



THE PLANNING, ZONING AND HISTORICAL APPROPRIATENESS COMMISSION (PZHAC)

WILL BE HAVING A WORK SESSION AT THE MESILLA TOWN HALL,
2231 AVENIDA DE MESILLA
MONDAY – MAY 18, 2026 @ 5PM
(WORK SESSION MINUTES)

WORK SESSION REGARDING INTERPRETATION OF MESILLA TOWN CODE AND OR IF ANY RECOMMENDATIONS TO AMEND ANY SECTION(S) OF THE CODE.

Chair Eric Walkinshaw called the work session to order at approximately 5:00 PM.

Commissioners:

- Chair Eric Walkinshaw
- Commissioner Lucero
- Commissioner Miller
- Commissioner Paz

Staff:

- Mr. Eddie Salazar, Community and Economic Development Director
- Ms. Liana Aguirre, Historic Preservation Specialist

Commissioner Paz arrived later during the work session.

Public:

- Trina Witter
- Andrea Bryan
- Greg Lester

WORK SESSION DISCUSSION

Mr. Eddie Salazar explained the purpose of the work session was to review discrepancies and interpretation concerns within the Mesilla Town Code and discuss possible future amendments or clarifications to improve consistency and enforcement. Mr. Salazar stated approximately fifteen topics had been identified for discussion, though time likely would not permit completion of every item.

1. PERMIT EXPIRATION / ISSUANCE TIMELINES

Mr. Salazar opened discussion regarding permit expiration timelines under Title 15 Building Code. He explained permits are currently valid for one year and are subject to renewal, but concerns existed regarding when the expiration period officially begins.

Discussion centered around whether permit timelines should begin:

- At PZHAC approval
- Board of Trustees approval
- CID approval
- Or when permits are officially issued and picked up by applicants

Mr. Salazar explained many projects receive conceptual approval before final engineered plans are completed, particularly projects requiring CID review. Commissioners discussed the need to clarify that the one-year period should not begin until all required plans, approvals, and permit issuance steps are completed.

Examples discussed included:

- Solar panel projects
- Large commercial developments
- School construction projects
- Projects delayed by CID engineering review

Commissioners expressed concern that applicants should not lose permit time while waiting for external agency approvals.

Discussion Highlights:

- Commissioner discussion acknowledged confusion between approval dates and issuance dates
- Mr. Salazar explained the Town computer system records the date permits are physically issued/picked up
- Commissioners generally agreed permit expiration should begin when permits are officially issued by staff after all conditions are met

Consensus / Possible Amendment Direction:

Commissioners generally agreed future ordinance language should clarify:

- Permit validity begins upon official permit issuance
- Not at conceptual approval by PZHAC or BOT
- Expiration timelines should relate to actual issuance dates documented by staff

2. PERMIT RENEWALS / EXTENSIONS

Discussion continued regarding permit renewals and expired permits.

Commissioners discussed:

- Whether permits must be renewed before expiration
- Whether expired permits automatically become invalid
- Whether extensions should be permitted after expiration
- Whether projects should restart the approval process entirely

Mr. Salazar explained staff currently attempts to work administratively with applicants, but the code language lacks clarity.

Discussion included:

- Six-month extension periods
- Possible late fees
- Administrative renewals for unchanged projects
- Distinctions between review fees and permit fees

Commissioners also discussed the Town's responsibility versus applicant responsibility in monitoring expiration dates.

Discussion Highlights:

- Commissioners agreed applicants should remain responsible for tracking expiration dates

- Staff discussed future automated email reminder systems
- Commissioners discussed courtesy notifications but opposed creating mandatory staff monitoring obligations
- Discussion included imposing late fees for expired permits

Consensus / Possible Amendment Direction:

Commissioners generally agreed future ordinance language should:

- Require permit renewals before expiration when possible
- Allow six-month extensions
- Allow administrative extensions for projects with no substantial changes
- Consider late fees for expired permits
- Clarify staff notification responsibilities as courtesy only

3. PERMIT FEES / REFUNDS

Mr. Salazar explained permit applications currently involve:

- Review fees
- Permit fees

Discussion centered around whether permit fees should be refundable if projects are denied.

Commissioners discussed:

- Staff review time
- Administrative processing costs
- Fairness to applicants

Discussion Highlights:

- Commissioners generally agreed review fees compensate staff time and should remain non-refundable
- Permit fees may potentially be refunded if permits are never issued
- Current code language does not clearly address refund procedures

Consensus / Possible Amendment Direction:

Commissioners generally agreed future ordinance language should clarify:

- Review fees are non-refundable
- Permit fees may be refundable under limited circumstances if permits are not issued

4. CODE VIOLATIONS AND NEW PERMITS

Commissioners discussed whether applicants with unresolved code violations should be permitted to obtain new permits or approvals.

