Town of Mesilla, New Mexico

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES (BOT) OF THE TOWN OF MESILLA WILL HOLD A REGULAR MEETING AT THE MESILLA TOWN HALL, 2231 AVENIDA DE MESILLA

MONDAY, JULY 27, 2026

~ 6:00 P.M.~

AGENDA
(MINUTES)

TRUSTEES Russell Hernandez, Mayor
Stephanie Johnson-Burick, Mayor Pro Tem
Biviana Cadena, Trustee
Veronica Garcia, Trustee
Gerard Nevarez, Trustee

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

PUBLIC Greg Lester
Andrea Bryan
Mary H Ratje
Cole Morris
Bill & Janice Cook
Lori Miller
Ben Schitt
Beverly Estrada

Governing Body

- **Mayor:** Russell Hernandez
- **Mayor Pro Tem:** Stephanie Johnson Burick
- **Trustee:** Veronica Garcia *(Present)*
- **Trustee:** Bibiana Cadena *(Absent)*
- **Trustee:** Gerard Nevarez *(Absent)*

Staff Present

- Gloria Maya, Town Clerk/Treasurer
- Greg Whited, Fire Chief
- Edgar Ramirez, Code Enforcement Officer

Absent Staff

- Eddie Salazar, Community Development Director
- Lorenzo Astorga, Public Works Director

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1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Hernandez called the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees to order at approximately **6:04 p.m.** and led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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2. ROLL CALL AND DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Town Clerk/Treasurer Gloria Maya called roll.

Governing Body	Attendance
Mayor Hernandez	Present
Mayor Pro Tem Burick	Present
Trustee Garcia	Present
Trustee Cadena	Absent
Trustee Nevarez	Absent

Mayor Hernandez noted that Trustees Cadena and Nevarez had notified the Town they would be absent from the meeting.

A quorum was established.

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3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Mayor Hernandez presented the agenda for approval.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Burick

Second: Trustee Garcia

Vote:

- Mayor Pro Tem Burick — Yes
- Trustee Garcia — Yes

Quorum: Motion carried unanimously by the members present.

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4. APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

The Board considered the Consent Agenda, including approval of the July 13, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes.

Trustee Garcia briefly referenced the minutes before indicating there were no requested revisions.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Burick

Second: Trustee Garcia

Vote:

- Mayor Pro Tem Burick — Yes
- Trustee Garcia — Yes

Outcome: Motion carried unanimously. The Consent Agenda was approved as presented.

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5. STAFF UPDATES AND STAFF COMMENTS

Fire Department

Fire Chief Greg Whited reported that the department's interns successfully completed approximately ten weeks of Saturday training while assisting both the department and the community. He also advised the Board that the Town had received notification of its EMS funding allocation for the upcoming year, which exceeded the previous year's allocation. Additional grant funding had also been approved for cardiac monitors and related emergency medical equipment, allowing the department to continue providing Advanced Life Support (ALS) services. Chief Whited also reported on an upcoming meeting with Doña Ana County regarding ambulance service coordination.

Code Enforcement

Code Enforcement Officer Edgar Ramirez introduced himself to the Board and reported that he had begun working on several code enforcement cases throughout the Town and was coordinating efforts with other departments.

Trustee Garcia suggested contacting Gabriel Lopez, a local volunteer known for assisting with graffiti removal through sandblasting, to determine whether he would be willing to help with graffiti abatement projects in Mesilla.

Community Development

Mayor Hernandez informed the Board that Community Development Director Eddie Salazar was unable to attend due to vehicle issues but might arrive later if circumstances allowed.

Public Works

Mayor Hernandez advised that Public Works Director Lorenzo Astorga was also unable to attend the meeting.

Finance

Town Clerk/Treasurer Gloria Maya reported that the Town's annual audit fieldwork was scheduled for October. She advised that the auditors would soon provide staff with a list of required documentation to begin preparing for the audit process.

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6. PUBLIC INPUT ON CASES

Mayor Hernandez opened the floor for public input regarding the agenda action items.

No members of the public requested to speak.

Mayor Hernandez closed public input on the cases.

7. NEW BUSINESS

A. PZHAC Case No. 062153 – 2138 Avenida de Mesilla

The Board considered PZHAC Case No. 062153, submitted by Thai Delight, requesting approval to replace the restaurant's storefront signage in the Historical Commercial Zone.

The Board reviewed the application materials and noted that the proposed sign was substantially similar to the existing sign. No additional questions or concerns were raised.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Burick
Second: Trustee Garcia

Vote:

- Mayor Pro Tem Burick — Yes
- Trustee Garcia — Yes

Outcome: Motion carried unanimously by the members present. PZHAC Case No. 062153 was approved.

B. Resolution 2026-40 – Fourth-Quarter Report

The Board considered Resolution 2026-40 approving the Town's fourth-quarter financial report. No discussion was held.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Burick
Second: Trustee Garcia

Vote:

- Mayor Pro Tem Burick — Yes
- Trustee Garcia — Yes

Outcome: Motion carried unanimously. Resolution 2026-40 was approved.

