

Town of Mesilla, New Mexico

TOWN OF MESILLA

PLANNING, ZONING AND HISTORICAL APPROPRIATENESS COMMISSION (PZHAC) WORK SESSION AND REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, September 21, 2026

Mesilla Town Hall - 2231 Avenida de Mesilla, Mesilla, New Mexico
(MINUTES)

Commissioners Present

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

Staff Present

- Community Development Eddie Salazar
- Community Development Paulo Rocha
- NM CID Thomas Maese

Public Present

- Mary Helen Ratje
- Trina Witter

WORK SESSION 5:00 PM

[00:05:34] PZHAC CASE #062169 - 2450 Calle de Principal

Applicant Felix Armijo, Historic Commercial (HC) Zone, Review of Proposed Amendments to Previously Approved Construction

Chair Eric Walkinshaw opened the work session and explained that the purpose was to further review PZHAC Case #062169 concerning the property at 2450 Calle de Principal. The Chair expressed concern regarding the importance of the property's location near the Mesilla Plaza and immediately across from historic structures. He noted that the Commission had previously worked with the applicant to accommodate the project while attempting to maintain compatibility with the surrounding historic district.

The applicant was not present at the beginning of the work session. Chair Walkinshaw requested that staff provide the Commission with a chronology of the project, including the original approval, subsequent

modifications, and the current request, so that the Commission could better understand how the project had evolved.

[00:07:36] Staff Report and Project History

Community Development staff presented PZHAC Case #062169 and explained that the applicant was requesting amendments to previously approved plans. The requested changes included relocation of a previously approved drainage pond, installation of approximately 52-inch wrought-iron fencing, installation of red brick pavers, and elimination of previously approved entry/privacy walls. The property is located within the Historic Commercial zoning district.

Staff explained that the applicant proposed red brick pavers extending from the front entry area along the south side toward the rear parking area. The drainage configuration was also proposed to change, and wrought-iron fencing was proposed in connection with the drainage area.

Historic Preservation staff, including Liana Aguirre, had identified concerns regarding several elements of the construction. These included the proposed wrought-iron fencing, modern doors, modern windows and interior window grids/panes, exterior light fixtures, and screening of the electrical equipment. Staff explained that wood framing and exterior architectural elements could potentially be incorporated into the windows to create a more historically appropriate appearance. A heavier natural-wood door was also recommended.

Staff further explained that much of the information originally provided by the applicant had been communicated verbally rather than through photographs, drawings, or other visual documentation. This created difficulty in determining exactly what the applicant intended to construct.

The Commission was reminded that exterior changes within the historic district require PZHAC review for compliance with the Town's historic preservation requirements and subsequent approval by the Board of Trustees.

[00:10:20] Chronology of Previous Approvals

The Commission discussed the history of the project. Staff indicated that the original project had been approved near the end of 2023 and that the applicant subsequently requested an extension of the permit. Construction, however, had only begun relatively recently.

The Commission discussed a later modification involving the porch/portico. Members recalled that the applicant had previously discussed using a red-colored roof material. Staff confirmed that the porch configuration had changed from the original design and that the project currently reflected a different porch treatment.

The previously approved design also included divider/privacy walls along the front of the units. Those walls had not been constructed.

The Commission expressed concern that changes were repeatedly being made without first returning to the Town and PZHAC for approval.

[00:18:00] Construction Documents and CID Coordination

A representative involved with building-code review explained that the construction documents submitted for state review did not contain several of the historic-design elements discussed by the Town, including wood doors and wood-framed windows.

The representative stated that the construction completed to date generally reflected the plans that had been submitted for building-code purposes. If additional historic-design requirements had been established by the Town, those requirements should also have appeared in the construction documents so that inspectors would know what conditions were required.

Staff acknowledged that the Town had not previously used a separate historical appropriateness permit in this case, which may have contributed to the disconnect between the Town's historic-design discussions and the construction documents submitted for state review.

