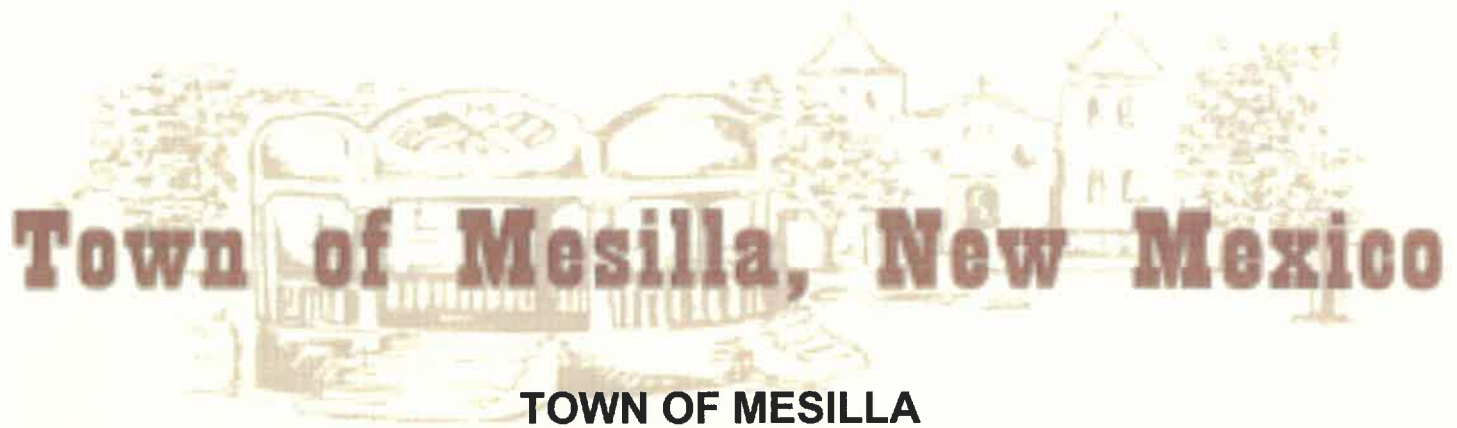




**PLANNING, ZONING AND HISTORICAL APPROPRIATENESS
COMMISSION (PZHAC)**

WORK SESSION AND REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, August 5, 2026

Mesilla Town Hall, 2231 Avenida de Mesilla

(MINUTES)

Commissioners Present

- Chair Eric Walkinshaw
- Vice Chair Eric Gallegos
- Secretary Lori Miller
- Commissioner Alvillar
- Commissioner Lucero

Staff Present

- Community Development Eddie Salazar
- Historic Specialist Liana Aguirre

Public Present

None

The revised agenda scheduled a 5:00 p.m. work session to review Mesilla Town Code Chapter 18.33 – Historic Preservation, followed by the Regular Meeting at approximately 6:00 p.m.

WORK SESSION @ 5:PM

Review Mesilla Town Code Chapter 18.33 – Historic Preservation

Chair Walkinshaw opened the work session shortly after 5:00 p.m. Mr. Eddie Salazar explained that the purpose was to review the Historic Appropriateness process under Chapter 18.33, clarify what types of exterior work should require a Certificate of Historical Appropriateness, and establish a

consistent procedure for staff and the Commission. He noted that establishing a clear process was especially important with a new Community Development Coordinator expected to take over more of the application processing.

The Commission reviewed MTC 18.33.020 – Applicability and questioned the reference to the Town's "four historic districts." Staff and commissioners could not identify four separate historic districts under the current zoning structure and discussed whether the language may refer to historic architectural styles, former districts, or outdated terminology. The Commission also discussed the provision concerning properties outside the historic district that may be subject to the 1973 preservation and development guidelines, commonly referred to as the Yguado Plan, as a zoning overlay. The meaning and present applicability of that provision were considered unclear and in need of additional research.