C. Resolution 2026-41 – Fourth-Quarter Budget Adjustment Resolution

The Board considered Resolution 2026-41 approving the fourth-quarter Budget Adjustment Resolution. No discussion was held.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Burick
Second: Trustee Garcia

Vote:

- Mayor Pro Tem Burick — Yes
- Trustee Garcia — Yes

Outcome: Motion carried unanimously. Resolution 2026-41 was approved.

D. Doña Ana County/Town of Mesilla Fire MOU and Updates

Mayor Hernandez presented the revised Memorandum of Understanding between Doña Ana County and the Town of Mesilla Fire Department. He explained that the agreement had already been approved by the Board at its previous meeting, subject to requested revisions and legal review.

The revised language included:

- Additional clarification regarding the deployment model;
- Expanded annual reporting and performance-measure requirements;
- More detailed provisions regarding liability, insurance, and the respective responsibilities of the Town and County; and
- Force majeure and default-liability provisions.

Mayor Hernandez reported that the Town's legal counsel had reviewed and approved the revised agreement and that the Doña Ana County Commission was scheduled to consider it the following day.

The Board discussed responsibility for ambulance equipment, medical supplies, EMS funding, and billing. Battalion Chief Morris explained that the department already had a cardiac monitor available and that each ambulance transport would eventually need to be billed. The Town had not historically billed for EMS transports, and discussions were ongoing regarding whether Doña Ana County or another agency would assist with processing the billing.

Trustee Garcia emphasized that insurance and Medicaid claims have strict filing deadlines and offered to assist voluntarily with billing until the Town could hire or designate appropriate staff. She noted her prior experience with dental billing and stated that the medical billing process used similar procedures, terminology, and codes.

Staff also reported that the Town was consulting with the City of Las Cruces regarding its ambulance-billing practices and collection rates.

Mayor Pro Tem Burick asked whether the agreement would return to the Board after County approval. Mayor Hernandez clarified that the Board had already approved the agreement at the previous meeting and that this discussion was only to provide the requested follow-up regarding the revisions. The agreement would take effect once approved by the County and signed by all parties. Staff could then proceed with additional recruitment and operational planning.

E. Upcoming Work Session Dates and Agendas

Mayor Hernandez stated that work sessions needed to be scheduled to continue discussion of several pending matters, including:

- Nuisance regulations;
- Noise regulations;
- Roadway matters involving Principal Street, Calle de Guadalupe, and Calle de San Albino; and
- The University Avenue corridor.

The Board agreed that each subject should be addressed during a separate work session so sufficient time could be devoted to each topic without rushing the discussion.

Mayor Pro Tem Burick recommended sending a scheduling poll because Trustees Cadena and Nevarez were absent, allowing all members to participate in choosing dates. The Board generally favored beginning the sessions at approximately 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. to encourage public participation.

Trustee Garcia advised that she would not be available on Wednesdays during August. Thursdays and Fridays were discussed as possible alternatives, depending on the members' schedules.

The Board directed staff to circulate a scheduling poll for proposed dates in August.

The Board also agreed to include a separate work session concerning the University Avenue corridor. Mayor Hernandez stated that residents along University Avenue should be invited to participate and that a public hearing or other opportunity for public feedback could be held before the work session. The discussion could also help identify potential funding opportunities and additional improvements requested by residents.

8. PUBLIC INPUT

Mayor Hernandez opened the floor for public input.

Ms. Janie Brown

Ms. Brown addressed the Board regarding the recently completed Multi-Use Path project. She expressed concerns about erosion, drainage, and runoff entering adjacent private properties following recent rainfall. She stated that portions of the project appeared unfinished and asked that the Town continue working with the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) to address the remaining deficiencies before the project is accepted as complete.

Ms. Brown also questioned the landscaping that had been installed along the project, noting that several of the native plants appeared to have died. She asked whether irrigation had been installed as shown in the project plans and requested additional follow-up regarding the maintenance responsibilities between the Town and NMDOT.

Mr. Paul Roder

Mr. Roder discussed drainage concerns associated with the Multi-Use Path and stated that runoff was now being directed toward residential properties rather than remaining within the roadway drainage system. He urged the Town to have an independent civil engineer review the project and determine whether the design met accepted engineering standards. He also questioned whether the steep slopes adjacent to the path complied with applicable safety standards and asked that the Town continue documenting deficiencies during the warranty period.

Ms. Beverly Estrada

Ms. Estrada provided comments regarding the landscaping installed as part of the Multi-Use Path project. She referenced project documents and photographs identifying plant species that had not survived and questioned whether the landscaping had been installed according to the approved plans. She also discussed maintenance responsibilities, irrigation, and the long-term appearance of the project, encouraging the Town to continue monitoring the landscaping until all warranty obligations had been satisfied.

Mayor Hernandez thanked the speakers for their comments and advised that staff would continue coordinating with NMDOT regarding the outstanding punch-list items and warranty work before the project is finalized.

9a. CLOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION

No Executive Session was held.

9b. CLOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Hernandez announced that the Board returned from Executive Session at **7:06 p.m.** He stated that the only matters discussed during the closed session were personnel matters pursuant to **Section 10-15-1(H)(2) NMSA 1978**, specifically regarding the Public Works Department and the Community Development Department.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Burick moved to return to the Regular Meeting.

