcia – Yes
- Trustee Cadena – Yes
- Trustee Nevarez – Yes
- Mayor Pro Tem Johnson Burick – Yes

Motion carried unanimously approving:

- BOT Minutes – April 13, 2026
- PZHAC Case #062118
- PZHAC Case #062117
- Roof Care Purchase Requisition
- Able Sign Company Purchase Requisition
- Cordova Construction Purchase Requisition
- A Mountain Construction Purchase Requisition
- Milestone Construction Purchase Requisition

- Souder Miller & Associates Purchase Requisition
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## **7. STAFF UPDATES & COMMENTS**

### **Fire Department**

Fire Chief Greg Whited discussed:

- Cinco de Mayo activities
- Foam pit participation
- Adobe brick-making event
- Volunteer firefighter training
- Fire Department recruitment academy
- Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month
- Fatal motorcycle crash during Fiesta activities
- Community Connect participation

Chief Morris discussed the summer Fire Academy schedule and recruitment efforts.

Trustees discussed outreach to senior citizens and Community Connect registration assistance.

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### **Community & Economic Development**

Economic/Community Development Director Eddie Salazar presented departmental updates including:

- Business licenses issued
- Zoning permits issued
- Administrative approvals

Mr. Salazar discussed:

- Cinco de Mayo event success
- Preservation Week planning
- Historic preservation activities
- Blacksmith demonstrations
- Economic impacts of historic preservation
- Certified Local Government designation
- IWorqs Asset Management software
- GIS implementation
- Square 9 records management
- Short-term rental reporting

- Historic nominations

Trustees discussed:

- Parade planning
- Queen Mesilla traditions
- Planning and zoning training opportunities
- Historic preservation accomplishments

Mayor Hernandez praised the department's efforts and the significance of obtaining Certified Local Government designation.

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## **8. PUBLIC INPUT ON CASES**

No public input was received.

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## **9. NEW BUSINESS**

### **a) DISCUSSION: Audit Findings & Responses**

Mayor Hernandez opened discussion regarding audit findings.

Staff clarified the audit had been fully approved by the Office of the State Auditor and copies were available to the public.

No additional discussion occurred.

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### **b) APPROVAL: PZHAC CASE #06183 (AMENDMENT) – 2450 Calle de Principal**

#### **Motion:**

Trustee Nevarez moved to approve PZHAC Case #06183 Amendment.

#### **Second:**

Trustee Cadena seconded the motion.

Eddie Salazar presented the amendment request involving a change from a flat parapet porch roof to a slanted corrugated roof.

Discussion included:

- Existing parking requirements
- ADA parking compliance
- Drainage concerns
- Historic compatibility
- Corrugated roof materials
- Historic plaque requirements

**Roll Call Vote:**

- Trustee Garcia – Yes
- Trustee Cadena – Yes
- Trustee Nevarez – Yes
- Mayor Pro Tem Johnson Burick – Yes

Motion carried unanimously.

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**c) PZHAC CASE #062127 – 2355 Avenida de Mesilla (continued)**

Economic/Community Development Director Eddie Salazar continued presentation of the request submitted by Las Cruces Public Schools for construction of a Career and Technical Education (CTE) building at the Rio Grande Preparatory Institute campus.

Mr. Salazar explained the proposed 4,295-square-foot building would provide hands-on technical and vocational training opportunities for students and could potentially serve future community education purposes.

The proposed facility would include:

- Construction trades shop space
- Classrooms
- Restrooms
- Storage rooms
- Outdoor work area with canopy
- Drainage improvements
- Utility extensions
- Fenced yard area

Mr. Salazar stated the building would match the appearance and character of the existing school campus and noted the project represented an approximately \$3 million investment into educational programming.

Robert Williams, Construction Project Manager for Las Cruces Public Schools, addressed the Board and explained:

- Current student population at the school is approximately 30 students
- Most students are bused to the campus
- No major parking impacts were anticipated
- Discussions had occurred regarding future evening community education opportunities
- The facility may eventually serve students from other high schools lacking similar technical education facilities
- Construction bids were anticipated in July pending state funding approval
- Estimated construction timeline was approximately nine months

Discussion occurred regarding:

- Parking requirements
- Community education opportunities
- Collaboration with Dona Ana Community College
- Future public use possibilities
- Project timeline
- School district funding

Discussion then shifted to zoning and permit fees associated with the project.

Mr. Salazar explained the Town Code does not currently provide exemptions for governmental entities from zoning fees and estimated fees for the project could total approximately \$60,000 due to the project valuation.

Board discussion included:

- Consistency in fee application
- Previous governmental projects
- Potential future code amendments
- Fairness and precedent-setting concerns
- Existing practice regarding government entities

Mayor Pro Tem Stephanie Johnson Burick expressed concern about waiving fees without prior policy discussion and emphasized consistency with previous projects.

