Town of Mesilla, New Mexico

BOARD OF TRUSTEES (BOT) OF THE TOWN OF MESILLA
WORK SESSION
2231 AVENIDA DE MESILLA
MONDAY, OCTOBER 26,2026
~6:00 P.M.~
MINUTES

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

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

PUBLIC: Andrea Bryan Greg Lester
Janice & Bill Cook

1. **FIRE DEPARTMENT POSITIONS**
   a) **Organizational Chart**

Mayor Hernandez reviewed the Fire Department organizational chart. The proposed changes were to rename the engineer position "Engineer/EMT" and the firefighter position "Firefighter/EMT."

Fire Chief Whited explained that the organizational chart was designed for future expansion. The long-term concept included a captain, two lieutenants and eventually two firefighters assigned under a driver. The captain position was not proposed for hiring at this time and was shown in red because the job description was not being submitted for consideration.

A Board member asked whether the funding for the positions came from the County and whether the funding had an expiration date. The response was that the arrangement is reconsidered annually but contains no stated sunset or automatic expiration. Members expressed concern that the County might discontinue its contribution in a later year, and the distinction between annual reconsideration and an actual funding deadline was discussed.

Mayor Hernandez reviewed the salary schedule. The packet showed projected total payroll and benefit costs. Existing lieutenants' rates were higher because they had received the Town's three-percent pay increases.

Chief Whited described a plan to hire an engineer/driver and, when qualified, promote that employee to lieutenant, unless a particularly qualified lieutenant applicant were available. He said the pay proposal was designed to remain within approximately $550,000 available for salaries and related personnel costs, leaving roughly $20,000 or more for unanticipated overtime and possible promotion. Estimates of deductions and benefits were based on assumptions.

A Trustee stated the concern that the County could decline to continue funding the positions in a subsequent year. Mayor Hernandez responded that the Town was working to establish medical/ambulance billing and that preliminary revenue projections were approximately $300,000 to $400,000 annually, although that amount would not fully replace County funding.

Chief Whited stated that the South Valley facility was not equipped for personnel to live there continuously. The contemplated staffing schedule would begin at approximately 9:00 a.m. at the main station, with personnel spending an initial hour or two there before covering South Valley for about seven hours daily, seven days per week. He stated that the agreement required approximately 48 hours of coverage weekly and that the proposed schedule provided approximately 49. Participants discussed the likelihood that the County would keep the station open so long as required hours were met. The Chief also noted that a County crew temporarily stationed at South Valley was expected to return to another station when renovations and furnishing were completed. Their temporary presence had reduced the Town's call volume by an estimated 20 to 30 percent, which could rise again after the crew relocated.

At a Trustee's request, the Chief explained the County payment arrangement. Rather than continuing to submit expenditures and await individual reimbursements, the Town had negotiated to request approximately $600,000 in advance, maintain documentation of expenses and return unused funds at year-end. He said paperwork had been submitted and the Town was awaiting payment. Because the fiscal year was already underway, the Town might not expend the full allocation this year.

Concern about a possible future loss of County support continued. The Mayor stated that, if necessary, the Town could consider drawing temporarily on General Fund reserves while identifying another funding source, but acknowledged that the financial impact would be substantial. The Chief expressed a strong preference for retaining staff. The discussion returned to the need for dependable ambulance billing and collection. Staff said billing had not yet started and that the City or County might provide billing services. A rate of approximately six percent was mentioned in connection with an outside billing arrangement. Participants discussed examples of problems that can arise when services are not billed or collections are inadequate, as well as the importance of carefully administering the process. No final billing-provider selection was made in this discussion.

A Board member asked about reasonable accommodations for firefighters with disabilities or temporary limitations. The Chief explained that firefighters must meet essential physical and medical job functions and that an alternative light-duty assignment may be considered where available; however, any firefighter unable to fill an operational shift would still need to be replaced for staffing purposes.

The Mayor requested Board direction regarding recruitment procedures for the four proposed positions. He noted that volunteer firefighters had historically been treated similarly to Town employees for some purposes and asked whether they should be considered internal applicants or required to complete a full competitive interview process. One Board member recommended interviews to ensure fairness when more applicants than openings were available and to support a defensible hiring decision.

2. COMMEMORATIVE PARK UPGRADES

a) Playground Equipment

b) Landscaping

c) Fencing

Mayor Hernandez reviewed the equipment and the vendor catalogs. The Mayor said the Town had some remaining capital outlay funding that could be applied toward park equipment. The vendor estimate included the accessible glider and examples of STEM-oriented play equipment. He noted that an earlier playground proposal for Town Hall Park did not include the type of accessibility ramp being considered here and showed an example of a ramp enabling mobility-impaired children to access a play structure. Staff had also suggested tandem swings allowing an adult and child to swing together.