[00:25:00] Windows and Historic Appearance

The Commission discussed the installed windows at length.

Staff explained that Liana Aguirre had recommended adding wood framing and exterior architectural elements to the windows to provide a more traditional Territorial-style appearance. Commissioners reviewed photographs showing an example of wood trim that had apparently been installed on a rear window.

Commissioners discussed whether similar treatment could be applied consistently to the remaining windows. The Commission emphasized that the treatment should not simply satisfy a technical requirement but should result in an appearance compatible with the historic district.

Members agreed that the currently installed modern windows did not reflect what the Commission had envisioned for the project.

[00:31:00] Doors

The Commission reviewed the proposed replacement doors.

Staff reported that the historic preservation recommendation was for a heavy natural-wood door with an appearance appropriate to the historic character of the structure. Commissioners expressed concern that the proposed replacement door still appeared too modern or residential in character.

The Commission indicated that Liana Aguirre should review the proposed door before final acceptance and that the finish and trim should use historically appropriate, earth-tone or natural colors.

[00:35:00] Electrical Panel Screening

The Commission discussed screening of the electrical equipment visible from the street.

It was noted that wood had apparently been placed directly over or around the electrical panel. Building-code staff advised that this was not acceptable because electrical equipment must remain accessible and maintain required working clearances.

The Commission discussed using a separate screening feature located away from the panel rather than attaching screening directly to the equipment. Staff explained that applicable electrical clearances would have to be maintained.

[00:40:00] Drainage Pond and Walkway

A substantial portion of the work session concerned the drainage system.

The Commission discussed whether the existing ponding area between the restaurant and the new structure would remain or whether drainage would be relocated toward the rear of the property.

Staff explained that the existing pond had been in place for some time and served the existing building. A separate drainage solution had been contemplated for the new structure.

Commissioners expressed concern that moving drainage to the rear could reduce available parking and potentially interfere with the pedestrian route from the rear parking area to the rental units.

The Commission also discussed the roof drainage. Because the roof slopes in more than one direction, water currently drains toward both sides of the building. Staff explained that stormwater could not simply be discharged onto an adjoining property or onto a pedestrian walkway.

Several possible methods were discussed, including gutters, downspouts, underground drainage, trench/French drains, and rerouting water to an appropriate ponding area. The Commission emphasized, however, that it should not design the drainage system for the applicant. Instead, the applicant should submit an engineered or otherwise code-compliant drainage solution demonstrating how stormwater would remain on the property and reach an approved drainage area.

[00:48:00] Wrought-Iron Fence and Safety Around Ponding Area

The Commission discussed the proposed wrought-iron fencing primarily in relation to pedestrian safety around the drainage area.

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Members discussed whether fencing could prevent persons from inadvertently entering the ponding area while still preserving necessary access between the restaurant, rental units, parking area, and public sidewalk.

The Commission also noted that the restaurant has a rear exit that cannot be obstructed because it serves as an emergency means of egress. Therefore, fencing could not simply extend uninterrupted from one building to another.

The exact location and configuration of the wrought-iron fence remained unresolved and would need to be shown clearly on revised plans.

[00:53:00] Previously Approved Privacy/Divider Walls

The Commission returned to the previously approved front divider/privacy walls.

Members stated that these adobe-appearing walls were an important part of the architectural character originally approved for the project. The applicant's current proposal sought to eliminate those walls, but Commissioners expressed concern that their removal significantly changed the appearance of the project.

The Commission emphasized that the applicant could not simply eliminate previously approved architectural elements without obtaining approval for the amendment.

[00:57:00] Exterior Lighting

Commissioners reviewed the exterior light fixtures shown in photographs.

Staff explained that temporary fixtures had previously been installed for electrical testing and that newer fixtures had since been proposed or installed. Commissioners requested that the fixtures be reviewed for historic compatibility, with Liana Aguirre's recommendations incorporated into the final design.

