



**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 AUGUST 24, 2026
6:00 P.M.
MINUTES**

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

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

PUBLIC Joe DeLaPaz Cynthia Hernandez
Crystal Whited C. Alexander
Trina Witter Beverly Estrada
Gail Ann

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the Town of Mesilla Board of Trustees was called to order at 6:00 P.M. The Mayor Pro Tem welcomed those present and requested that everyone stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. ROLL CALL AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Roll call was conducted and a quorum was established.

- Mayor Pro Tem: Stephanie Johnson-Burick
- Trustees: Veronica Garcia, Biviana Cadena, Gerard Nevarez

The transcript audio for the initial roll call was unclear and did not reliably identify each individual response.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

During approval of the agenda, a request was made to remove New Business Item F, concerning approval of a historic preservation nomination, in order to obtain additional information concerning the designation before proceeding with the nomination.

A motion was made to remove Item F from the agenda. The motion was seconded. A roll-call vote was conducted, and the amendment was approved. The discussion reflected the desire to obtain additional information before proceeding with the historic preservation nomination.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

The Consent Agenda included:

- Board of Trustees Minutes of July 27, 2026;
- Board of Trustees Minutes of August 10, 2026; and
- Purchase Requisition for Able Signs for sign replacement in the amount of \$10,625.00.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Consent Agenda.

During discussion, Trustee Garcia asked whether the sign purchase had already been paid. Staff advised that the payment status could be verified through Accounts Payable. Trustee Garcia requested that, going forward, information identifying whether purchases had already been paid or remained unpaid be included.

A friendly amendment was also presented regarding the July 27, 2026 minutes. On pages 11 and 12, under Board of Trustee Committee Reports and Comments, the organization referenced should be corrected to "M.O." rather than "MMOE," as reflected in the draft minutes.

A roll-call vote was conducted, and the Consent Agenda was approved as amended.

6. PRESENTATIONS

A. Life Saving Awards

Fire Chief Greg Whited presented Life Saving Awards recognizing personnel involved in a coordinated emergency response to a cardiac arrest involving a suspected opioid overdose.

Chief Whited read a recommendation submitted by Paramedic Lieutenant Chris Stevens, who was on scene during the incident. Personnel recognized included Lieutenant Stevens, Battalion Chief Cole Morris, Captain Crystal Whited, personnel from New Mexico State University, and Mesilla Deputies Manny Sanchez and Katrina Ornelas.

Chief Whited explained that Deputy Sanchez and Deputy Ornelas quickly recognized that the patient was in cardiac arrest and initiated CPR prior to the arrival of emergency medical services. Once EMS arrived, personnel conducted a coordinated high-performance resuscitation, established appropriate medical access and airway management, and were ultimately successful in restoring a heartbeat before transporting the patient to the hospital.

Deputy Manny Sanchez was called forward and formally recognized for his lifesaving actions.

Chief Whited stated that the department has received several similar lifesaving recognitions during the past year and credited improvements in equipment, training, and interoperability with neighboring emergency response agencies. He explained that the use of compatible equipment among Mesilla Fire, NMSU, and surrounding agencies has improved coordination during emergency incidents.

Members of the Board thanked the personnel involved and encouraged the Fire Department to continue bringing lifesaving recognitions before the Board so the employees' efforts can be publicly acknowledged.

Chief Whited emphasized that immediate CPR prior to EMS arrival was critical in this incident and thanked the Marshal's Department personnel for beginning lifesaving measures before the arrival of the ambulance.

B. Historic Fire Truck Photography Presentation

Historic Preservation staff presented a photograph of the Town's historic fire truck donated by photographer Gail Ann.

Staff explained that Ms. Ann attended the Town's Preservation Week activities at the end of May and photographed several events. Following those activities, she approached the Town regarding an older photograph she had taken of the historic fire truck and expressed a desire to donate the work to the Town and Fire Department.

Ms. Ann explained that she had spent time in the Las Cruces/Mesilla area since approximately 1972 and believed the photograph was likely taken during the late 1980s. She recalled that the historic fire truck was then surrounded by a simple wire and log enclosure, before the installation of a later metal fence.

Ms. Ann formally donated the original photograph to the Town of Mesilla. The work is titled "Heatwave."

Staff also noted that Ms. Ann had created cards using the image that may potentially be used for fundraising efforts associated with restoration of the historic fire truck. Members of the Board thanked Ms. Ann for the donation and contribution to the preservation effort.

C. Town of Mesilla Children's Activity Book

Historic Preservation staff presented an activity book developed in cooperation with Doña Ana Community College (DACC).

Staff explained that she had been working with DACC faculty, including an instructor from the Digital Film and Media Department, to develop projects that could increase community engagement and introduce children to Mesilla's history and historic structures.

What initially began as a request for a coloring book developed into a more comprehensive activity book prepared by Mr. DeLaPaz, a DACC student. The activity book includes illustrations, activities, crossword puzzles, information on the history of Mesilla, and representations of recognizable historic buildings and community landmarks.

Mr. De LaPaz explained that the project began as a college assignment but developed into something he became personally invested in as he researched Mesilla and considered ways to represent local culture. He stated that the project also influenced his interest in pursuing elementary education.

Staff reported that approximately 35 children received copies during the Town's summer program and responded very positively to the activity book.

The Board discussed opportunities to obtain additional copies, including possible grant funding, future budget consideration, sales, or accepting donations so that copies could continue to be provided free of charge to children while remaining available to the general public.

