



Town of Mesilla, New Mexico

TOWN OF MESILLA PLANNING, ZONING AND HISTORICAL APPROPRIATENESS COMMISSION (PZHAC)

WORK SESSION AND REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 8, 2026

Mesilla Town Hall, 2231 Avenida de Mesilla

(MINUTES)

Commissioners Present

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

Staff Present

- Community Development Eddie Salazar
- Community Development Paulo Rocha
- Historic Specialist Liana Aguirre

Public Present

- Robert Williams
- Sam Bernal
- Eric Sanchez
- Teresa Sanchez
- Everardo Carbajal
- Carlos Aguilar

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Walkinshaw called the Regular Meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m. and invited those present to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. ROLL CALL AND DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Roll call was conducted. Chair Walkinshaw, Vice Chair Gallegos, Secretary Miller, Commissioner Alvillar, Commissioner Mulvihill, and Commissioner Lucero were present. A quorum was established.

3. CHANGES / APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Commission considered approval of the September 8, 2026 agenda. During the motion, the meeting date was briefly misstated as September 3 and immediately corrected to September 8, 2026. No further discussion was held.

Motion: Commissioner Mulvihill moved to approve the agenda.

Second: Secretary Miller.

Vote: Vice Chair Gallegos - Yes; Secretary Miller - Yes; Commissioner Alvillar - Yes; Commissioner Mulvihill - Yes.

Outcome: Motion carried 4-0; agenda approved.

4. PUBLIC INPUT ON ACTION AND CONSIDERATION ITEMS

Chair Walkinshaw opened public input for the four cases listed under Action and Consideration.

Annette Granado

Good afternoon. My name is Annette Granado, and I am here on behalf of my mom, Rebecca Segovia, owner of 2928 La Mesilla Circle. I want to make it clear that we are not against Mr. Bernal subdividing his property or building his own private road from Calle del Sur. The new proposal shows that Mr. Bernal will have his own private road coming from Calle del Sur. My only request is that it be made very clear that my mother's road will not be used for regular access or emergency access to this subdivision. I also want to make sure that does not change down the road, whether Mr. Bernal keeps the property, passes it on to his family, or someone else eventually buys it. My mother's private road should not become an access road for this subdivision. So, I am asking that this be clearly stated in the approval and the documents that are recorded with the property. We are not trying to stop this subdivision. If Mr. Bernal can provide and maintain his own access from Calle del Sur, we are okay with it. Before you vote, I would just ask that you confirm for the record that my mother's road will not be used for either regular or emergency access to this subdivision now or in the future, regardless of who owns the property. Thank you.

No additional public input was received.

5. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

The Consent Agenda consisted of the August 17, 2026 PZHAC Regular Meeting minutes. Commissioners indicated that the minutes appeared accurate, and no corrections were requested.

Motion: Vice Chair Gallegos moved to approve the Consent Agenda.

Second: Commissioner Mulvihill.

Vote: Vice Chair Gallegos - Yes; Secretary Miller - Yes; Commissioner Alvillar - Yes; Commissioner Mulvihill - Yes.

Outcome: Motion carried 4-0; August 17, 2026 PZHAC Regular Meeting minutes approved.

6. ACTION AND CONSIDERATION

A. PZHAC CASE #062171 - 2231 CALLE DE PARIAN

Motion: Vice Chair Gallegos moved to approve PZHAC Case #062171.

Second: Commissioner Alvillar.

Community Development Coordinator Paulo Rocha presented PZHAC Case #062171, submitted by Eric and Theresa Sanchez, requesting approval to install a three-ton packaged air-conditioning unit at 2231 Calle de Parian in the Historic Commercial Zone. The unit would serve two bedrooms and two bathrooms and would be installed toward the rear of the residence. The property already contains another air-conditioning unit serving other portions of the residence.

Staff reviewed the site plan, proof of ownership, contractor business license, and photographs showing the location of the existing and proposed equipment. Staff noted that the proposed equipment is subject to the exterior-appearance requirements of MTC 18.35.050 and historic-preservation review under MTC Chapter 18.33.

Chair Walkinshaw asked about the height of the proposed unit compared with the existing unit. Property owner Eric Sanchez stated that the proposed unit would be somewhat smaller and would be installed toward the rear of the structure. He explained that the residence currently uses mini-split systems that have caused ongoing problems and that the new packaged unit would replace those mini-splits rather than replace the existing packaged unit.

After the vote, Chair Walkinshaw asked about a Public Works signature he initially thought was missing. Staff confirmed that the approval was present as an electronic signature and remained valid.

Vote: Vice Chair Gallegos - Yes; Secretary Miller - Yes; Commissioner Alvillar - Yes;

Commissioner Mulvihill - Yes.