Members expressed support for making parks more inclusive, encouraging family use and offering activities for younger children. The Mayor said residents had commented that there were too few play options for very young children. The group discussed whether musical equipment might disturb nearby residences. Suggestions included placing sound-producing equipment toward the center of a park or away from residential boundaries. Members noted that parks have curfews and that the instruments discussed were not especially loud. There was also discussion of vandalism and missing mallets or beaters at Young Park, and of selecting durable equipment with securely attached components.

The Mayor said community meetings had also identified safety and beautification as priorities at Commemorative Park. He introduced the possibility of installing a relatively low fence, approximately three feet high, with strategically placed openings.

Members considered extending the fence far enough to protect the existing playground. The Mayor and Trustees clarified potential locations along the parking area and the boundary adjoining Chris Alexander's property, where bollards currently delineate the area. The conversation included the importance of preserving a safe route into the park and keeping sight lines open.

The Mayor introduced landscaping as a related improvement, Members favored a simple rustic appearance compatible with Mesilla's historic character and the existing sign, preferably without pointed decorative finials near play areas.

The Mayor explained that improvements would likely proceed in phases. A Trustee stated that Commemorative Park honors fallen public servants and other local figures. The Trustee said the memorial elements needed restoration and coordination with the park's overall design.

The Board noted that community members had previously provided input and that the design should respect their feedback. Members favored an overall theme that could be implemented in phases, with consistent materials and coordinated fencing, signage, and landscaping. A distinction was clarified between funding restricted to playground equipment at Town Hall Park and the separate Commemorative Park allocation, which could be used for eligible park upgrades including equipment, fencing, and

landscaping. The amount available for Commemorative Park was estimated in discussion at approximately $70,000 to $80,000, insufficient for all contemplated improvements or full parking-lot reconstruction. Members discussed prioritizing the playground equipment and potentially a portion of fencing while retaining a long-term coordinated plan. The broader commemorative concept was described as approximately 50 percent developed and potentially suitable for future funding applications. There was discussion regarding landscape design and the appearance of the frontage. Staff indicated that the discussion provided directions to develop a plan with the team and assess costs.

A participant suggested exploring grants related to veterans or commemorative improvements.

WORKSESSION ENDED AT 6:04 P.M.

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, OCTOBER 26, 2026

~ Immediately Following Worksession ~ 6:05 P.M.

MINUTES

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Russell Hernandez led the Pledge of Allegiance.

5. ROLL CALL AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Roll call.

Present: Mayor Russell Hernandez, Mayor Pro Tem Stephanie Johnson-Burick, Trustee Bibiana Cadena, Trustee Veronica Garcia, Trustee Nevarez.

6. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: To approve agenda, Moved by Trustee Nevarez, Seconded by Trustee Garcia.

Motion carried

7. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

a) *BOT MINUTES – Minutes of BOT, October 20, 2026

Mayor Hernandez noted amendments to the minutes: page 14 date should read October 20, and page 16 correct address is 2200 Calle de los Huertos.

b) *APPROVAL: Purchase Requisition: Trailers Plus - $51,154.37 (Que Linda Grant)

Motion: To approve consent agenda with amendments, Moved by Trustee Nevarez, Seconded by Trustee Cadena.

Roll Call Vote: Motion passed (summary: Yes-4)
Mayor Pro Tem Johnson-Burick Yes
Trustee Cadena Yes
Trustee Garcia Yes
Trustee Nevarez Yes

8. STAFF UPDATES AND COMMENTS

Marshal reported that the department had secured participation in a district court trunk-or-treat event on Friday and would work modified swing shifts from 3:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. on Friday and Saturday of Halloween weekend. Three officers would be working those evenings in anticipation of local activities.

Fire Chief Whited reminded the Board that the Fire Department would distribute candy and participate in the Halloween event, and urged drivers to watch for children, especially those wearing dark costumes.

Mayor Hernandez thanked the departments and encouraged trustees to direct questions to staff or himself.

9. PUBLIC INPUT ON CASES

No Public Input

10. NEW BUSINESS

a) APPROVAL: RESOLUTION 2026-54 – BAR 2ND QUARTER

Mayor Hernandez reviewed Resolution 2026-54.

Motion: To approve Resolution 2026-54 – BAR 2nd Quarter, Moved by Trustee Garcia, Seconded by Trustee Cadena.

Roll Call Vote: Motion passed (summary: Yes-4)
Mayor Pro Tem Johnson-Burick Yes
Trustee Cadena Yes
Trustee Garcia Yes
Trustee Nevarez Yes

b) APPROVAL: ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Mayor Hernandez gave an overview.

Motion: To approve Organizational Chart, Moved by Trustee Nevarez, Seconded by Trustee Garcia.

