Town of Mesilla, New Mexico

TOWN OF MESILLA

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

Tuesday, October 27, 2026

Mesilla Town Hall - 2231 Avenida de Mesilla, Mesilla, New Mexico

(MINUTES)

Commissioners Present

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

Staff Present

- **Community Development Eddie Salazar**
- **Community Development Paulo Rocha**
- **Historic Preservation Liana Aguirre**

Public Present

- **Sam Bernal**
- **Carlos Aguilar**
- **Andrea Bryan**
- **Greg Lester**
- **Gary Rodgers**

REGULAR MEETING 6:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Eric Walkinshaw called the Planning, Zoning and Historical Appropriateness Commission regular meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 27, 2026.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chair invited those present to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Staff called the roll. Vice Chair Gallegos, Secretary Miller, Chair Eric Walkinshaw, Commissioner Alvillar, Commissioner Mulvihill, and Commissioner Lucero were recorded as present. Staff declared a quorum. The recorded roll-call votes later in the meeting included four voting commissioners, excluding the Chair.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Chair requested any changes and a motion to approve the agenda. Vice Chair Gallegos moved approval, and Commissioner Mulvihill seconded. No amendments or discussion were recorded.

Vote: Vice Chair Gallegos — Yes; Secretary Miller — Yes; Commissioner Alvillar — Yes; Commissioner Mulvihill — Yes. Motion carried, 4–0.

5. PUBLIC INPUT ON ACTION ITEMS

The Chair opened public input concerning old and new business. Carlos Aguilar who identified himself as designer/draftsman for the applicant at 2200 West Union Avenue, approached the podium and stated he was appearing on behalf of Abel Covarrubias in Case 062192. He asked to read a letter from the applicant. The Chair advised that project-specific testimony and questions would be addressed when the case came before the Commission. The speaker acknowledged the direction and returned to his seat.

6. CONSENT AGENDA — OCTOBER 5, 2026 MINUTES

The Commission considered approval of the October 5, 2026 PZHAC 5:00 p.m. work-session minutes and 6:00 p.m. regular-meeting minutes. Commissioner Mulvihill moved approval. Second motion by Secretary Miller. The Chair invited comments or corrections; none were recorded.

Vote: Vice Chair Gallegos — Yes; Secretary Miller — Yes; Commissioner Alvillar — Yes; Commissioner Mulvihill — Yes. Motion carried, 4–0.

7. OLD BUSINESS — PZHAC CASE 062172, 2615 CALLE DEL SUR

First Motion: Secretary Miller

Second Motion: Commissioner Mulvihill

Applicant Sam Bernal requested approval of an alternate summary subdivision of property zoned Historic Residential (HR). Staff explained that the case was unfinished business because a motion from the prior meeting had not been formally concluded. The application and plans were substantially the same as previously presented. Staff also noted a notarized letter reflecting an agreement with a neighboring owner regarding a private civil access matter and explained that the subdivision was intended to gift parcels to the applicant's children.

The Commission and Director Eddie Salazar discussed proper parliamentary handling of an original motion, second, amendment and final vote. Staff described the procedural error at the prior meeting: an amendment or condition had been voted on, but the original approval motion had not received its final vote. Director Salazar reviewed common motions, including postponement to a definite time, previous question, laying on and taking from the table, reconsideration by a member on the

prevailing side, point of order, recess, and adjournment. He emphasized the importance of completing the vote on the main motion after disposing of an amendment, avoiding informal discussion of cases during recesses, and keeping a clear record for Board of Trustees review.

In response to questions, staff stated that the notarized agreement was included, but its underlying private access dispute was a civil matter outside the Commission's land-use review. Staff also discussed prior concerns about property posting and public hearing notices, explaining the earlier interpretation of when posting was required and the decision to return the case to avoid unresolved procedural questions.

Commissioners asked about the hammerhead turnaround, a dotted property or land line shown on some plan sheets, and the consistency of the draft plat exhibits. Staff explained that various exhibits depicted different subjects, such as utility layouts and turnaround details; the plans under review were drafts, not a final stamped survey. The final plat would be reviewed for satisfaction of conditions and signed by the PZHAC Chair and Secretary, with subsequent municipal signatures as required. Staff also explained that an alternate summary subdivision proceeds to the Board of Trustees for final consideration rather than following the conventional preliminary-plat two-year development period.

Secretary Miller restated the motion to approve PZHAC Case 062172 with the conditions concerning the hammerhead turnaround and the notarized letter included in the packet. The discussion indicated that the earlier second was already in place; another commissioner also voiced a second during the clarification.

Vote: Vice Chair Gallegos — Yes; Secretary Miller — Yes; Commissioner Alvillar — Yes; Commissioner Mulvihill — Yes. Motion carried, 4–0, with the previously discussed conditions.