Outcome: Motion carried 4-0; PZHAC Case #062171 approved.

B. PZHAC CASE #062169 - 2450 CALLE DE PRINCIPAL

Motion: Commissioner Mulvihill moved to approve PZHAC Case #062169.

Second: Secretary Miller.

Staff presented PZHAC Case #062169, submitted by Felix Armijo, requesting amendments to previously approved building plans at 2450 Calle de Principal in the Historic Commercial Zone. The proposed amendments included relocating the previously approved drainage pond, installing a 52-inch wrought-iron fence, installing red brick pavers, and eliminating previously approved front entry walls.

Historic Preservation Specialist Liana Aguirre identified several concerns with the work already completed and with the proposed amendments. She stated that the proposed wrought-iron fencing did not reflect the design standards of the structure and development zone. She also identified concerns with the installed doors, door color, windows, and light fixtures. She explained that the windows appeared too modern, with muntins located inside the glazing rather than having the exterior appearance expected in the historic area. She recommended exterior wood framing and exterior muntins to create a more appropriate historic appearance. She also stated that the door should be a heavier natural wood design, the door color should conform to the approved palette, the front light fixtures appeared too modern, and the electric meter should be screened from street view.

Commissioners questioned why the applicant wanted to depart from the originally approved plans, including moving the ponding area and eliminating the front walls. Staff stated that the applicant was not present and had not provided a clear explanation for all of the requested changes. Commissioners also questioned the exact design and location of the proposed wrought-iron fence and requested actual photographs or drawings of the proposed fencing rather than a conceptual illustration.

Ms. Aguirre explained that an existing ornamental wrought-iron gate on the property was different in character from the new fencing being proposed. She reiterated that the residence should reflect the historic character of the area and that the current window and door treatments did not meet that standard.

Commissioners expressed frustration that the originally approved plans had not been followed. Chair Walkinshaw noted that MTC Chapter 18.33 contemplates work sessions before significant historic design proposals move forward and stated that the case would benefit from a work session. Commissioners discussed the need for a clearer process to ensure that approved permits are actually followed and to establish enforcement consequences when a project materially deviates from its approval.

Community/Economic Development Director Eddie Salazar stated that the originally approved project had not been adhered to and acknowledged that the Town currently lacks

a final inspection or close-out process comparable to the Construction Industries Division inspection process. He suggested that the Town consider a future check-and-balance procedure, particularly for work in historic zones. He stated that Mr. Armijo had been told that he could not simply deviate from the approved permit and that the present case was brought forward so the Commission could determine whether the proposed alternatives were acceptable. Mr. Salazar agreed that the matter should return for a work session and stated that he would further research the enforcement process for projects that fail to follow approved plans.

A commissioner asked whether fines or other enforcement measures exist when an applicant does not follow an approved plan. Mr. Salazar responded that the applicant must be held accountable and must go through the proper process, and that the Town would need to determine the appropriate enforcement mechanism as the hearing examiner process and other enforcement procedures are developed.

Vote: Vice Chair Gallegos - No; Secretary Miller - No; Commissioner Alvillar - No; Commissioner Mulvihill - No.

Outcome: Motion failed 0-4. The proposed amendments were not approved; discussion indicated the matter should return for a work session and further review.

C. PZHAC CASE #062161 - 2355 AVENIDA DE MESILLA / RIO GRANDE PREPARATORY INSTITUTE

Motion: Commissioner Mulvihill moved to approve PZHAC Case #062161.

Second: Commissioner Alvillar.

Staff presented PZHAC Case #062161, submitted by Everardo Carbajal on behalf of Las Cruces Public Schools, requesting approval for a new pergola/mercado project on the west side of the Rio Grande Preparatory Institute property at 2355 Avenida de Mesilla. The property is within the Historic Commercial Zone. The project consists of three steel pergolas intended to provide a place for students to present and sell products.

Staff reviewed historic-preservation requirements applicable to exterior construction in the Historic Commercial Zone and displayed the proposed site plan and renderings. The design uses exposed structural steel intended to weather naturally and develop a rustic appearance consistent with the nearby bus-stop design.

Everardo Carbajal of Build-x Construction Company explained that the project would use concrete foundations, steel posts, and exposed steel rafters and beams. The steel would be allowed to oxidize naturally to develop the desired rustic appearance, although he noted that the aging process could be accelerated chemically if Las Cruces Public Schools chose to do so. The rafters would be slightly angled to provide shade, and lighting and electrical outlets would be incorporated for student use.

Carlos, the project designer with Navitech and Associates, introduced himself and stated that he was available to answer design questions. Discussion clarified that the primary working surface would be a concrete slab with colored concrete or brick-like trim. The slab would be approximately six inches thick, while individual steel-column footings would extend approximately two feet by two feet by two feet.