[01:00:05] Pavers

The Commission generally indicated that the proposed red brick pavers were acceptable, subject to the final layout and their relationship to the pedestrian walkway, drainage, and fencing.

[01:01:47] Need for Complete Revised Plans

As the work session progressed, Commissioners agreed that the repeated piecemeal changes were making the project increasingly difficult to review.

Rather than continuing to consider individual modifications separately, the Commission discussed requiring the applicant to submit one complete revised package showing all remaining work and proposed changes.

- complete drainage and ponding plan;
- location and configuration of the wrought-iron fencing;
- required front privacy/divider walls or an approved alternative;
- historically appropriate windows and exterior wood treatment;
- historically appropriate doors;
- historically appropriate exterior lighting;
- proper screening of electrical equipment while maintaining required clearances;
- pedestrian walkway and access;
- brick pavers;
- parking implications associated with drainage changes; and
- coordination of the approved Town plans with the plans submitted for building-code review.

Commissioners repeatedly emphasized that they wanted to work with the applicant but needed a clear proposal from him rather than continuing to react to construction changes after they occurred.

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[01:05:01] Thirty-Day Period

Toward the conclusion of the work session, the Commission and staff discussed allowing the applicant approximately 30 days to submit complete drawings, proposed colors, and other information necessary for review.

Staff explained that if the required information were not submitted and approved within that period, further construction related to the unresolved amendments could be stopped until the project complied with the approved plans.

The Commission emphasized that the applicant should personally participate in the next review so that questions could be answered directly and the Commission could understand precisely what he intended to construct.

The work session concluded before commencement of the Regular Meeting.

[01:09:46] REGULAR MEETING 6:00 PM

Commissioners Present

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

Staff Present

- Community Development Eddie Salazar
- Community Development Paulo Rocha
- NM CID Thomas Maese

Public Present

- Trina Witter

Chair Eric Walkinshaw called the Regular Meeting of the Planning, Zoning and Historical Appropriateness Commission to order shortly after 6:00 p.m. on Monday, September 21, 2026.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

[01:10:26] ROLL CALL AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Roll call reflected the following members present:

- Chair Eric Walkinshaw - Present
- Vice Chair Gallegos - Present
- Secretary Miller - Present
- Commissioner Alvillar - Present
- Commissioner Mulvihill - Present
- Commissioner Lucero - Present

A quorum was declared.

[01:11:05] CHANGES AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion: Commissioner Mulvihill

Commissioner Mulvihill made a motion to approve the agenda. Vice Chair Gallegos seconded the motion. During discussion, the Commission considered whether PZHAC Case #062169 should be removed from the agenda because of the unresolved matters identified during the work session. Staff explained that the Commission could alternatively approve the agenda and address postponement when the case was reached under Consideration and Possible Action.

The Commission proceeded with the agenda as presented.

- Vice Chair Gallegos - Yes
- Secretary Miller - Yes
- Commissioner Alvillar - Yes
- Commissioner Mulvihill - Yes

Motion passed 4-0.

[01:14:00] PUBLIC INPUT

Chair Walkinshaw opened the floor for public input. No public input was received.

[01:14:20] CONSENT AGENDA

Motion: Commissioner Alvillar

Second: Secretary Miller

September 8, 2026 PZHAC Regular Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Alvillar made a motion to approve the September 8, 2026 PZHAC Regular Meeting Minutes. Secretary Miller seconded the motion.

A correction was requested concerning language associated with a previous case involving a rear access easement/private road. The Commission clarified that the previous speaker had indicated that, while he and his family continued to occupy the property under the circumstances discussed at that meeting, they would not request use of the rear easement/private road.

Chair Walkinshaw also noted a formatting correction concerning placement of a motion within the previous minutes. The motion to consider a case should appear before the staff presentation and discussion rather than at the end of the item.

With the corrections noted, the Commission proceeded to vote.