Trustees discussed potentially revisiting the issue through future ordinance amendments but generally agreed the current application should proceed under existing code requirements.

Mayor Hernandez clarified that approval of the application as presented would include standard fee requirements unless specifically modified by Board action.

Mr. Williams stated the school district budget had already anticipated permit and related fees as part of overall project costs.

Trustees thanked staff for bringing the issue before the Board for discussion rather than making an administrative determination.

**Roll Call Vote:**

- Trustee Garcia – Yes
- Trustee Cadena – Yes
- Trustee Nevarez – Yes
- Mayor Pro Tem Johnson Burick – Yes

Motion carried unanimously approving PZHAC Case #062127.

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**d) APPROVAL: Preliminary FY2026-2027 Budget**

**Motion:**

Mayor Pro Tem Stephanie Johnson Burick moved to approve the Preliminary FY2026-2027 Budget.

**Second:**

Trustee Cadena seconded the motion.

Mayor Hernandez explained approval of the preliminary budget was needed so staff could begin entering budget data into the state financial system prior to submission deadlines.

Discussion occurred regarding:

- Firefighter stipends
- Public Works overtime
- Public Works on-call compensation
- Comparable compensation structures in similar municipalities
- Remaining budget review timelines
- Final submission deadlines
- Research into compensation practices in neighboring communities

Trustees expressed support for further compensation review while still allowing preliminary budget processing to proceed.

Mayor Pro Tem Johnson Burick proposed amending the motion with conditions requiring:

- Allocation of firefighter stipends
- Review and allocation of Public Works overtime funding
- Inclusion of Public Works on-call compensation figures

**Motion to Amend:**

Mayor Pro Tem Stephanie Johnson Burick moved to approve the preliminary budget with conditions regarding firefighter stipends, Public Works overtime, and on-call compensation allocations.

**Second:**

Trustee Garcia seconded the amendment.

**Roll Call Vote on Amendment:**

- Trustee Garcia – Yes
- Trustee Cadena – Yes
- Trustee Nevarez – Yes
- Mayor Pro Tem Johnson Burick – Yes

Motion carried unanimously.

The Board then returned to the original motion for approval of the preliminary budget with conditions.

**Roll Call Vote:**

- Trustee Garcia – Yes
- Trustee Cadena – Yes
- Trustee Nevarez – Yes
- Mayor Pro Tem Johnson Burick – Yes

Motion carried unanimously approving the Preliminary FY2026-2027 Budget with conditions regarding stipends, overtime, and on-call compensation review.

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**e) DISCUSSION: University Avenue / NMDOT Meeting Update**

Mayor Hernandez provided an update regarding recent meetings with the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) concerning the University Avenue project.

The Mayor explained:

- A public update meeting hosted by NMDOT was scheduled for May 20 at Zia Middle School
- Questions from residents regarding project safety, lighting, drainage, and planning timelines had been forwarded to NMDOT
- Historical planning documentation dating back to approximately 2016 had been compiled and made available to the public

Discussion included:

- Stakeholder meetings conducted during project planning
- Prior approvals through the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
- Public outreach and public meetings previously conducted
- Existing agreements executed between the Town and NMDOT

Mayor Hernandez reviewed agreements involving:

- Roadway lighting
- Drainage pond maintenance
- Landscaping maintenance
- Flashing school-zone beacons

The Mayor explained the lighting agreements had already been executed in 2023 and included installation of LED roadway lighting.

Discussion focused heavily on resident concerns regarding lighting brightness and light trespass into nearby residential properties.

Mayor Hernandez stated NMDOT representatives had been receptive to concerns and were evaluating installation of shields to reduce light spill onto adjacent properties.

Additional updates included:

- Installation of safety bollards near intersections
- Replacement of fencing near acequia areas
- Ongoing communication between Town staff and NMDOT representatives
- Availability of project records and agreements for public review

Trustees discussed:

- Prior expectations regarding future lighting approvals
- Importance of transparency
- Public access to project documentation
- Coordination with NMDOT moving forward

No action was taken.

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## **f) DISCUSSION: Blacksmith Shop Ad Hoc Committee & Restoration**

Mayor Hernandez opened discussion regarding formation of an ad hoc committee for the newly acquired Blacksmith Shop property.

Discussion included:

- Preservation and stabilization of the structure
- Historical preservation goals
- Potential museum or educational uses
- Deed restrictions prohibiting commercial business operations
- Green space and parking considerations
- Community involvement

Explained the former property owners requested focus on:

- Securing and revitalizing the structure
- Historical or museum-related use
- Preservation of community character

Discussion occurred regarding committee structure and membership.

Potential committee composition discussed included:

- One Trustee representative
- One Planning & Zoning representative
- One Town employee
- Community residents

Residents expressing interest included:

- Nora Barraza
- Michael Langford

Trustees discussed maintaining an odd number of committee members and ensuring flexibility because the committee would function as an advisory ad hoc committee rather than a formal board.