Examples discussed included:

- Excessive weeds
- Inoperable vehicles
- Accumulated rubbish
- Deteriorated historic structures

Discussion included balancing enforcement with encouraging rehabilitation of neglected historic properties.

Discussion Highlights:

- Commissioners expressed concern regarding approving improvements on properties already violating Town Code
- Mr. Salazar noted code language currently lacks specificity regarding how violations affect permit eligibility
- Commissioners acknowledged some projects could help improve blighted properties

Consensus / Possible Amendment Direction:

Commissioners generally agreed future ordinance language should:

- Address how unresolved violations affect permit eligibility
- Allow staff discretion based on severity of violations
- Encourage rehabilitation while still enforcing code compliance

5. RV OCCUPANCY / TEMPORARY HOOKUPS

Commissioners reviewed Town Code language regulating:

- Recreational vehicles
- Temporary occupancy

- Utility hookups

Current code language prohibits permanent utility hookups and limits RV occupancy to temporary use periods.

Discussion focused on:

- Extension cords
- Water hoses
- Temporary electrical hookups
- Frequency of RV stays
- Enforcement practicality
- Neighborhood impacts

Commissioners discussed concerns regarding:

- Long-term RV occupancy
- Repeated short-term occupancy cycles
- RV storage visibility within historic districts
- Narrow streets and infrastructure impacts

Discussion Highlights:

- Commissioners debated whether temporary hookups should also be prohibited
- Some commissioners supported permit systems for temporary RV stays
- Commissioners discussed limiting the number of temporary stays per property annually
- Concerns were raised regarding enforcement practicality

Consensus / Possible Amendment Direction:

Commissioners generally agreed future ordinance language should:

- Clarify no hookups or temporary hookups
- Revisit annual frequency limits later
- Consider screening requirements for RV storage in HR zones
- Differentiate plaza areas from agricultural/residential HR areas

6. SPECIAL USE PERMITS / BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS

Mr. Salazar reviewed Town Code Section 18.85 involving:

- Variances

- Board of Adjustments
- Special use permits
- Public hearing procedures

Discussion focused on inconsistencies within the code regarding:

- Which governing body conducts hearings
- Whether hearings belong before PZHAC, BOT, or Board of Adjustments
- Resolution procedures
- Notification timelines

Discussion Highlights:

- Mr. Salazar explained current practice differs somewhat from written code language
- Commissioners discussed reducing duplicate hearings and duplicate resolutions
- Mayor Hernandez had previously expressed support for clarifying procedures

Consensus / Possible Amendment Direction:

Commissioners generally agreed future ordinance language should:

- Clarify hearing authority
- Clarify Board of Adjustment responsibilities
- Clarify special use permit procedures
- Streamline hearing and resolution processes

7. FENCE SETBACKS / RIGHT OF ENTRY

Commissioners discussed code language involving:

- Fence construction
- Property line setbacks
- Right-of-entry agreements
- Historic Residential setbacks

Discussion focused on whether fences located directly on property lines require notarized neighbor agreements and how maintenance responsibilities affect setback requirements.

Discussion Highlights:

- Commissioners debated whether setbacks should apply when neighbors refuse right-of-entry agreements
- Commissioners discussed maintenance access problems
- Historic Residential setback interpretations created confusion

Consensus / Possible Amendment Direction:

Commissioners generally agreed future ordinance language should:

- Be reviewed by the Town attorney
- Clarify right-of-entry requirements
- Clarify setback applicability for fences

8. SHIPPING CONTAINERS / STORAGE CONTAINERS

Commissioners discussed absence of code language regulating:

- Shipping containers
- Portable storage containers
- Modern storage structures

Discussion included:

- Historic appropriateness concerns
- Agricultural storage practices
- Modern industrial appearance
- Reclaimed/recycled container uses

Discussion Highlights:

- Commissioners acknowledged current code does not clearly regulate shipping containers
- Discussion included whether containers should be prohibited in historic areas

Consensus / Possible Amendment Direction:

Commissioners generally agreed future ordinance language should:

- Define shipping/storage containers
- Clarify where containers are permitted or prohibited
- Address historic compatibility concerns

9. TREE OVERHANG / NUISANCE ISSUES

Mr. Salazar discussed complaints involving trees extending over neighboring properties and creating:

- Pine needle accumulation
- Agricultural interference
- Maintenance burdens

Discussion referenced state case law suggesting overhanging branches may not automatically constitute violations.