Discussion expanded to the possibility of using historic districts, overlays, or individual landmark designations to protect agricultural properties and other historically significant areas outside the existing Historic Residential and Historic Commercial zones. Chair Walkinshaw noted that future updates to historic registrations could result in additional properties becoming eligible based on age and significance. Staff also discussed the potential benefit of having different preservation standards for different parts of Town rather than applying the same standards uniformly to every property.

The Commission reviewed the definition and use of a development zone, which generally consists of the immediate surrounding area used to determine predominant architectural character and design standards. Staff emphasized that existing structures within a development zone should be used carefully as comparables because some prior approvals may not necessarily represent the character the Town intends to preserve.

Historic Appropriateness Permit Process

The Commission then focused on MTC 18.33.080 – Historical Appropriateness Permit. The code currently requires a Certificate of Historical Appropriateness before new construction, exterior alterations, demolition, or removal. A major issue discussed was whether every exterior alteration, regardless of size or significance, should be required to go through the complete Historic Appropriateness process.

Staff reviewed the existing process, which includes:

- A pre-application conference with Community Development staff;
- Providing the applicant with the Town's guide to building permits in the historic zones;
- Submission of a preliminary application;
- Review of architectural style, development-zone standards, and applicable rehabilitation standards;
- A PZHAC work session;
- Placement of the formal application on a PZHAC agenda;
- Public notice and, when applicable, a public hearing; and
- A PZHAC recommendation to approve, approve with modifications, or disapprove the application.

Mr. Salazar noted that the Town had not consistently followed all portions of this process in the past, including routinely providing the historic building guide or conducting a separate work session for each Historic Appropriateness application. Commissioners expressed concern that requiring a separate work session for every minor exterior modification could create unnecessary delays and workload.

The Commission discussed the requirement that PZHAC act within 45 days, with a possible additional 30-day extension. Staff noted that failure to act within the specified period could result in

the application being deemed recommended for approval and forwarded to the Board of Trustees. Commissioners recognized that the time limit may have originally been intended to protect applicants from indefinite postponements but expressed concern about automatic advancement when no action is taken.

Routine maintenance and repair that returns a property to its existing appearance were discussed as appropriate exemptions. The Commission also reviewed exemptions for storm doors, storm windows, and small accessory structures for animals. Discussion revealed that some terminology, including "storm door," could benefit from clearer definitions. Commissioners also discussed sheds and whether prefabricated sheds located in historic areas should be required to conform to the architectural character of the development zone.

A significant portion of the discussion concerned whether the Certificate of Historical Appropriateness should replace the normal zoning permit for historic-zone projects rather than requiring applicants to complete both processes. Staff presented historic application forms showing that the Historic Appropriateness application had previously functioned similarly to a zoning/building permit. The Commission generally discussed the benefit of developing one clear application process that identifies whether a project requires normal zoning approval, Historic Appropriateness approval, or both where applicable.

Commissioners discussed prior cases in which the process had been unclear, particularly exterior window modifications and projects that were approved with conditions but did not return to the Commission after staff or historic-preservation review. Chair Walkinshaw stated that all relevant information and recommended changes should be available to the Commission before it makes its decision. Staff agreed that conditions can help avoid unnecessary delays, but significant unresolved design issues should be addressed before final Commission action.

The Commission also discussed what constitutes demolition. The code definition was located during the discussion and defines demolition as an act or process that destroys a structure "in part or in whole." This clarified that partial removal can also constitute demolition.

Direction from the Work Session

Mr. Salazar requested that commissioners provide him with suggestions identifying what types of exterior alterations should require the full Historic Appropriateness process and what types of minor work should qualify for administrative review or an exemption. Staff will compile those suggestions for a future work session. The Commission emphasized the need for consistency so applicants are treated equally and staff has clear guidance.

The work session concluded with the understanding that no code amendments were being adopted during this session. The immediate goal was to clarify the existing procedure and identify possible amendments for later consideration through the proper ordinance process.

