



# Town of Mesilla, New Mexico

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES (BOT) OF THE TOWN OF MESILLA

REGULAR MEETING AT THE MESILLA TOWN HALL,  
2231 AVENIDA DE MESILLA

MONDAY, AUGUST 12, 2024 ~ 6:00 P.M.~

AGENDA

*ATTENDEES*

*BOARD OF TRUSTEES*

*Mayor Russell Hernandez*  
*Mayor Pro Tem Adrianna Merrick*  
*Trustee Stephanie Johnson-Burick*  
*Trustee Gerald Nevarez*

*STAFF*

*Ben Azcarate*  
*Greg Whited*  
*Eddie Salazar*  
*Lourdez Hernandez*

*PUBLIC*

<i>Dasa Bausova</i>	<i>Trina Witter</i>
<i>Mary F Lucero</i>	<i>Les Williamson</i>
<i>Robert Owen</i>	<i>Susan Krueger</i>
<i>Gary Rodriguez</i>	<i>Lori Miller</i>
<i>Mary H Ratje</i>	<i>Karena</i>
<i>Greg Lester</i>	<i>Crystal Whited</i>
<i>Andrea Bryan</i>	<i>Catherine Walkinshaw</i>
<i>Eric Walkinshaw</i>	<i>Nora Barraza</i>

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**1. ROLL CALL & DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM**

*Mayor Russell Hernandez – present*  
*Mayor Pro Tem Adrianna Merrick – present*

*Trustee Stephanie Johnson-Burick – present*

*Trustee Gerald Nevarez – present*

*Trustee Biviana Cadena – absent*

## **2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA & APPROVAL**

*1st motion to approve – Mayor Pro Tem Merrick*

*2nd motion to approve – Trustee Gerald Nevarez*

*Unanimously Approved.*

## **3. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:** (The Board will be asked to approve by one motion the following items of recurring or routine business. The Consent Agenda is marked with an asterisk \*)

### **a) BOT MINUTES – Minutes of BOT Work session, Public Hearing, Meeting – 07.22.2024**

*1st motion to approve – Trustee Nevarez*

*2nd motion to approve – Mayor Pro Tem Merrick*

*Unanimously Approved.*

## **4. PRESENTATIONS:**

### **a) PRESENTATION: Querencia Mi Mesilla – internship training – Albert & Pat Taylor**

*Presentation was given by Pat Taylor and two guest interns.*

## **5. PUBLIC INPUT ON CASES –** The public is invited to address the Board as allowed by the chair.

*Mary H Ratje – concerned about case #061867, the storage shed does not meet the historic zone development design. Looks out of place. Also a concern about case #061871, garage door request. Currently, the property across the street is being used to enter existing garage door entrance. Lastly, a large tree limb overhanging into the street.*

*Ken Dickson – concern about the same shed, case #061867.*

## **6. ACTION AND CONSIDERATION**

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **a) APPROVAL:** PZHAC CASE #061867 – 2195 Calle de Arroyo, submitted by Anna E. Emeric. Requesting approval to allow a shed on her property for the purpose of storage. ZONE: Historical Commercial (HC).

*1st motion to approve by Mayor Pro Tem Merrick*

*2nd motion by Trustee Johnson-Burick*

*Motion was denied, not approved – 0-3.*

#### **b) APPROVAL:** PZHAC CASE #061871 – 2280 Calle de Principal, submitted by Basilica de San Albino. Requesting approval to install a garage door next to an existing garage door. ZONE: Historical Commercial (HC).

*1<sup>st</sup> motion to approve by Trustee Nevarez*

*2<sup>nd</sup> motion by Trustee Johnson-Burick*

**Roll Call Vote: Yes=2; No=1**

*Mayor Pro Tem Merrick Yes*

*Trustee Johnson-Burick No*

*Trustee Nevarez Yes*

- c) APPROVAL:** PZHAC CASE #061872 – 2780 Calle Cuarta, submitted by Jose Torres. Requesting approval to build a 12' x 16' storage shed on property. ZONE: Historical Residential (HR).