- Vice Chair Gallegos - Yes
- Secretary Miller - Yes
- Commissioner Alvillar - Yes
- Commissioner Mulvihill - Yes

Motion passed with corrections.

[01:18:10] ACTION AND CONSIDERATION

[01:18:17] PZHAC CASE #062169

Motion: Commissioner Mulvihill

Second: Vice Chair Gallegos

2450 Calle de Principal - Felix Armijo

Amendments to Previously Approved Construction

Chair Walkinshaw stated that the Commission had extensively reviewed the case during the preceding work session and now needed to determine how the pending application would proceed.

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A motion was initially made to table PZHAC Case #062169 until further information was presented.

Staff clarified that 'table' generally refers to setting an item aside temporarily during the same meeting, whereas the Commission's apparent intent was to continue the case to a future meeting. The motion was therefore amended to postpone PZHAC Case #062169.

During discussion, staff requested that the Commission include a 30-day timeframe for the applicant to provide a complete plan for Commission consideration and that the applicant be present to discuss the proposal.

The Commission agreed that the revised submittal should address the matters identified during the work session rather than continuing with piecemeal amendments.

The Commission proceeded to vote on postponement.

- Vice Chair Gallegos - Yes
- Secretary Miller - Yes
- Commissioner Alvillar - Yes
- Commissioner Mulvihill - Yes

Motion passed 4-0.

PZHAC Case #062169 was postponed, with the applicant to provide the requested revised information within the discussed 30-day timeframe for further Commission consideration.

[01:20:23] STAFF AND COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Community Development staff advised the Commission that Liana Aguirre's quarterly historic preservation newsletter was available, with copies provided at the meeting for anyone interested.

Staff then raised several planning matters for informal Commission discussion, including the potential future use of commercially zoned property for farmers-market-type activities. Discussion included the zoning history of certain properties, the need for property-owner permission, vendor regulations, and whether amendments to Town ordinances could eventually be necessary to accommodate such activities.

Commissioners discussed how a farmers-market-type use could potentially complement the Town's Comprehensive Plan and commercial areas if appropriately designed and managed to maintain Mesilla's historic character.

Staff also requested informal guidance regarding a property in the Rural Farm zone containing several separate residential structures, each with separate utilities, where the new owner was interested in short-term rental use. Discussion centered on whether the property had historically been approved for multifamily use, how the Town's short-term rental density limitations apply, and whether the matter should receive Commission review rather than administrative approval. Commissioners indicated that additional research into the property's approval history was appropriate before a determination was made.

Staff further advised the Commission that another pending case had been postponed to the upcoming Board of Trustees meeting so that outstanding questions could be answered rather than the application being denied without complete information.

Eddie Salazar advised that Community Development intended to begin providing the Commission with a more comprehensive monthly departmental report, similar to information provided to the Board of Trustees. The report would include information regarding PZHAC cases, administrative cases, businesses, departmental software, and other Community Development activities.

[01:37:12] ADDITIONAL COMMENT REGARDING CASE #062169

Near the conclusion of the meeting, the applicant associated with Case #062169 arrived and explained that circumstances beyond his control had prevented him from attending the earlier work session. He stated that he considered the project important to himself and to the Town and requested an opportunity to address the Commission.

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Chair Walkinshaw acknowledged the circumstances but explained that the Commission had already completed the work session and had acted on the matter during the Regular Meeting. The applicant was advised that the Commission's decision could not simply be changed through discussion after the vote.

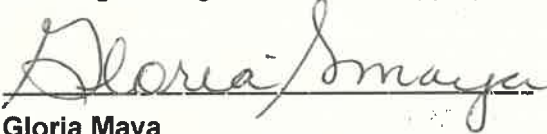
[01:36:52] ADJOURNMENT

The regular meeting ended at 6:39 p.m.



Eric Gallegos, PZHAC Vice Chair

Planning, Zoning and Historical Appropriateness Commission



Gloria Maya

Town Clerk/Treasurer