Commissioners Present

Chair Eric Walkinshaw
Vice Chair Eric Gallegos
Secretary Lori Miller
Commissioner Alvillar
Commissioner Lucero

Staff Present

Community Development Eddie Salazar
Historic Specialist Liana Aguirre

Public Present

Bill Cook
Janice Cook
Andrea Bryan
Greg Lester
Vicki Barrett

REGULAR MEETING @ 6PM

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Walkinshaw called the Regular Meeting to order shortly after 6:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. ROLL CALL AND DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Present: Chair Walkinshaw, Vice Chair Gallegos, Secretary Miller, Commissioner Alvillar, and Commissioner Lucero.

A quorum was established.

3. CHANGES / APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Secretary Miller

Second: Commissioner Lucero

Vote: 4-0

Outcome: Agenda approved as presented.

4. PUBLIC INPUT

Katalina Hadfield, owner of Purple Mountain Law Office, introduced herself and stated that she had submitted the applications for the business license and proposed sign at 2030 Calle de Parian. She stated that she was born and raised in Doña Ana County and was looking forward to potentially operating her law practice in Mesilla. She brought two versions of the proposed sign for the Commission to review.

Vicki Barrett appeared regarding the Berrier Farms request and stated that Mr. Salazar had the supporting information and that she was available to answer questions.

5. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

a. July 20, 2026 PZHAC Regular Meeting Minutes

A correction was requested regarding attribution of a statement in the July 20 minutes concerning newer structures within the Historic Residential Zone and the requirement for Historic Appropriateness review. Staff also acknowledged additional revisions that had previously been forwarded.

Motion: Secretary Miller

Second: Commissioner Alvillar

Vote: 4-0

Outcome: July 20, 2026 minutes approved with corrections.

6. ACTION AND CONSIDERATION

a. BUSINESS LIC #1515 – 2030 Calle de Parian, Purple Mountain Law Office

Mr. Salazar presented the request by Purple Mountain Law Office to operate at 2030 Calle de Parian in the Historic Commercial Zone. No construction modifications were proposed. Because the site does not provide the required off-street employee parking, the business would be required to pay the applicable parking fee. The applicant had submitted the required business documentation, and staff recommended approval.

Chair Walkinshaw asked how the parking requirement functions when no specific parking space can be assigned. Mr. Salazar explained that the fee is intended primarily to address employee parking associated with businesses that cannot provide the required off-street parking, rather than reserving spaces for customers. The applicant indicated that the law office would initially have one employee.

Motion: Commissioner Alvillar

Second: Vice Chair Gallegos

Vote: 4-0

Outcome: Business License #1515 approved.

b. PZHAC SIGN #062160 – 2030 Calle de Parian, Purple Mountain Law Office LLC

The Commission considered an eight-inch by twelve-inch wall sign to identify Purple Mountain Law Office at the separate entrance leading to the second-floor office. No illumination was proposed. Ms. Hadfield presented two versions of the sign, one aluminum and one glass. Commissioners expressed no preference between the two materials.

Mr. Salazar also raised a code question concerning whether a professional nameplate of less than one square foot may be exempt from the normal sign-permit requirement. Commissioners indicated that where staff is uncertain about an exemption, bringing the matter to the Commission is appropriate.

Motion: Vice Chair Gallegos

Second: Commissioner Lucero

Vote: 4-0

Outcome: PZHAC Sign #062160 approved.

c. PZHAC CASE #062157 – 1140 S. Highway 292 (Calle de El Paso), Berrier Farms LLC

Mr. Salazar presented the request to recognize 3.271 acres south of the Mesilla Drain as an independent parcel so that it could be deeded and sold to the adjacent agricultural property.

He explained that the property was historically divided when the Mesilla Drain was constructed by the U.S. Reclamation project between approximately 1926 and 1934. Although the land on both sides of the drain continued to be carried by the Doña Ana County Assessor under one tax account, the drain physically separated the property. Staff explained that County assessor parcel numbers are for tax purposes and are not themselves legal deeds.