Roll Call Vote: Motion passed (summary: Yes-4)
Mayor Pro Tem Johnson-Burick Yes
Trustee Cadena Yes
Trustee Garcia Yes

Trustee Nevarez Yes

c) APPROVAL: FIREFIGHTER/EMT JOB DESCRIPTION

Mayor Hernandez gave an overview and included the salary grade correction.

Motion: To approve Firefighter/EMT Job Description, Moved by Trustee Garcia, Seconded by Trustee Cadena.

Roll Call Vote: Motion passed (summary: Yes-4)
Mayor Pro Tem Johnson-Burick Yes
Trustee Cadena Yes
Trustee Garcia Yes
Trustee Nevarez Yes

d) APPROVAL: FIRE ENGINEER/DRIVER JOB DESCRIPTION

Mayor Hernandez gave an overview.

Motion: To approve Fire Engineer/Driver Job Description, Moved by Trustee Garcia, Seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Johnson-Burick.

Roll Call Vote: Motion passed (summary: Yes-4)
Mayor Pro Tem Johnson-Burick Yes
Trustee Cadena Yes
Trustee Garcia Yes
Trustee Nevarez Yes

e) APPROVAL: PITNEY BOWES RENTAL AGREEMENT

Mayor Hernandez gave an overview.

Motion: To approve Pitney Bowes Rental Agreement, Moved by Trustee Johnson-Burick, Seconded by Trustee Garcia.

Roll Call Vote: Motion passed (summary: Yes-4)
Mayor Pro Tem Johnson-Burick Yes
Trustee Cadena Yes
Trustee Garcia Yes
Trustee Nevarez Yes

f) APPROVAL: AK SALES PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION

Mayor Hernandez gave an overview.

Motion: To approve AK Sales Playground Equipment Purchase and Installation, Moved by Trustee Garcia, Seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Johnson-Burick.

Roll Call Vote: Motion passed (summary: Yes-4)
Mayor Pro Tem Johnson-Burick Yes
Trustee Cadena Yes
Trustee Garcia Yes
Trustee Nevarez Yes

11. PUBLIC INPUT
No Public Input

12. BOARD OF TRUSTEES COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COMMENTS
Trustee Nevarez reported attending a water-management presentation with Community Development staff, discussing low-water-use trees, irrigation sensors, and applications in parks and other public spaces. He also reported attending a Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site board meeting, noting upcoming activities including the annual Nacimiento's event. He announced a museum first-anniversary celebration on November 14 with tours, light refreshments, and an RSVP deadline of November 9, and offered to forward the invitation. He updated the Board on the Blacksmith Shop committee's work on conceptual layouts and a forthcoming meeting, and on the Noise Ordinance Committee's review of several drafts, with another meeting planned for Thursday.

Trustee Garcia discussed the upcoming Blacksmith Shop committee meeting which took place Friday at 3:00 p.m.

Trustee Cadena announced a transit meeting scheduled for Wednesday at 1:30 p.m. She encouraged participation in the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site Foundation's first-anniversary celebration, noted a store sale beginning November 6 with a reported 25 percent discount on jewelry and related merchandise, and referenced the annual Nacimiento's celebration. She also expressed hope for progress on the Noise Ordinance Committee and thanked staff for increasingly detailed departmental reports that helped the Board understand workload and activity levels.

Mayor Pro Tem Johnson-Burick announced an upcoming MPO meeting on Wednesday, November 18, at 1:00 p.m. in the city council chambers.

Mayor Hernandez advised that Doña Ana County might present at one of the next two Board meetings concerning High Mesa Highway and requested that trustees forward public questions to him so the County could prepare responses. He said Las Cruces Public Schools was expected to present its plans for the neighboring RGPI school property and its anticipated sale. He reported receiving a cost estimate from RT Electric for replacement of nine lights along University Avenue and anticipated bringing the issue back for discussion. The Mayor also stated that NMDOT had advised him that it had dimmed lights along University Avenue, and invited trustees to observe the nighttime conditions. The Mayor discussed scheduling previously approved retreats facilitated by the Riviera Group for the Board of Trustees, Planning and Zoning, and department heads. Each session was described as a half-day retreat. The Board considered December 8-9 or 15-16, 2026, and January 5-6 or 12-13, 2027, with several members favoring January due to holiday travel. The Mayor stated that he would send a Doodle poll for the January dates and requested responses by Friday. One participant indicated that January availability remained uncertain.

13. ADJOURNMENT

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

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 6:25 P.M.

APPROVED THIS 9th DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2026.

Russell Hernandez
Mayor

ATTEST:

Gloria S. Maya
Town Clerk/Treasurer

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

(RESCHEDULED)

REGULAR MEETING
SIGN IN SHEET
October 26, 2026

NAME	ADDRESS
Andrea Bryan	Mesilla
Greg Lester	"
JANICE & BILL COOK	MESILLA