*1<sup>st</sup> motion to approve by Mayor Pro Tem Merrick*

*2<sup>nd</sup> motion by Trustee Nevarez*

*Unanimously Approved.*

- d) APPROVAL: Resolution 2025-07 FY2024-25 Holidays**

*1<sup>st</sup> motion to approve by Mayor Pro Tem Merrick*

*2<sup>nd</sup> motion by Trustee Nevarez*

*Motion Approved with amendment request by Trustee Nevarez to remove 2 holidays from the proposed holiday resolution, December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024 & December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024.*

*Unanimously Approved.*

*1<sup>st</sup> motion to approve by Mayor Pro Tem Merrick*

*2<sup>nd</sup> motion by Trustee Nevarez*

*Unanimously Approved, as its original motion to approving the resolution with amendments.*

- e) APPROVAL: Resolution 2025-08 Addition and Designation of Cannabis line item**

*1<sup>st</sup> motion to approve by Mayor Pro Tem Merrick*

*2<sup>nd</sup> motion by Trustee Johnson-Burick*

*Unanimously Approved.*

**7. PUBLIC INPUT – The public is invited to address the Board as allowed by the chair.**

*Mayor Hernandez – noted an emailed received by Eric Leifeld regarding road improvements in Mesilla. See attachment*

*Trina Witter – concerned about a community park and road improvements on Calle de Santiago/Picacho, addition of public parking.*

*Susan Krueger – support Trina’s comments.*

*Lori Miller – just learned the construction mentioned by Trina Witter. Does not recall any meetings stating the reduction of the park to increase public parking. Also, expressed concern about an electric anchor pole advised by El Paso Electric being put on her property.*

*Mary Lucero – also expressed concern about the reduction of the park to increase public parking.*

*Nora Barraza – Crime activity has increased. Parks, streets and medians look unkept. Trees and foliage covering signs. Codes not doing their job as well. Mesilla is hiring administrative positions; we need boots on the ground.*

*Requested moratorium on short-term rentals.*

## **8. CLOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- a) Discussion of limited personnel matters pursuant to NMSA 1978, Section 10-15-1(H)(2) – -**
- **Marshal’s Department**
  - **Community & Economic Development**
  - **Public Works**
  - **Finance**

*1<sup>st</sup> motion to approve to go into close session by Mayor Pro Tem Merrick*

*2<sup>nd</sup> motion to approve by Trustee Johnson-Burick.*

*(closed session @ 6:51 pm)*

- b) APPROVAL:** Any actions that may arise as a result of discussions in closed session
- **Promotion Marshal’s Department**
  - **Promotion Community Economic Development**
  - **Open Position Public Works**
  - **Open Position Finance**

*1<sup>st</sup> motion to approve to go back to scheduled session by Mayor Pro Tem Merrick*

*2<sup>nd</sup> motion to approve by Trustee Nevarez*

*Back into open session, regularly scheduled meeting at 7:14 pm.*

*Mayor Hernandez announced promotion in Marshal’s Department, Lourdez Hernandez to Sergeant position.*

*1<sup>st</sup> motion to approve to go into close session by Mayor Pro Tem Merrick*

*2<sup>nd</sup> motion to approve by Trustee Johnson-Burick.*

*Unanimously Approved.*

*1<sup>st</sup> motion to approve to promote Edward Salazar to be Community & Economic Director by Mayor Pro Tem Merrick*

*2<sup>nd</sup> motion to approve by Trustee Johnson-Burick.*

*Unanimously Approved.*

*1<sup>st</sup> motion to approve facility clerk position to Jacob Atwell, new hire by Mayor Pro Tem Merrick*

*2<sup>nd</sup> motion to approve by Trustee Johnson-Burick*

*Unanimously Approved.*

*1<sup>st</sup> motion to approve employment opportunity to Christopher Naranjo in the public works department by Mayor Pro Tem Merrick*

*2<sup>nd</sup> motion to approve by Trustee Johnson-Burick*

*Unanimously Approved*

## **BOARD OF TRUSTEE COMMITTEE REPORTS**

*Trustee Nevarez – nothing to report at this time.*

*Trustee Johnson-Burick – MPO update, canceled.*

*Mayor Pro Tem Merrick – only have 3 people in public works and understands the concerns from the community.*