The owner proposed selling the southern portion to the neighboring farm. The memorandum included in the packet indicated that the land would continue to be used for agriculture. The

Commission discussed whether the parcel met Rural Farm requirements and whether it could later be developed independently. Staff explained that because the parcel existed in its current configuration before adoption of the Town's zoning requirements, it would be considered a conforming lot; however, the stated intent was for it to be incorporated into the adjoining agricultural property. A future combination of the parcels would require the appropriate subdivision process.

Motion: Secretary Miller

Second: Commissioner Alvillar

Vote: 4-0

Outcome: PZHAC Case #062157 approved.

7. COMMISSIONERS / STAFF COMMENTS

Mr. Salazar followed up on a previously approved project near Principal Street and Calle de Parian. The original approval included a low wall intended to provide privacy for rental units. The property owner subsequently indicated that he was considering a different treatment involving brick pavers and possibly an adobe wall. Mr. Salazar advised him that he could not simply omit elements of the approved plans and that any proposed change would need to return for review. The matter was expected to come back before the Commission at a future meeting. Chair Walkinshaw also asked that the previously approved window treatment be reviewed when the project returns.

Mr. Salazar corrected information previously provided about New Mexico Municipal League training. He explained that the upcoming local conference was primarily for municipal officials and staff, while the annual training relevant to commissioners would be held in Albuquerque on September 9. Commissioners interested in attending were asked to notify staff so registration and lodging could be arranged.

Historic Preservation staff reported attending a preservation conference in Minneapolis and discussed new ideas and networking opportunities. Staff also reported on the Town's first Certified Local Government grant opportunities, including a repair grant for qualifying locally designated historic properties and an application for a historic walking-tour map with digital and audio components incorporating local oral histories. Property owners were encouraged to pursue local historic designation and begin preparing contractor estimates, scopes of work, and other documentation needed for future grant opportunities.

Historic Preservation staff also discussed proposed changes to the federal Section 106 historic-preservation review process and expressed concern that the changes could reduce required consultation with state and local governments, tribes, and the public when federal undertakings affect historic properties. Commissioners were encouraged to review the information and participate in future public-comment opportunities. Staff indicated that additional educational materials and information would be provided.

The Commission briefly discussed the difference between local and national historic designation and the need for a broader Town preservation plan. Staff explained that properties must be individually nominated to the Town's local register rather than automatically adopting the National Register list. Local nominations can also help support future National Register eligibility and preservation incentives.

Mr. Salazar asked commissioners to provide their Historic Appropriateness-process recommendations within approximately two weeks so staff could compile them for a later work session. He clarified that the August 17 meeting would include a public hearing, so continued review of Chapter 18.33 would likely occur at a subsequent meeting.

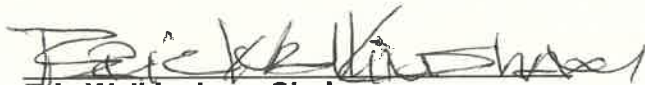
Chair Walkinshaw also asked how previously approved ordinance amendments are applied before the municipal code publisher formally incorporates them. Mr. Salazar clarified that an adopted ordinance becomes effective after the applicable effective period even if the online codified code has not yet been updated. Staff agreed to provide commissioners with copies or links to recently adopted amendments so they can apply the current requirements.

Mr. Salazar advised the Commission that the new Community Development Coordinator would eventually assume more of the day-to-day permitting and Commission support responsibilities, while he would remain involved in Community Development, Historic Preservation, events, and code enforcement oversight. He also discussed implementation of new permitting/software tools intended to improve staff efficiency and public access.

8. ADJOURNMENT @ 7 PM

The Regular Meeting concluded following Commissioners/Staff Comments.

APPROVED on August 17, 2026 by:



Eric Walkinshaw, Chair

Planning, Zoning and Historical Appropriateness Commission



ATTEST:



Gloria Maya

Town Clerk/Treasurer