8. NEW BUSINESS — PZHAC CASE 062192, 2200 WEST UNION AVENUE

First Motion: Commissioner Mulvihill

Second Motion: Secretary Miller

The Commission considered an application by Abel Covarrubias for construction of a barn/garage and outdoor kitchen or barbecue area on a 3.12-acre parcel zoned Residential Agricultural (RA). Commissioner Mulvihill moved approval and Secretary Miller seconded, opening the item for consideration.

Staff member Paulo Rocha presented the application, site and building plans, elevations, proof of ownership, and zoning standards. The proposed buildings were described as accommodating a garage, workshop, storage, and private family and social gatherings. Staff reviewed RA permitted uses and dimensional standards, including the three-acre minimum lot area, 200-foot minimum lot width, 300-foot minimum depth, 30-foot front and rear yards, 10-foot side yards, and underground utility installation where technically feasible. Staff described cream-colored stucco, natural-tone cultured stone, exposed wood framing, barn-style doors, and light-gray standing-seam metal roofing. The site plan showed a hammerhead fire-apparatus turnaround, which staff reported had been reviewed by the Fire Chief.

Designer Carlos Aguilar appeared with contractor Gary Rogers of Planet Development. He discussed consultation with Fire Chief Greg Whited regarding apparatus access and read a letter from the absent applicant and his wife, Monica. The letter described the family's New Mexico farming background, its connection to Mesilla, and the intention to create a private space for hobbies, classic cars, holiday gatherings and family events, rather than a commercial event venue.

Commissioners asked whether the building would contain living quarters. The designer stated it would not have bedrooms or overnight dwelling use. He explained that the large open room would

be used for family gatherings and display of vehicles; the attic, accessed by a drop-down ladder, would be for storage only.

The designer explained that existing access from West Union was through the property's access corridor and gate. He reviewed the fire-truck turning path and hammerhead, including driveway widths discussed as approximately 20 and 35 feet. The existing approach was compacted gravel, not paved; the proposed extension would use an engineered compacted road base designed for fire-apparatus loads.

A commissioner questioned the application's stated $75,000 construction valuation as possibly low. The designer stated the figure was developed with the owner and contractor. Director Salazar discussed the Town's valuation and permit-fee approach under Title 15 and the International Building Code, explaining that staff could request cost documentation or receipts where a valuation appeared unreasonable and would review fees before permit issuance. The Commission discussed whether to add a condition, but the transcript does not record a separate adopted valuation condition.

Another commissioner asked why the packet included business and LLC documentation, raising the possibility of commercial use. The designer explained that parcel ownership was shown under an LLC, and the operating agreement had been submitted to establish that the applicant and his wife owned the entity.

Vote: Vice Chair Gallegos — Yes; Secretary Miller — Yes; Commissioner Alvillar — Yes; Commissioner Mulvihill — Yes. Motion carried, 4–0.

9. COMMISSIONER AND STAFF COMMENTS

Liana Aguirre, providing historic-preservation and community-development updates reported submission of an agricultural-heritage nomination to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, potential advocacy activities in New Mexico, and plans to invite the State Historic Preservation Office or the new Certified Local Government coordinator to address the Commission and Board of Trustees. Liana Aguirre also described a Gadsden Purchase history newsletter, a call for local artists for Mesilla shirt and public-art designs, outreach to schools, and exploration of a MainStreet or Frontier program to support Avenida de Mesilla and historic-building restoration. Commissioners discussed the challenges posed by state-road jurisdiction, pedestrian crossings, streetscape signs, and the importance of participating in community input opportunities. A commissioner praised the newsletter.

Director Salazar praised the historic-preservation work and explained that commissioners had been sent a Doodle scheduling poll for possible January training with the Town's human-resources consultant and potentially the New Mexico Municipal League. He announced a community-engagement event on November 14 at the community center, involving law enforcement, Town staff, vendors and a possible Calle de Santiago street closure, and mentioned the upcoming Halloween event.

Director Salazar reported that the noise ordinance ADHOC committee had held its first meeting and planned another meeting Thursday. He explained that the proposed amendments originated with the Board of Trustees and that, although noise enforcement itself was not under PZHAC authority, several recommendations concerned land use and might appropriately be presented to PZHAC for review and recommendation.

Noise ordinance and other proposed ordinances

Director Salazar continued that the noise ordinance recommendations were assigned to the ADHOC committee, but he wished to bring the draft to the Commission for input, potentially as a work session or presentation rather than for formal consideration and recommendation. He said the childcare ordinance work had not yet begun. He identified a community ditch ordinance as a more

immediate priority because staff were encountering disputes over responsibility for keeping irrigation ditches clear.