Historic Preservation staff recommended consideration of archaeological monitoring because of the depth of the column footings and the historic sensitivity of the area. Staff noted that the school building itself is not historic, but the surrounding area is historically sensitive and the project remains subject to the historic-zone review requirements.

Commissioners also discussed the appearance of the structures from the street and concluded that the design generally echoed the existing bus-stop design and was visually compatible with the setting.

Mr. Salazar raised questions about how the proposed student mercado would function, particularly if events were opened to the public, because of limited Town Hall parking. Project representatives explained that students and school events would have access to the Rio Grande Preparatory Institute parking lots. The concept originated from a student competition and was intended to create opportunities for students to display and sell class projects and crafts, potentially in conjunction with the Mesilla Farmers Market or during after-school and evening events.

Commissioners asked how proceeds would be handled. Representatives explained that proceeds would generally support the applicable student class, club, or organization. Mr. Salazar added that the educational concept was intended to expose students to real-world processes, including business licensing and renewals, and that students would be expected to follow the same licensing process where applicable.

Vote: Vice Chair Gallegos - Yes; Secretary Miller - Yes; Commissioner Alvillar - Yes; Commissioner Mulvihill - Yes.

Outcome: Motion carried 4-0; PZHAC Case #062161 approved.

D. PZHAC CASE #062172 - SUMMARY SUBDIVISION, 2615 CALLE DEL SUR

Motion: Commissioner Alvillar moved to approve PZHAC Case #062172.

Second: Vice Chair Gallegos

Staff presented PZHAC Case #062172, submitted by Sam Bernal, requesting approval of a summary subdivision of property adjacent to his residence at 2615 Calle del Sur in the Historic Residential Zone. The proposal would divide the approximately 1.09-acre property into two parcels. Access would be provided through Mr. Bernal's property from Calle del Sur by a private road that begins at approximately 20 feet and widens to approximately 35 feet near the proposed lots for access, utilities, and fire-service maneuvering. A turnaround

would be provided between the two proposed parcels, and a fire hydrant was proposed on La Mesilla Circle to improve emergency-service coverage.

Staff explained that variances were being requested from the requirement that each lot in the Historic Residential Zone have at least 80 feet of frontage on a public street and from certain street-improvement requirements because the proposed access is a private road. Staff reviewed the history of the request, including PZHAC approval of a prior subdivision proposal on August 12, 2025 and subsequent denial by the Board of Trustees on August 25, 2025 because of concerns regarding legal access. The current proposal changed the access configuration and reduced the subdivision to two lots. If approved, a final replat prepared by a licensed surveyor would be required.

Commissioners questioned whether a large fire apparatus could safely enter from Calle del Sur, use the private road, and turn around. Staff explained that the submitted plan was intended to provide that access and turnaround. Later in the discussion, staff clarified for the record that engineers had measured the proposed configuration and determined that a fire engine would be able to use the turnaround.

A commissioner expressed concern about the prior civil-access issue and asked whether it had been resolved. Mr. Bernal explained that the previous proposal involved use of a southern access and that his current proposal would no longer use that road. He stated that the new turnaround would allow the fire truck to enter and exit through his own access from Calle del Sur. He emphasized the cost of repeatedly revising plans and stated that prior attempts to subdivide the property had also required substantial expenditures.

Commissioners asked whether the change eliminating the southern access was in writing and expressed concern that the subdivision should be completed correctly before it returns to the Board of Trustees. Mr. Salazar explained that the prior civil issue arose because the earlier proposal contemplated use of a private road belonging to Rebecca Segovia. Under the current application, Mr. Bernal is providing access through his own property from Calle del Sur and is not requesting any use of Ms. Segovia's private road.

Discussion then focused on the proposed lot lines and an existing adobe building. Mr. Bernal explained that the purpose of adjusting one boundary was to square off an existing angled lot line near his residence and provide reasonable space around the house. Staff clarified that the existing adobe building would remain on one of the two proposed lots, with the second parcel remaining vacant, and that the emergency turnaround would be located between the two lots.

Commissioners questioned whether a hammerhead turnaround was permitted and asked for clarification concerning the earlier project requirements. A minor typographical error was also identified on the application where the year had been entered as 2027; staff indicated that it could be corrected.

The Commission discussed whether the property should be described as landlocked and why a variance was necessary. Staff explained that MTC requirements call for minimum lot area and frontage on a public street. Because the proposed lots would be served by a private road rather than direct frontage on a public street, a variance was being requested through the summary-subdivision provisions. Mr. Salazar explained that similar summary

subdivisions had used this process and that the subdivision ordinance authorizes the Planning Commission to vary, modify, or waive certain requirements when strict compliance would inhibit the objectives of the regulations, subject to the code standards.