*Mayor Hernandez – nothing to report at this time.*

## **11. BOARD OF TRUSTEE/STAFF COMMENTS**

*Marshal Azcarate – new radios, some issues with radio but working with MVRD on this. Will be in Clovis next week for training. New cameras in our community. (Pinned badge on Sgt. Hernandez).*

*Sgt Hernandez expressed her gratitude in serving the community and promotion*

*Fire Marshal Whited – academy of 8 graduated Saturday at the community center. Taking old radios and soon to be expiring PPE and supplies to Ruidoso.*

*CCE Salazar – showed appreciation of promotion and excited to grown and help with economic development and historic preservation. Also, reported update on Ad Hoc committee regarding short-term rentals. Stated goal to have a drafted proposed STR ordinance by first or second week of September.*

*Mayor Hernandez – public works as mentioned has been short staffed. Two of our public works were out fairly late last night in an emergency. There is an opportunity to improve the appearance of our town, and a new landscaping company to assist in the absence of our public work staff. Had over 300 applications, is exciting but took time to review.*

*Trustee Nevarez – commented on internship program from college to assist Mesilla in various positions and aspects of staff. Also, commented on a property in Mesilla, with a new structure not in compliance with our code, eye sore.*

*Trustee Johnson-Burick – commented on short-term rental moratorium and would like to be a discussion in next meeting. Not recall hearing about park changes to accommodate public parking.*

*Mayor Pro Tem Merrick – if there is any concerns in the community or at least clarification, please let me know. I have not received any concerns on the park issue. Safety has been a concern, a lot is due to being so close to our surrounding communities. Have hired 4 marshals, are growing the department. Big part of safety is community involvement, keep Community Connect.*

*Mayor Hernandez – commented we are live on YouTube, in case there are any questions about a particular subject or meeting. Improvements to our meeting room. Taylor family day on 24<sup>th</sup> of this month, 9am to 1pm and also a soft start to visitor center.*

*Any code issues, please be sure to contact us. Sometimes there is and other times there are no permits for a project. Soon, a software, MyMesilla will be available to share codes, improvements, bill online, business, etc.*

*Community Development has been working on a STR moratorium. Need to consider influx of new applications being submitted and not due to codes being aggressive and contacting unregistered STR. Very little new STR applications are coming in to constitute a moratorium.*

*A lot of the projects have already been in place and are an overflow from previous administration that are being worked with. Capital improvement plan just approved a couple meetings ago. Quite a few items within the next couple of years. Projects and funding takes time to make it happen.*

*Been in this position for 8 months, was zero transition for previous administration. Learning a lot since then. Some of the plans, like the park parking, was changed. A grant fund that was received and put in through the process at the beginning of the year. Still have time to get input from community and will have a meeting for it to happen. Need to continue with communicating with him. Electric pole from El Paso Electric was planned from an existing project.*

*Waiting for a grant awarded for a study and comprehensive plan. Will give residents opportunity to be involved.*

*Hear comments on both ends by some that question what he has done since in office and others tell him to slow down, going too fast, which one is it?*

*Reminded everyone that his door is always open to listen to anyone in the community.*

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

**The Town of Mesilla Trustees unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting. (Summary: Yes-3).**

**MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:53 P.M.**

**APPROVED THIS 26th DAY OF AUGUST, 2024**



**Russell Hernandez  
Mayor**

**ATTEST:**



**Gloria S. Maya  
Town Clerk/Treasurer**



From: Eric Liefeld eric.liefeld@gmail.com  
Subject: Urgent: Pause the Calle de Santiago/Picacho project for transparency, historic preservation, and key stakeholder review...

Date: Aug 12, 2024 at 2:17:41PM

To: mayor@mesillanm.gov,  
stephaniejb@mesillanm.gov,  
adriannam@mesillanm.gov,  
bivianac@mesillanm.gov,  
gerardn@mesillanm.gov,  
yolandal@mesillanm.gov, ericg@mesillanm.gov,  
davies@mesillanm.gov, Lori Miller  
lldustymiller@gmail.com, Eric Walkinshaw  
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Cc: poppie\_gullett@nps.gov, nm.shpo@dca.nm.gov,  
Trina Witter trina.witter@gmail.com, Pat Taylor  
apataylor@comcast.net, Mary Helen Ratje  
Mhratje@comcast.net, Michael Taylor  
adobechaco1@gmail.com,  
robertotaylor1947@gmail.com,  
emguerra@yahoo.com

[Please include this letter in the official record for the minutes of the August 12, 2024 Board of Trustees meeting.]