Mr. De LaPaz noted that the activity book could also be enjoyed by adults and older residents. The Board thanked Mr. De LaPaz for his work and contribution to the Town.

7. STAFF UPDATES AND STAFF COMMENTS

A. Marshal's Department

Marshal Supervisor Ben Ascarate congratulated Deputy Manny Sanchez and Deputy Katrina Ornelas on the lifesaving recognition.

He further advised that Deputy Sanchez had subsequently been involved in another lifesaving incident at Andele's involving a choking child and indicated that additional recognition may be presented at a future meeting.

Marshal Ascarate thanked the Board for approving two new hires at the previous meeting. He reported:

- Officer Lopez was completing field training on day shift and was expected to transition to graveyard shift during the next pay period.
- Officer Alvarez would remain on day shift for approximately three months before transitioning to graveyard shift for another three months as part of the full field-training program.
- Both officers were progressing well and had been sworn in by Magistrate Judge Flores.

The department was also preparing staffing schedules, traffic control, and crosswalk assignments for the upcoming Fiesta.

Marshal Ascarate reported that traffic congestion associated with Rio Grande Preparatory Institute (RGPI) had improved and expressed hope that completion of the Zia access route would further reduce traffic problems by allowing vehicles to enter from the rear and exit near the football field. At present, the daily traffic situation can require two to three officers for traffic control.

During questions, concerns were raised regarding dirt bikes operating in a residential area. Marshal Ascarate asked residents to report incidents when they occur and indicated that video evidence could also be provided to the department for follow-up.

B. Fire Department

Fire Chief Greg Whited reported that the department continued to await execution of an agreement with Doña Ana County. He explained that administrative delays were occurring because changes in County personnel titles affected authorization and access needed to execute documents.

Chief Whited reported that the department's current call volume had already exceeded the total call volume from the previous year, including increased transports and emergency responses.

The department's new cadets were progressing well, although one cadet had recently accepted employment with another agency.

Chief Whited discussed the Town's automatic-aid relationship with neighboring agencies and stated that the system was working well. During a recent incident, Mesilla personnel were already committed to one emergency when another critical call occurred within Mesilla. Because dispatch knew Mesilla's unit was unavailable, another agency was dispatched immediately.

Chief Whited stated that NMSU was also staffing an additional daytime ambulance in the Los Alturas area, which had recently assisted Mesilla during an emergency call.

A Trustee raised concern regarding motorists failing to yield to emergency vehicles. Chief Whited explained that public education efforts continue, but drivers sometimes fail to recognize emergency lights and sirens until emergency vehicles are extremely close. He described a recent near-collision involving the ambulance and emphasized the need for motorists to remain alert and yield to emergency vehicles.

C. Public Works Department

Public Works Director Lorenzo Astorga reported that Public Works had recently completed several roadway patching projects, including larger pavement repairs.

The department was preparing for the upcoming Fiesta and continued working on weed maintenance throughout Town. Mr. Astorga stated that additional information would be provided at future meetings concerning several pending infrastructure projects.

Mr. Astorga then recognized Ms. Dorothy for 10 years of service to the Town of Mesilla and presented her with a plaque. Members of the Board thanked her for her years of service.

During questions, Mr. Astorga confirmed that Public Works had repaired several potholes on Snow Road and stated that additional locations remained on the department's list. Additional patching material had been ordered.

Concerns were raised regarding weeds and drainage conditions along University Avenue. It was clarified for the record that University Avenue remained under NMDOT responsibility at that time and was not yet a Town of Mesilla Public Works maintenance responsibility. Members of the Board emphasized that residents should not interpret the condition of University Avenue as a failure by Town Public Works personnel.

D. Community and Economic Development Department

Community and Economic Development Director Eddie Salazar reported the department's activity for the previous month. The department issued:

- 9 business licenses;
- 5 zoning permits; and
- 4 administrative zoning permits.

Fiesta / 16 de Septiembre Planning

Director Salazar stated that the department's primary current focus was preparation for the upcoming Fiesta. A coordination meeting had been held with department heads, the Community Events Coordinator, and the Mayor.

Staff discussed event activities, the float, the parade, and arrangements involving the Queen of Mesilla contest.

Director Salazar stated that information regarding the Queen contest had been posted and that staff had met with the owner of a bridal boutique to obtain advice regarding how to organize and administer the competition. An application had been prepared, and interested participants were encouraged to apply.

Director Salazar indicated that he and the Mayor were assisting with administration of the contest because the Community Events Coordinator was handling numerous other event responsibilities.

Historic Preservation

Director Salazar reported that work continued on the third edition of the Historic Preservation newsletter.

He stated that considerable staff time had recently been devoted to researching five local historic preservation nominations. The work involves archival research, contacts, telephone calls, and verification of historic information.

Director Salazar noted that community interest in the Historic Preservation program continued to increase, with additional residents contacting the Town and expressing interest in participating.

Blacksmith Committee

Director Salazar reported that another Blacksmith Committee meeting had been scheduled for Friday at 3:00 P.M. following a scheduling poll.

An agenda had been distributed. He clarified that the Blacksmith Committee was an Ad Hoc committee, rather than a formal board or commission subject to the same meeting structure. Nevertheless, the Town intended to provide public information concerning the meetings and make the proceedings available through YouTube so interested residents could observe or participate.