Second: Trustee Garcia.

Outcome: Motion carried unanimously, and the Board reconvened into Regular Session at **7:07 p.m.**

9.B. Possible Action Following Executive Session

Approval of Grounds Maintenance Employee

The Board considered the appointment of **David Ferales** to fill the Grounds Maintenance position.

During discussion, Trustee Garcia asked about the starting salary. Mayor Hernandez responded that the position's starting salary was **$16.50 per hour**, consistent with the approved job description.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Burick

Second: Trustee Garcia

Vote: Roll call vote; motion approved unanimously.

Outcome: The appointment of **David Ferales** to the Grounds Maintenance position was approved.

Approval of Water Operator Level I Employee

The Board next considered the appointment of **Isaiah Chavez** to the Water Operator Level I position.

Trustee Garcia inquired about the starting salary. Mayor Hernandez advised that the starting pay would be **$18.50 per hour**. No further discussion was held.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Burick

Second: Trustee Garcia

Vote: Roll call vote; motion approved unanimously.

Outcome: The appointment of **Isaiah Chavez** to the Water Operator Level I position was approved.

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10. BOARD OF TRUSTEE COMMITTEE REPORTS & COMMENTS

Trustee Garcia

Trustee Garcia reported that the next **New Mexico Outdoor Economics (MPO)** meeting is scheduled for **August 12**. She advised that she would be out of town on personal business and had notified the organization of her absence, requesting to participate by telephone if a quorum was needed.

She also reported that the Blacksmith Shop Committee held its first meeting and stated that the committee is working toward organizing future discussions. Trustee Garcia noted that a Doodle Poll would be distributed to schedule the next committee meeting.

Trustee Garcia requested an update regarding the sinkhole on Highway 28 and asked who would ultimately be responsible for the repair costs. She also asked Mayor Hernandez whether he had received both of the emails she had previously forwarded regarding the matter.

Mayor Pro Tem Burick

Mayor Pro Tem Burick reported that the next MPO meeting would be held on **August 12** and had no additional comments.

Mayor Hernandez

Mayor Hernandez reported that he had been participating in several New Mexico Municipal League meetings involving district director nominations in preparation for the upcoming Municipal League Conference to be held in Las Cruces. He noted that although the Town of Mesilla was not hosting conference events, the Town anticipated increased visitor activity during the conference and encouraged Board members interested in attending to register through the Town Clerk's office.

Mayor Hernandez thanked the Board for scheduling upcoming work sessions and provided an update on the sinkhole located near University Avenue and Avenida de Mesilla. He explained that the sinkhole expanded significantly following recent rainfall and that the Town immediately secured the area with barricades. He thanked Trustee Garcia for contacting the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), which subsequently installed concrete barriers to improve public safety.

Mayor Hernandez explained that NMDOT determined the sinkhole resulted from damage to an underground stormwater conveyance pipe during utility boring associated with the new traffic signal project. He reported that NMDOT had accepted responsibility for the repair and had crews actively working to restore the damaged infrastructure. He further stated that additional nearby areas would continue to be monitored for similar concerns.

Mayor Hernandez also reported that new drinking fountains had been installed at Ramon Ortiz Park and Lions Park. An additional replacement fountain had been received for the Plaza and would be installed once staffing or contractor availability allowed. He noted that cast iron fountains require lengthy manufacturing times, similar to replacement streetlights.

Mayor Hernandez encouraged residents to utilize the Community Garden, noting that vegetables, including corn, squash, zucchini, and tomatoes, would soon be available for harvesting. He stated that Public Works continues maintaining the garden and that the Town is pursuing grant funding to construct an ADA-accessible walkway through the garden area. He also indicated that the Town may establish a volunteer "Garden Captain" program to assist with ongoing maintenance.

Mayor Hernandez clarified that the Town's Code Enforcement position is not a new position and that the department vehicle has been in service since approximately 2017. He also addressed rumors regarding the Town's ambulance service, explaining that Mesilla continues operating under an interoperability agreement with Doña Ana County and neighboring agencies, allowing the closest available emergency responder to answer calls regardless of jurisdiction. He emphasized that the agreement benefits both Mesilla residents and the surrounding region. Finally, he encouraged residents to contact Town staff directly whenever questions or concerns arise rather than relying on rumors.

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11. ADJOURNMENT

The Town of Mesilla Trustees unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting. (Summary: Yes -4)

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:22 P.M.

APPROVED THIS 24th DAY OF AUGUST, 2026

Russell Hernandez, Mayor

ATTEST:

Gloria Maya
Town Clerk/Treasurer

BOT REGULAR MEETING SIGN IN SHEET

July 27, 2026

NAME	ADDRESS
GREG LESTER	2557 Calle de Parian
ANDREA BRYAN	" " " "
Mary H Katz	2281 Calle de San Jose
Carl Morris	MFD
BILL & JANICE COOK	MESILLA
Lori Miller	"
Ben Schmitt	Mesilla
Beverly Estrada	Mesilla (Capri Rd)