Irrigation ditches, hazardous trees, and public rights-of-way

Director Salazar explained that EBID guidance addresses maintenance of irrigation ditches by water-right holders or irrigation users, but the Town did not have its own adopted ordinance establishing a municipal enforcement mechanism. Public Works and staff were seeking voluntary cooperation; some residents complied under protest. The discussion also addressed hazardous, dead, or drying trees, particularly where a subdivision developed since the 1970s may extend into approximately 15 feet of Town right-of-way. Salazar stated that the apparent property boundaries and existing yards complicated responsibility for tree maintenance, and that attorneys were reviewing the matter. Commissioners expressed concern about potential liability if trees fell and damaged property or injured someone. A suggestion was made to send residents cooperation letters while legal direction remained pending.

Nuisance enforcement, home occupations, and hearing examiner

Director Salazar described complaints about abandoned vehicles and home occupations involving automotive repair and appliance repair, especially in historic residential areas. He questioned whether current regulations adequately address vehicles, equipment, and parts stored on residential properties. He stated that the Town was working toward updated regulations and a hearing examiner following dissolution of the former municipal court, and that the lack of an enforcement mechanism limited immediate action.

University Avenue lighting

Director Salazar reported concerns from residents about the height, grade, brightness, and appearance of new University Avenue streetlights. He said the Mayor had discussed a possible replacement with shorter, historically styled fixtures comparable to lights along Avenida de Mesilla, subject to Board approval. In the meantime, he reported discussions with NMDOT and reduced light output. Commissioners also mentioned downward-facing fixtures and shielding to limit light spill.

Automotive repair property enforcement

In response to a commissioner question about a particular residential automotive repair operation, Director Salazar described a prior municipal-court outcome permitting work on no more than three vehicles, as well as a special-use permit involving a vehicle lift and proposed screening. He said a later fence proposal had not received the required approval. Staff were awaiting clearer legal direction and establishment of a hearing examiner before pursuing further enforcement.

Training poll and alternate summary subdivision requirements

A commissioner reminded members that the Doodle scheduling poll deadline was October 30. Discussion returned to alternate summary subdivisions. A commissioner stated that, as understood from the ordinance, an alternate summary subdivision should still comply with applicable subdivision rules, including public notices and signs. Director Salazar explained that the alternate process allows case-specific consideration where a two-lot division, private road, or infrastructure circumstances make the full standard process difficult. He emphasized that commissioners could require conditions, request additional notice, or return a case for public hearing, while noting the delays imposed on applicants. Members discussed the distinction between a standard summary subdivision and an alternate summary subdivision and the importance of consistency.

Inheritance, gifting, and subdivision timing

Director Salazar discussed property divisions arising through probate or family inheritance and his understanding of exemptions under state subdivision law. He suggested the Town consider how to handle gifts to family members when no immediate development is proposed, while avoiding

creation of nonconforming lots. He contrasted such transfers with the preliminary/final plat process and its development time frames. Commissioners raised the risk that a claimed family gift could later become a sale, referring to a prior Old Farm Road matter. The exchange was exploratory; no amendment or formal action was taken.

Proposed senior wellness room at the community center

Staff member Paulo Rocha presented an idea for a no-cost community wellness center for seniors using Room 3 of the existing community center, presently used for storage and seasonal supplies. He envisioned safe exercise equipment and protective flooring for activities such as tai chi and Pilates, complementing existing senior meals and community programs. He described visiting a Las Cruces facility with special-events staff, considering how to relocate stored items, and exploring state grants and private donations. Commissioners reacted favorably and encouraged further exploration; no expenditure or approval was requested.

Pickleball and recreational programming

Rocha also reported an introductory discussion with pickleball advocates and special-events staff about bringing the activity to Mesilla, potentially through a permanent court or a program allowing residents to borrow equipment. Commissioners noted that pickleball appeared in the comprehensive plan and discussed a possible site near the river, while observing that noise, access, floodplain, and jurisdictional considerations would need review. Additional ideas included recreational tournaments and community events. A commissioner suggested seeking grant-writing assistance.

Commissioner comments: appreciation, applicant delay, and traffic safety

Before adjournment, a commissioner thanked Rocha for his initiative and vision for community recreation. The commissioner apologized to Mr. Bernal for delays in processing his subdivision case caused by the Commission's earlier procedural error. The commissioner then expressed serious concern about collisions and injuries at the Union Avenue/Highway 28 intersection and requested attention from the Town and NMDOT. Additional concerns included traffic congestion and signal timing at Avenida de Mesilla and Calle del Norte, where a commissioner said only a few vehicles could pass per signal cycle. These comments were requested for inclusion in the minutes.

Final event discussion

After an initial indication that the meeting was adjourned, discussion continued with a suggestion to use the lighted basketball court for games and activities during community events. Staff responded that the Marshal's Department was coordinating an event involving as many as approximately 50 booths, vendors, and an outdoor band, with activities planned in the surrounding area. Participants expressed interest in helping with the event.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The Chair asked whether there were objections to adjournment and, hearing none, declared the meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Eric Walkinshaw, PZHAC Chair

Planning, Zoning and Historical Appropriateness Commission

Gloria Maya

Town Clerk/Treasurer