GIS and iWorQ Implementation

Director Salazar reported that implementation of the Town's GIS and iWorQ systems continued.

The department was beginning to use the code enforcement and permitting modules to identify and resolve operational issues prior to broader implementation.

The final training session for the current portion of the system was expected to occur that week, after which staff would transition to implementation of the Planning and Zoning module.

Director Salazar stated that the long-term goal was to improve access to Town records and communication among staff, the Board of Trustees, commissioners, and the public. The system is expected to allow users to access permit and property information electronically.

New Community Development Employee

Director Salazar introduced a new member of the Community and Economic Development Department, Paulo Rocha, who had begun work that Monday.

Mr. Rocha attended the meeting to meet the Board and become familiar with the Town's meeting and permitting processes. Director Salazar reported that Mr. Rocha Alfaro had already begun assisting with department cases, meeting minutes, and training on the iWorQ system.

Records Management and Standard Operating Procedures

Director Salazar reported that records management remains a high priority for the department.

Funding for the proposed Square 9 records-management system was not received, so implementation had been postponed.

He emphasized that proper records management is critical for understanding the history of prior Town approvals and for assisting staff and the governing body in future decision-making. He noted that the Town historically retained a large volume of records and that records should be reviewed according to proper retention requirements so obsolete material can be eliminated and important records made easier to locate.

Director Salazar also reported that he had begun developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the department to provide a structured process for departmental duties, responsibilities, and application processing.

Code Enforcement

Director Salazar commended Code Enforcement Officer Edgar Ramirez for his work.

He reported that Officer Ramirez regularly coordinates with the department concerning code-enforcement cases and was taking courses toward national certification as an Animal Control Officer.

Director Salazar stated that the coursework includes legal training concerning enforcement authority, search-and-seizure limitations, and other subjects relevant to code and animal-control enforcement.

Political Signs

Director Salazar advised the Board that political signs had begun appearing around Town and that the issue would be discussed later on the agenda.

He stated that Code Enforcement was monitoring signs under the Town's current ordinance but that staff would benefit from direction so the Town could administer its regulations without unnecessarily interfering with candidates' ability to participate in the election process.

Mesilla Street Lighting / Media Inquiry

Director Salazar advised that the Town had received an inquiry from a KRWG reporter concerning Mesilla's streetlights, including why certain lights have a yellow appearance and whether their design has historic or other significance.

He stated that he did not want to provide information to the media without first verifying the historical basis for the lights.

Board discussion indicated that some of the streetlights were installed approximately ten years earlier, with a combination of Town and legislative funding. Members recalled that installation may have occurred around the same time the Town was working on its Night Sky ordinance.

Discussion also suggested that the yellow light may have been selected both to support dark-sky objectives and to provide a more traditional historic appearance resembling lantern light. Director Salazar stated that he would research the purchase orders, ordinances, and historical records before providing information to the reporter.

Local Historic Register Nomination Process

Director Salazar recognized Ms. Liana Aguirre for the significant amount of research and effort involved in preparing local historic preservation nominations.

He explained that staff's primary historic reference is an older Town historic inventory prepared during approximately the 1980s, which provides the baseline information for many properties. Staff supplements that material with archives, online research, community contacts, and other sources.

Director Salazar encouraged residents with historic information to participate in the research process.

He expressed concern about receiving significant new historical information immediately before or during nomination hearings, which can delay consideration and require additional hearings.

Director Salazar asked the Board for direction concerning how the Town should handle historic nominations when some historical details remain unverified. Options discussed included nominating a property primarily based upon the significance of the structure itself and supplementing the historical narrative later as additional facts are verified, or including a disclaimer or source statement identifying that historical information is based upon specified inventories, archives, oral histories, or other references and should not necessarily be relied upon as a legal determination.

Director Salazar indicated that establishing a consistent process would help staff move nominations forward while still allowing the historical record associated with each property to be expanded and corrected as additional information becomes available.

The Board discussed concerns regarding the reliability of historic information, particularly information based primarily on oral histories or word-of-mouth accounts. Director Salazar agreed that community stories are valuable but stated that staff must determine how those accounts can be verified before incorporating them as established facts into the Town's Historic and Cultural Register.

Board members expressed support for including historical narratives when adequate supporting documentation is available and noted that more complete information can strengthen the presentation and significance of individual properties.

Historic Preservation Committee

Trustee Garcia suggested establishing a small historic preservation research committee to assist staff with nominations.

The Board discussed including knowledgeable longtime residents, local historians, and possibly individuals associated with previously approved nominations. Historic Preservation staff agreed that a small committee of knowledgeable residents and historians could assist with filling gaps in the historical record and identifying additional sources of information.

It was suggested that the committee remain relatively small so that it could remain focused and productive. The possibility of rotating members periodically was also discussed so that additional community perspectives could be incorporated.

Recognition of Code Enforcement Officer Ramirez

A Trustee recognized Code Enforcement Officer Edgar Ramirez for his recent efforts in the Mesilla Park area.

The Trustee reported that Officer Ramirez had independently gone door-to-door speaking with residents regarding concerns involving trees. She described observing him continuing to contact residents despite difficult weather conditions and stated that he remained committed to completing the work.

The Trustee noted that Officer Ramirez encountered residents who were upset but remained professional, listened to their concerns, and continued working to resolve the issue. She thanked him for taking initiative and stated that his efforts had helped earn the respect and appreciation of residents in the area.