Discussion Highlights:

- Commissioners debated nuisance versus property rights
- Discussion included agricultural drainage ditch maintenance
- Commissioners acknowledged current Town Code lacks clear nuisance language for such situations

Consensus / Possible Amendment Direction:

Commissioners generally agreed future ordinance language may need to:

- Clarify nuisance responsibilities
- Address agricultural maintenance concerns
- Define property owner obligations involving overhanging vegetation

ADDITIONAL GENERAL DISCUSSION

Commissioners and staff discussed:

- Historic district preservation
- Community character
- Maintaining Mesilla's uniqueness
- Self-reliance versus growth
- Enforcement consistency
- Administrative efficiency

Mr. Salazar emphasized the importance of proactive ordinance clarification before future disputes arise.

No formal action was taken during the work session.

REGULAR MEETING

Following completion of the work session, the Commission proceeded into the regular meeting.

Commissioners:

- Chair Eric Walkinshaw
- Commissioner Lucero
- Commissioner Miller
- Commissioner Paz

Staff:

- Mr. Eddie Salazar, Community and Economic Development Director
- Ms. Liana Aguirre, Historic Preservation Specialist

Public:

- Trina Witter
- Adrea Bryan
- Greg Lester
- Janice Cook
- Bill Cook

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Walkinshaw led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. ROLL CALL AND DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Mr. Eddie Salazar called roll.

Present:

- Chair Eric Walkinshaw
- Commissioner Paz
- Commissioner Miller

- Commissioner Lucero

Quorum established.

3. CHANGES / APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Commissioner Miller moved to approve the agenda.

Second: Commissioner Paz

Vote:

Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Walkinshaw noted that since no project cases were scheduled, public input would be omitted.

4. PUBLIC INPUT

No public input was taken.

5. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

a. May 4, 2026 PZHAC Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion: Commissioner Miller moved to approve the Consent Agenda including the May 4, 2026 PZHAC meeting minutes.

Second: Commissioner Paz

Discussion:

Commissioners noted corrections were needed within the May 4 minutes:

- Commissioner Paz and Commissioner Mulvihill were incorrectly listed absent
- AI-generated wording mistakenly referenced “Mr. Ray”

Corrections were acknowledged for revision.

Vote:

Motion passed unanimously.

COMMISSIONERS / STAFF COMMENTS

Mr. Eddie Salazar

Mr. Salazar thanked commissioners for participating in the work session and stated several clarification items could now move forward toward ordinance amendments and future hearings.

Mr. Salazar discussed:

- Upcoming fiscal year budget planning
- Proposed staffing additions within Community Development
- Hiring of a permitting coordinator
- Increased code enforcement coordination
- Improved collaboration between governing boards

Mr. Salazar also discussed:

- Historic preservation coordination
- Economic impact workshops
- Community engagement ideas
- Public programming opportunities

Discussion included:

- Chess tables
- Community activities
- Merchandise ideas
- Interactive public spaces
- Revenue generation balanced with historic preservation goals

Mr. Salazar emphasized maintaining Mesilla's historic identity while remaining financially sustainable.

Ms. Liana Aguirre

Ms. Liana Aguirre provided extensive updates regarding historic preservation activities.

Topics discussed included:

- Preservation Week events
- Educational workshops
- Historic storytelling programs
- CLG (Certified Local Government) designation approval
- Federal preservation funding concerns
- Preservation advocacy
- Endangered Latinx Landmark nomination efforts
- Agricultural heritage preservation

Ms. Aguirre also discussed:

- Partnerships with DACC students
- Historic property photography projects
- Historical research packets
- Children's activity books featuring Mesilla landmarks
- Summer educational programming
- Internships with Dona Ana County
- Historic register development efforts

Commissioners expressed appreciation for Ms. Liana's preservation work and community engagement efforts.

8. ADJOURNMENT

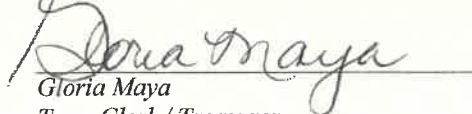
Chair Walkinshaw called for adjournment.

Meeting adjourned.



Eric Walkinshaw, PZHAC Chair

ATTEST:



Gloria Maya
Town Clerk / Treasurer