A commissioner returned to the public comment requesting that the southern private road never be used in the future and questioned whether the Commission had legal authority to impose such a restriction on future owners. Staff advised that the application before the Commission proposed only the new access through Mr. Bernal's own property and did not request use of the southern private road. Staff cautioned that imposing a permanent restriction on future ownership beyond the application could exceed the Commission's land-use review authority.

Before the vote, staff reiterated that engineers had confirmed the proposed turnaround was dimensioned to accommodate fire apparatus.

Vote: Vice Chair Gallegos - Yes; Secretary Miller - Yes; Commissioner Alvillar - Yes; Commissioner Mulvihill - No. Commissioner Mulvihill stated that she believed the concern raised by the neighboring property owner still needed to be addressed.

Outcome: Motion carried 3-1; PZHAC Case #062172 approved.

7. COMMISSIONER / STAFF COMMENTS

Historic Preservation - Liana Aguirre

Ms. Aguirre provided a clarification regarding nominations to the Town's local Historic and Cultural Register, historic significance, and integrity. She explained that a property can be historically significant under a single qualifying criterion and does not need to satisfy multiple criteria. She also discussed her consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office regarding updates to historic-property documentation.

Ms. Aguirre explained that historic-register information can be updated as new information becomes available. She described technical amendments as corrections or additions involving matters such as physical descriptions, resource inventories, photographs, or maps, and substantive amendments as changes involving criteria, areas of significance, or periods of significance. She emphasized that nominations are made based on the best information available at the time and can later be supplemented or corrected.

She reviewed the general National Register evaluation concepts that Mesilla also uses for local historic review, including significance in history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture and integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. She stated that many of Mesilla's buildings can qualify because of their physical historic character even without an extensive narrative of significant persons or events.

Ms. Aguirre stated that she planned to develop a process or form for adding verified historical information to local-register documentation as additional ownership histories and other research become available.

Historic Trades / Educational Outreach

Ms. Aguirre reported meeting with Rio Grande Preparatory Institute regarding possible historic-trades programming and an upcoming meeting with the school's construction instructor. She discussed the possibility of a Mesilla history day and an educational grant application with a short deadline. Ideas included friendly competitions among grade levels, plays, poster projects, short videos, and student-created digital or audio tours focused on different areas of Mesilla.

She also reported that the Historic Preservation newsletter was being prepared before the upcoming celebration and encouraged commissioners and residents to participate in preservation activities. Ms. Aguirre stated that she would have a table during the upcoming weekend celebration and noted that Community Development staff had been working on the event.

Preservation Advocacy / Washington, D.C.

Ms. Aguirre reported that she would travel to Washington, D.C. approximately two weeks later through a scholarship opportunity to speak about historic preservation on Capitol Hill. She stated that current preservation discussions include protection of private lands and review of federal undertakings and encouraged continued public participation in preservation matters.

Commissioner Comments / Staff Recognition

A commissioner congratulated Community Development Coordinator Paulo Rocha on his work during the meeting. Mr. Rocha thanked the Commission, Chair, and residents for the opportunity and stated that serving the community was an honor and that he looked forward to future meetings.

Additional Comment from Sam Bernal

Mr. Bernal asked to place an additional statement on the record regarding his case. He stated that he had spoken with the neighboring property owner's daughter and, as long as he was alive, his children would not request to use the rear easement. Discussion acknowledged that future ownership circumstances cannot be predicted with certainty.

Community Development Director - Eddie Salazar

Mr. Salazar reminded commissioners who were attending Municipal League training in Albuquerque the following day that registration information had been emailed. He reviewed travel arrangements, hotel coordination, mileage reimbursement, per diem/actual expense procedures, and the need to retain itemized receipts.

Mr. Salazar also discussed the upcoming September celebration, including a parade scheduled to begin at 10:00 a.m. and a matachines/Aztec-style dance performance scheduled later in the day. He encouraged commissioners to attend.

Mr. Salazar concluded by complimenting Mr. Rocha on handling his first meeting presentation and stated that he intended to give Mr. Rocha increasing responsibility for the full meeting process while remaining available to answer questions and provide support.

ADJOURNMENT: The regular meeting ended at 7:35 p.m.

APPROVED on September 21, 2026 by:

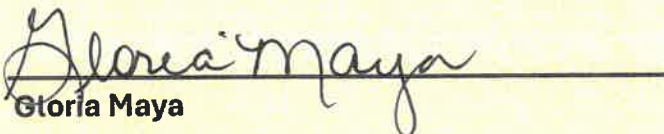


Eric Walkinshaw, PZHAC Chair

Planning, Zoning and Historical Appropriateness Commission



ATTEST:



Gloria Maya

Town Clerk/Treasurer