Fiesta / Parade Participation

The Board asked whether staff had received information regarding the number of entries or participants for the upcoming parade. Director Salazar stated that he did not yet have the final number and would follow up with the Community Events Coordinator.

The Board also asked what activities were planned for the 16 de Septiembre Fiesta. Director Salazar reported that planned activities included:

- a mechanical bull;
- children's activities;
- entertainment;
- vendors;
- piñatas;
- the Queen of Mesilla activities; and
- additional activities still being finalized.

Director Salazar noted that this would be his first year being directly involved in the Fiesta from beginning through the conclusion of the event.

Queen of Mesilla

The Board discussed the traditional process previously used to select the Queen of Mesilla.

It was recalled that historically contestants raised funds by selling tickets, with the contestant selling the most tickets being selected as Queen. Funds raised through that process had historically benefited the Fire Department.

Director Salazar explained that staff had reconsidered that approach. Following discussions with the bridal boutique representative who was assisting staff with development of the program, staff felt that selecting a winner principally through fundraising could create the appearance of paying to win.

Staff was therefore considering criteria that place greater emphasis on matters such as essays, community involvement, public service, and other merit-based participation.

The Board emphasized the historical importance of Mesilla's 16 de Septiembre celebration and expressed a desire for the Town to actively promote and strengthen the event. Board members stated that Mesilla should take ownership of the celebration as one of the area's significant traditional events and should actively seek participation from car clubs, organizations, and other community groups.

Blacksmith Committee Meeting

A Trustee requested that an email reminder be sent to members of the Blacksmith Committee regarding the upcoming Friday at 3:00 P.M. meeting, stating that she had not received notice of the meeting. Staff agreed to send a reminder to committee members.

Section 106 Historic Preservation Webinar

Discussion followed regarding a notice that had been distributed concerning Section 106.

Ms. Liana Aguirre clarified that the event was not a Town meeting but an online webinar primarily directed toward historic preservation commissioners and preservation professionals.

She explained that the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions (NAPC) provides regular educational webinars and that this particular program was being made available free to the public because of proposed changes involving the federal historic preservation process.

Ms. Aguirre stated that the webinar concerned the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and potential changes affecting the National Historic Preservation Act and Section 106 review process. Because the matter could have national and future local implications, staff distributed the information so Mesilla residents and officials could become informed and participate in any available public-comment opportunities.

Ms. Aguirre agreed to forward the webinar information to members of the Board and stated that printed information and QR codes for registration were also available.

Ms. Aguirre further announced that she had received a scholarship to travel to Washington, D.C., where she would represent and advocate for historic preservation interests affecting the Town of Mesilla, including issues related to Section 106. The Board congratulated her and thanked her for representing the Town.

Upcoming Board Work Session

The Board discussed an upcoming work session and whether Trustees would be permitted to actively participate.

Director Salazar explained that the purpose of the work session was for the Board to discuss issues, exchange ideas, and develop possible approaches before the subsequent public-hearing process.

He stated that staff was already receiving comments and concerns from members of the public and would compile those comments in advance so they could be considered as part of the Board's discussions.

8. PUBLIC INPUT

The Mayor Pro Tem opened the public-input portion of the meeting. Staff advised that written correspondence had been received and would be included in the official meeting record and minutes.

Chris Alexander - Historic Preservation

Mr. Chris Alexander addressed the Board regarding historic preservation.

Mr. Alexander emphasized that the accuracy of information contained in historic nominations and listings is essential. He expressed concern that inaccurate or inadequately researched information could negatively affect the Town's historic preservation efforts.

He encouraged the Town to continue supporting local historic nominations while ensuring that information used to support those nominations is thoroughly researched and accurate.

Mr. Alexander suggested seeking assistance and input from outside historical organizations, including the Doña Ana County Historical Society, and recommended that the Town formally request participation and assistance from such organizations.

He suggested that pending nominations be carefully reviewed until the Town establishes a clear and consistent process identifying what information and documentation should be required.

Mr. Alexander emphasized the importance of Mesilla's historic character and stated that the community has an opportunity to use historic preservation to protect its heritage while strengthening the Town's future.

He concluded by encouraging the Board to obtain as much professional and community support as possible to establish a strong foundation for the Town's historic preservation program.

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Resolution 2026-42

The Board considered Resolution 2026-42. A motion was made and seconded. A roll-call vote was conducted.

MOTION: Trustee Nevarez

SECOND: Trustee Garcia

Following discussion, the motion carried.

RESULT: Approved

B. Resolution 2026-43 - Water Trust Board Design Funding

The Board considered Resolution 2026-43, relating to submission of an application for Water Trust Board/NMFA funding for design work.

Cynthia Stoechner-Hernandez of Souder, Miller & Associates addressed the Board.

Ms. Stoechner-Hernandez explained that the New Mexico Finance Authority (NMFA) was offering 100 percent grant funding for design-only projects during the current funding cycle.

She stated that the next funding cycle would begin in December and would provide opportunities involving planning, design, and construction.

Following discussions with the Mayor and Town staff, approximately 11 potential projects had been identified for inclusion.

Ms. Stoechner-Hernandez explained that the resolution authorized the Town to submit the application and that applications were due September 17, 2026. She advised that she would assist Town staff in preparing and submitting the application.

MOTION: Trustee Nevarez

SECOND: Trustee Garcia

Following discussion, the motion carried.