Discussion also included:

- Immediate stabilization needs for the adobe structure
- Potential volunteer assistance from the Cadencia group
- Roof and wall stabilization concerns
- Future grant opportunities

- Long-range ICIP planning

Trustees directed staff to bring any stabilization authorization requests back before the Board at a future meeting.

No action was taken.

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## **10. PUBLIC INPUT**

### **Gary Tindal – Discount Fireworks**

Mr. Gary Tindal addressed the Board regarding newly implemented fireworks hazardous materials fees.

Mr. Tindal explained:

- He is one of two retail fireworks vendors in Mesilla
- Vendors operate only during limited seasonal periods
- A certified letter regarding hazardous materials fees had recently been received
- Previous discussions during licensing processes did not clearly communicate the fee structure

Mr. Tindal requested consideration of a more equitable fee structure based on temporary operational periods rather than annualized fees.

He suggested prorated or incremental fees for temporary vendors operating only during Fourth of July and New Year sales periods.

Mayor Hernandez clarified no Board response would occur during public comment.

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### **Jimmy Nevarez**

Mr. Jimmy Nevarez also addressed the Board regarding fireworks vendor fees.

Mr. Nevarez explained:

- Temporary fireworks vendors operate under different economic conditions than permanent businesses
- Seasonal sales periods generate the majority of annual income
- Permanent facilities continue to incur operating expenses year-round
- Tourism promotion and community activity remain important aspects of their businesses

Mr. Nevarez thanked the Town for prior transparency regarding the ordinance process.

No action was taken.

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## **11. COMMITTEE REPORTS & TRUSTEE COMMENTS**

### **Trustee Nevarez**

Trustee Nevarez reported:

- Attendance planned for the J. Paul Taylor Site Advisory Board meeting
- Participation in upcoming historic preservation training

Trustee Nevarez complimented the Cinco de Mayo event and particularly praised children's activities including the foam attraction.

He also raised safety concerns regarding brickwork surrounding two pine trees on the south side of the Plaza and requested evaluation for pedestrian safety improvements.

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### **Trustee Garcia**

Trustee Garcia reported:

- Attendance at New Mexico Municipal League training for newly elected officials
- Participation in upcoming MPO-related meetings

Trustee Garcia praised staff regarding fireworks ordinance implementation and transparency throughout the process.

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### **Trustee Cadena**

Trustee Cadena reported:

- Participation in the J. Paul Taylor advisory meeting
- Attendance at Transit Board meetings

Trustee Cadena discussed:

- Regional transit expansion

- Electric bus initiatives
- Tourism benefits associated with the J. Paul Taylor historic site
- Positive turnout and family participation during Cinco de Mayo festivities

Trustee Cadena also thanked Gloria Maya and Finance staff for extensive work on the preliminary budget process.

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### **Mayor Pro Tem Stephanie Johnson Burick**

Mayor Pro Tem Johnson Burick reported:

- Budget discussions with Public Works Director Lorenzo Astorga
- Upcoming MPO meeting attendance

She also complimented staff and noted strong attendance during Cinco de Mayo activities.

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### **Mayor Russell Hernandez**

Mayor Hernandez thanked:

- Trustees
- Staff
- Community members
- Event organizers
- Public Works crews
- Public Safety personnel

for flexibility and teamwork throughout recent scheduling changes and community events.

The Mayor highlighted:

- Successful Cinco de Mayo festivities
- Family-focused event planning
- Future cultural programming enhancements
- DOT and MPO meetings
- Colonias infrastructure grant applications
- School district partnerships
- Historic preservation week activities
- Community garden projects
- Upcoming voting site setup
- Community meal distribution events in partnership with Casa de Peregrinos

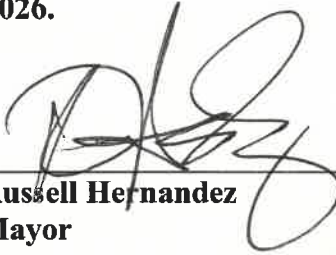
The Mayor encouraged continued public participation in Town activities and thanked the community for support and collaboration.

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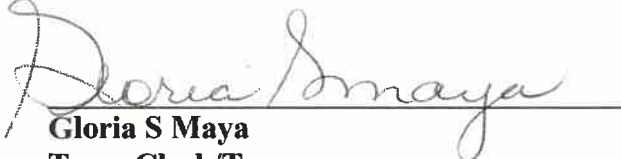
## 12. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Board, Mayor Russell Hernandez adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:31 p.m.

APPROVED THIS 26<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF MAY 2026.

  
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**Russell Hernandez**  
Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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**Gloria S Maya**  
Town Clerk/Treasurer