Dear Mayor Hernandez, Mesilla Board of Trustees, and Planning and Zoning and Historical Appropriateness Commissioners,

We are writing to request that the town immediately pause the Calle de Santiago/Calle de Picacho road reconstruction project until proper review by ALL stakeholders can take place. There has been a distinct lack of transparency with this project and it has not been reviewed by affected property owners, Mesilla residents at large, and historic preservation officials. While it appears the design is at an advanced stage, most residents are just finding out about the details. It is never too late to do the right thing for Mesilla's historic and cultural preservation.

We only recently learned that this project is much more than a simple "road repaving" project as it has been described. It has grown well past the initial "drainage" issues that were used to justify the project. Instead this project will significantly impact the visual and cultural landscape of this important historic Mesilla neighborhood by:

- Shrinking/removing park area, replacing it with very modern looking high-density diagonal commercial/public parking
- Shrinking/removing park area and at least one (frequently used) basketball court, replacing it with additional commercial/public parking
- Extending modern curb, gutter, and sidewalk all the way down Calle de Picacho where it has never existed before in Mesilla's history
- Adding electric car charging stations

All of these very modern "improvements" will be forced upon a mostly residential historic rural neighborhood. Residents will have high-density commercial/public parking up against their properties for the first time, drawing additional visitor traffic to our neighborhood, accompanied by additional noise, car lights at night, etc. A new

electrical power pole is already being forced onto a historic property as a part of this project.

And it is not just us: no neighbors we've spoken to understand the very significant impacts this project will have, as currently designed. Unfortunately, there seems to have been no notification and a lack of review for this project's design. Specifically there have been:

- NO NOTICE TO NEIGHBORS. We own three historic properties that directly border the project and will be adversely impacted. We received no official notification or opportunity to review the plans and details for impacts to our properties.
- NO PUBLIC REVIEW. The public and users of the park have had no opportunity to review the proposed shrinking of the heavily-used park and its amenities. Those basketball courts are used daily (and as recently as last night)! There was no charette (public input) process that we are aware of.
- NO HISTORIC REVIEW. These changes will alter the visual and cultural landscape in one of the most important historic neighborhoods in Mesilla. The project will directly touch no less than 13 listed significant and contributing properties in the Mesilla Historic District (see below). The project is a block away from the Mesilla National Historic Landmark (as currently defined).

The plans are not publicly available outside of Mesilla Town Hall. Apparently posting them on the MPO website would require the Mayor's approval. Why has this not been done?

The park and our historic neighborhoods are more than just an opportunity to squeeze in more commercial/public parking that ultimately benefits the town (not the neighborhood). The Town of Mesilla operates the Mesilla Community Center commercially and also draws revenues from businesses through public parking fees. We expect the town to make the case for expanding its commercial use of our neighborhood just like the town would require of any business in our historic district.

As the owner of the Community Center and the Parque Cura Roman Ortiz, the town simply must make an effort to be a better neighbor. Please pause this project immediately until residents and other stakeholders can understand its impacts.



Thank you for considering this request.

Regards,

Eric Liefeld and Trina Witter

#### Historic Significance

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There are unique archeological and interpretive opportunities in that park that could help us better understand and communicate Mesilla's unique story, but only if we don't pave over them. The park itself is dedicated to Ramon Ortiz, credited with helping to found Mesilla. This project will impact significant or contributing historic structures in Mesilla's State and National Historic districts, including:

- The Jose Maria Barela House
- The Enofre Barala House
- The Provencio House
- The Mesilla School / Community Center (designed by renowned architect Henry Trost)
- The Albino Fritze House and carriage house
- The Simon Guerra blacksmith shop
- The Padilla House
- The Reynolds/Chavez/Fountain House
- The Griggs House
- The Raider House (formerly the rectory for San Albino)
- The Guerra family buildings
- The Acequia Madre (Mesilla Lateral)
- The Contra Acequia (California Lateral)