RESULT: Approved

C. Resolution 2026-44 - Political Sign Interpretation, MTC §18.65.070

The Board considered Resolution 2026-44, concerning interpretation of the Town's political-sign regulations under Mesilla Town Code §18.65.070.

Director Salazar explained that the issue had arisen because the election season was beginning and staff had received questions regarding when political signs may legally be displayed within the Town.

He stated that the current ordinance generally establishes a 30-day period, but questions had arisen because of early voting.

Director Salazar asked the Board to clarify whether the 30-day period should be calculated from the date of the general election or the first day of early voting.

He noted that surrounding jurisdictions may allow political signs for longer periods, including 60 or 90 days, and that differing regulations along municipal and county boundaries can create confusion for candidates and residents.

Director Salazar also explained that Code Enforcement had already encountered political signs displayed earlier than allowed under the Town's current interpretation and needed clear direction from the Board.

Board Interpretation - 30 Days Before Early Voting

Board members expressed support for maintaining Mesilla's existing 30-day limitation but interpreting the period to begin 30 days before the first day of early voting, rather than 30 days before Election Day.

The Board did not favor extending the period to match the longer timelines used by neighboring jurisdictions.

Board members stated that candidates should have the full 30-day period before voters begin casting ballots and that the Town should communicate the interpretation to the Doña Ana County Clerk's Office so election materials provided to candidates accurately reflect Mesilla's requirements.

Enforcement of Political Sign Violations

Director Salazar requested additional direction regarding how Code Enforcement should handle political signs displayed in violation of the ordinance.

He explained that identifying or contacting a political campaign can be difficult and that staff sometimes removes illegally placed signs and retains them so they can later be returned.

The Board distinguished between signs located on private property and signs placed illegally within a public right-of-way or on public property.

For signs displayed on private property before the permitted date, Board discussion favored having Code Enforcement first notify the property owner and provide an opportunity to voluntarily remove the sign rather than immediately confiscating it.

A suggested procedure was to attempt contact with the resident; if no one is available, leave a written notice identifying the violation; identify the date on which the sign may legally be displayed; request removal within approximately 24 hours; and document the contact before considering further enforcement.

Board members expressed concern that Town employees could be blamed for damaging campaign signs if staff physically removed signs from private property.

For signs illegally placed within public rights-of-way or on Town property, the Board agreed that the signs could be removed because they were not lawfully located on private property.

Director Salazar also stated that staff could reduce violations through public education. He proposed contacting political parties and campaigns regarding Mesilla's requirements and providing information through Town communication channels.

Board members recommended coordinating with the County Clerk's Office and posting information in visible locations, including the Town website and other public locations frequently used by residents.

Campaigning Near Polling Locations

The Board also discussed restrictions on campaigning near polling locations.

Members recalled that campaign activity and campaign vehicles must remain outside the legally established restricted area surrounding a polling place. Discussion referenced a 100-foot restriction and prior incidents in which campaign vehicles had to be moved from areas near the polling location.

It was noted that election poll workers are responsible for enforcing applicable polling-place restrictions, with assistance from the appropriate authorities if necessary.

MOTION: Trustee Nevarez

SECOND: Trustee Garcia

Following discussion, the motion carried.

RESULT: Approved

D. Historic Preservation Nomination - 1650 Highway 292

The Board considered a Historic Preservation Nomination for property located at 1650 Highway 292. A motion was made and seconded to place the item before the Board for consideration. Historic Preservation staff Ms. Liana Aguirre presented the nomination.

Accuracy of Existing Historic Documentation

Ms. Aguirre began by explaining that much of the information used in the Town's current nomination work originates from documentation associated with the National Register, which the Town has relied upon for approximately 46 years.

She stated that recent research has raised questions regarding the accuracy of portions of that historical information.

Ms. Aguirre indicated that she intended to seek guidance from the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) regarding how the Town should address previously accepted information that may later be determined to be inaccurate.

She emphasized that the Town must establish a process that protects the accuracy and integrity of both its existing historic documentation and its new local Historic and Cultural Register.

Town of Mesilla Historic and Cultural Register

Ms. Aguirre explained that the Town of Mesilla Historic and Cultural Register is separate from the National Register and was established as part of the Town's responsibilities as a Certified Local Government (CLG).

She stated that the initial thought had been to transfer existing National Register properties onto the local register. However, the local process instead requires individual consideration of properties and a determination of whether each structure independently qualifies as historic.

Ms. Aguirre explained that historical narratives involving residents, families, events, and community history are extremely valuable because they bring a property to life, but the historical significance of a structure can exist independently from those associated narratives.

She explained that a historic structure may qualify based upon characteristics such as age, historic materials, architectural style, workmanship, integrity, location, setting, and design. Additional historical associations with important families, individuals, events, or activities can add another layer of significance.

Local Designation Compared With National and State Registers

Ms. Aguirre explained that local designation carries different responsibilities than National or State Register recognition.

The local register is administered through the Town's preservation and design-review process, with recommendations made through PZHAC and final decisions made by the Board of Trustees.

She explained that exterior alterations to designated historic structures are reviewed for compatibility with the historic character of the structure and surrounding area.

The purpose of design review is to maintain historically appropriate architectural elements and protect the integrity and character of Mesilla's historic environment.

Ms. Aguirre further stated that local designation may provide opportunities for grants and historic rehabilitation assistance when applicable.

Historic Eligibility Criteria

Ms. Aguirre outlined several factors commonly considered when determining whether a property qualifies as historic, including whether the property is generally 50 years of age or older; remains in its historic location; retains identifiable original design, historic setting, significant materials, workmanship, and feeling; and continues to convey the character of its historic period.

Additional significance may result from association with an important architect, individual, family, event, gathering place, transportation use, or other activity that contributed to the development of Mesilla or the region.

Ms. Aguirre also emphasized the importance of supporting historic nominations with sources. Oral histories may be considered, but where possible they should be supported by primary or secondary sources such as archival materials, newspapers, photographs, and other documentation.

Nomination - Historic Silo at 1650 Highway 292

Ms. Aguirre clarified that the nomination was specifically for the historic silo located at 1650 Highway 292 and did not include the residence or the entire property.

She described the structure as what is believed to be the last remaining historic silo in Mesilla. The silo is constructed of concrete and retains its historic materials.

Ms. Aguirre explained that earlier agricultural silos were commonly constructed of wood and that concrete silos became more common in southern New Mexico following development of the Rio Grande irrigation system during the early 20th century.

She stated that prior to major irrigation development, agriculture in the Mesilla Valley was largely focused on fresh-market crops, orchards, and open-range ranching. The introduction of more dependable irrigation contributed to changes in agricultural practices and the construction of facilities such as concrete silos.

Ms. Aguirre stated that historic silos have become increasingly rare in Mesilla and that the nominated structure represents an important physical reminder of the Town's agricultural heritage.

She cited historical agricultural information indicating that in approximately 1950 there were 22 silos associated with properties of one to nine acres in Doña Ana County.

She stated that, to her knowledge, the silo at 1650 Highway 292 is now the last remaining example within Mesilla. Another known silo had previously existed elsewhere in Town but was subsequently demolished.

Ms. Aguirre explained that the structure provides evidence of Mesilla's agricultural development and technological transition and remains in its historic agricultural setting, surrounded by active farmland.

She further reported that available historical information indicated the farm had been associated with the Oñate family and that Commissioner Gallegos had recalled family stories of his grandfather obtaining milk and other dairy products from the farm when it operated as an active dairy.

A roll-call vote was conducted on the historic preservation nomination for 1650 Highway 292.

MOTION: Trustee Cadena

SECOND: Trustee Nevarez

Following discussion, the motion carried.

RESULT: Approved

E. Historic Preservation Nomination - 2190

The Board considered the historic preservation nomination for 2190. Historic Preservation staff Ms. Liana Aguirre explained that the properties were nominated by Karen Rice, daughter of Emily Cano. Ms. Rice provided staff with numerous historical documents and records relating to the property.

Ms. Aguirre stated that three structures located on the same parcel were being nominated together. Two of those structures were already listed as contributing properties on the National Register.

Structure No. 38 / Café de Mesilla

Ms. Aguirre identified one of the structures as National Register No. 38, currently known as Café de Mesilla.

The National Register description identifies the building as a flat-roofed, stuccoed adobe residence with wood-frame windows, some protected by rejas, a remate on the façade, vigas and latillas. The National Register dates the building to approximately 1920 and identifies it as a contributing structure.

Ms. Aguirre noted that newer information provided by Ms. Rice suggests the building may instead have been constructed circa 1932.

Regardless of the exact construction date, Ms. Aguirre stated that the building retains its historic architectural footprint, setting, adobe construction, wood frames and windows, and other historic materials.

Ms. Aguirre further explained that the building has served as a commercial and cultural gathering place since approximately 1961. Documented uses include a barber shop, the Pelería Cano, an engraving shop, a jewelry store, an artist studio, and several restaurants. She noted that the building has operated as restaurant space for approximately 40 years and therefore possesses significance not only for its architecture, but also as a longstanding community gathering place.

Southwest Adobe Structure

Ms. Aguirre next discussed the small adobe building located at the southwest corner of the property. She stated that the structure had once been known as a pottery-related building and may have served other functions before that use.

The structure retains historic workmanship, footprint, original materials and location. It is believed to have been constructed around 1930.

Unplastered Adobe Workshop

The third structure discussed was an unplastered adobe building. Ms. Aguirre stated that the building appears to have remained unplastered throughout its existence and is believed to date from approximately the 1930s.

It reportedly functioned as a workshop for members of the Cano family and possibly earlier families associated with the property.

Trustee Nevarez indicated that the property may also connect to his family's history, providing additional historical information for staff to research.

Ms. Aguirre emphasized that Mesilla's history often contains multiple layers and perspectives and that the Town should attempt to capture as much verified information as possible while exercising caution regarding unsupported claims.

She also noted the significance of the adobe structures themselves, explaining that many were likely constructed by local residents using earth and water from the surrounding Mesilla Valley and Rio Grande area.

Barber Chair Discussion

During Board discussion, a Trustee suggested that staff research a historic barber chair reportedly associated with Mesilla and currently displayed at Fort Sumner.

The Trustee stated that information associated with the chair reportedly identifies it as having come from a Mesilla barber shop and suggested that historical documentation may connect the chair to Billy the Kid.

Ms. Aguirre stated that she had heard similar stories involving a barber shop near the Plaza and agreed that the information warranted additional research.

She then referenced a National Register description of the exposed adobe workshop structure, which described it as a U-shaped building with a flat roof, parapet, wood-frame windows and tin canales. The National Register identifies the building as having once been a residence and later being used as a workshop by Ray Cano, with an estimated construction date of approximately 1890.

MOTION: Trustee Garcia

SECOND: Trustee Cadena

Following discussion, the motion carried.

RESULT: Approved

F. Historic Preservation Nomination – Calle de Picacho – Griggs Home – *Removed from agenda*

G. Historic Preservation Nomination – 2551 Calle de Principal, Texas and Pacific Hotel

The Board considered the historic preservation nomination identified as 251 - Texas and Pacific Hotel. A motion was made and seconded to place the item before the Board.

Ms. Aguirre explained that the structure is also listed on the National Register as No. 128. She advised the Board that staff could provide copies of the National Register documentation and was working toward making a digital version available on the Town website.

Historic Description

Ms. Aguirre read from the National Register description, which states that the remaining structure is all that survives of the Texas and Pacific Hotel, one of the important social centers in the region during the 1870s.

During its operation, the hotel reportedly contained a spacious bar, a billiard room, and a theater. The original hotel occupied substantially more of the block than the remaining structure.

The surviving building is a stuccoed adobe structure with wood-frame windows, some with pediments, canales, buttresses, and rough-hewn lintels visible above openings. The building fronts the street in the traditional manner and is believed to date to approximately 1850.

Historic Land Office

Ms. Aguirre explained that deed research conducted with assistance from Doña Ana County interns uncovered additional information concerning the property.

In addition to its association with the Texas and Pacific Hotel, the property also housed an early land office, referred to in the transcript as La Associ.

Ms. Aguirre stated that the hotel operated during approximately the 1870s and that the surviving building is now used as a residence. She described the structure as a significant example of the Territorial architectural style.

The current owner was described as interested in restoring the property in a manner consistent with its historic character. Ms. Aguirre stated that the structure retains historic setting, workmanship and materials, and is significant both architecturally and because of its historical use as a hotel and land office.

Board Discussion Regarding Historical Associations

A Trustee commented that this was the property historically believed to have been associated with a colonel, referring to information previously provided to staff.

Ms. Aguirre agreed that additional research remained necessary and noted that this concern illustrated the need for the historic research committee previously discussed.

She reported that she had already contacted John Hunter, President of the Doña Ana County Historical Society, as well as other local historical organizations and individuals.

She expressed support for including knowledgeable Mesilla residents, historians and local organizations in developing the narratives associated with the Town's historic buildings.

Ability to Update Historic Information

A Trustee asked whether historical information could be corrected after a property had been approved for inclusion on the local register.

Ms. Aguirre explained that the Board's immediate determination is whether the structure itself is historic. She stated that historical narratives associated with a designated structure can continue to be researched and updated when new information becomes available.

Ms. Aguirre suggested that significant updates could be brought back to the Board informationally, potentially during a work session, without necessarily requiring the property to undergo the entire designation process again.

Board discussion emphasized that Mesilla's historic record is continuously evolving as residents provide oral histories, family information and other documentation that may not previously have been recorded.

A Trustee expressed support for moving forward with designation of qualifying structures so property owners may become eligible for preservation-related funding and restoration opportunities.

The Board clarified that approval of the nomination was intended to recognize the historic structure, while historical narratives and individual associations could continue to be researched and refined.

Ms. Aguirre agreed and reiterated that stories add context and meaning but are not necessarily the sole defining factor in determining whether a building possesses historic significance.

MOTION: Trustee Nevarez

SECOND: Trustee Garcia

Following discussion, the motion carried.

RESULT: Approved

Ms. Aguirre encouraged residents with additional historical information to contact her office and contribute to the Town's ongoing research.

10. PUBLIC INPUT - CONTINUED

Chris Alexander - Historic Preservation Process

Mr. Chris Alexander addressed the Board again regarding the historic preservation nomination process.

Mr. Alexander expressed concern with approving historic nominations when portions of the supporting historical information are known to be incomplete or inaccurate.

He stated that, in his opinion, an item should be tabled until the supporting information is correct rather than approved with the intention of correcting the record later. Mr. Alexander stated that accuracy is important to maintaining the credibility of the Town's preservation program.

He provided the example of a property referred to as the Griggs home, stating that in his family's historical understanding it should more accurately be identified as the Chavez-Griggs home.

Mr. Alexander reiterated his recommendation that the Town obtain assistance from historical authorities and organizations, including the History Department at New Mexico State University, the Doña Ana County Historical Society, and other local historians and preservation experts.

He emphasized that he did not dispute that the properties being discussed qualify historically but believed the associated documentation should be as accurate as possible at the time of designation.

Mr. Alexander further stressed that historic preservation should focus on preserving Mesilla's authentic historic character and encouraged the Town to place greater emphasis on celebrating and protecting its history.

Trina Witter - Section 106

Ms. Trina Witter encouraged the Board of Trustees and PZHAC members to participate in the upcoming Section 106 webinar.

She expressed concern that proposed federal changes could reduce opportunities for public participation in historic preservation review.

Ms. Witter encouraged the Board to prepare comments proactively before the formal public-comment period begins because such comment periods can be short.

She further suggested that, if federal protections are weakened, the Town consider strengthening its own local historic preservation ordinances and working with SHPO to determine what additional local protections may be appropriate.

Beverly Estrada - Code Enforcement, Traffic and University Avenue

Recognition of Officer Ramirez

Ms. Beverly Estrada commended Code Enforcement Officer Ramirez for his response to concerns in the Mesilla Park area.

She stated that Officer Ramirez personally visited residents, communicated both in person and by telephone, and demonstrated professionalism, honesty, humility and effective communication.

She stated that although residents were initially dissatisfied, Officer Ramirez's handling of the matter ultimately earned neighborhood support and respect.

Dirt Bikes and Speeding

Ms. Estrada thanked the Marshal's Department for its presence in the area but expressed continuing concern regarding dirt bikes, speeding vehicles, possible late-night racing, and increased roadway noise.

She stated that these activities frequently occur between approximately 11:30 P.M. and 4:00-4:30 A.M. She also commented that removal of the former ditch eliminated a sound barrier that had previously reduced roadway noise.

University Avenue Maintenance

Ms. Estrada expressed concern regarding the appearance and maintenance of University Avenue. She stated that she did not believe Town Public Works should bear responsibility for conditions that remain under NMDOT jurisdiction.

She identified concerns including overgrown weeds, litter and beer containers, debris and standing material in drainage areas, vehicles entering drainage areas, and accumulated leaves and trash.

Ms. Estrada asked whether the Town's Code Enforcement Officer could issue NMDOT a notice or citation for conditions that would otherwise violate Town property-maintenance standards.

NM 101 / Section 106 Concerns

Ms. Estrada also discussed continuing resident research concerning the former acequia/ditch affected by the NMDOT University Avenue project.

She stated that residents had not stopped researching the matter and expressed concern that additional information suggested the ditch may have been historically protected.

Ms. Estrada stated that NMDOT had requested another extension relating to her public-records request.

She further stated that NMDOT provided correspondence indicating a Section 106 study had been completed but was unable to provide an Area of Potential Effects (APE) map, which she understood had not been completed.

She encouraged continued communication between residents and Town officials as additional information becomes available.

Chris Alexander - Public Hearing Procedure

Mr. Alexander returned to address the Board concerning the procedure used during the prior historic preservation public hearing.

He stated that a public hearing should provide an opportunity for public participation as each individual item is presented, rather than presenting all nominations first and allowing public comment only at the end.

Mr. Alexander stated that each nomination should be addressed separately, with an opportunity for public comment immediately following the presentation of that item.

He expressed concern that requiring members of the public to wait until the end of multiple presentations makes it difficult to adequately respond to individual issues within a limited comment period.

Mr. Alexander urged the Town to establish a clearer public-hearing format because additional public hearings are expected in the future.

11. BOARD OF TRUSTEE COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Trustee Report - Museum Advisory / Blacksmith Committee / Community Development

A Trustee reported attending a Museum Advisory Board meeting and noted the upcoming Blacksmith Shop Committee meeting scheduled for Friday.

The Trustee also reported meeting with Community and Economic Development staff to receive updated information regarding departmental activities.

The Trustee commented favorably on the meeting materials and encouraged the Town to continue providing similar information.

Trustee Veronica Garcia

Trustee Garcia reported that she did not attend the recent MPO meeting because she was out of town on a personal matter.

She stated that she and Marshal Ascarate had been attempting to schedule a meeting but had experienced conflicts in their respective schedules.

Trustee Garcia also clarified for the record that her votes in favor of the historic preservation nominations were based on her understanding that the Board was approving the historic structures, rather than permanently adopting unverified historical narratives associated with those structures.

She emphasized that the Board of Trustees serves as the voice of Mesilla residents and stated that Trustees have a responsibility to listen to resident concerns, conduct research, and advocate on their behalf.

Trustee Biviana Cadena

Trustee Cadena reported that there would be no Regional Transit meeting during August and that meetings would resume in September.

She also commented on the J. Paul Taylor Family Day, held Saturday, August 22, from approximately 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.

Although she was unable to attend due to illness, she stated that the event appeared to have been well attended and successful with support from the Town of Mesilla.

Mayor Pro Tem / MPO Report

The Mayor Pro Tem reported on an MPO meeting held Wednesday, August 12.

A resolution was approved authorizing the MPO to enter into an agreement or memorandum with New Mexico Department of Transportation, City of Las Cruces, and South Central Regional Transit District.

The meeting also included an NMDOT Road Safety Audit Process Overview, including information concerning how federal transportation funding is distributed to states and local governments.

The next MPO meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, September 9.

12. UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Thursday, August 27, 2026 at 5:00 P.M. - Work Session regarding the Nuisance and Noise Ordinance.
- Thursday, September 3, 2026 at 5:00 P.M. - Work Session and Public Hearing concerning the University Corridor and Mesilla Park neighborhoods.
- Monday, September 14, 2026 at 5:00 P.M. - Work Session and Public Hearing regarding municipal streets and possible one-way streets within the Town of Mesilla.

13. ADJOURNMENT

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

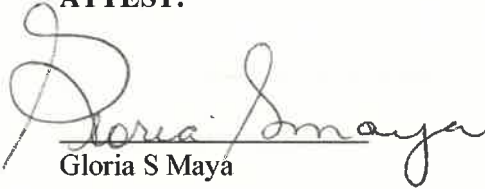
MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:35 P.M.

APPROVED THIS 14TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER 2026.



Russell Hernandez, Mayor

ATTEST:



Gloria S Maya
Town Clerk/Treasurer



**BOT REGULAR
MEETING
SIGN IN SHEET
AUGUST 24, 2026**

[illegible]

