



# CITY OF LAS CRUCES

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION Work Session

July 24, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

The following are minutes of the Historic Preservation Commission Work Session Meeting held July 24, 2024, in room 2007B, City Hall, 700 N. Main Street, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dr. Judy A. Berryman, Chair  
David Chavez, Vice-Chair  
Ernie Campos  
Dr. Paul John Deason  
Dr. Jerry Wallace

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Jeffrey Shepherd  
Patricia Williams

**STAFF PRESENT:** Larry Nichols, Director Community Development  
Chris Faivre, Economic Development Deputy Director  
Brad Douglas, City Attorney

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Becky McClure, City Councilor  
Deb Dennis  
Jo Ruprecht  
Greg Shervanick

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF THE MEETING AGENDA (6:00)**

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - April 17, 2024, May 6, 2024**

**3. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**3.1 HISTORICAL PRESERVATION SHOWCASE EXHIBIT**

RECORDING STARTED.

There was discussion about the HPC having more of a presence in the community. Shown an example of Historical Preservation Showcase Exhibit which will be a traveling exhibit. This will go to senior citizens centers, museums, library, schools and discuss historic buildings. A brief was given on the former Doña Ana County Courthouse.

1 Commission members stated it is a good idea and offers an opportunity for  
2 the Commission to go and showcase. They are showing what happens  
3 when the cultural legacy, the historic past is erased. Gives an opportunity  
4 to give educational outreach on the existing historic structures. Mentioned  
5 the community does not who they are of if they even exist. Acknowledged  
6 that Larry Nichols painted the examples shown. Suggested that the  
7 paragraph should be reduced a bit, as no one is going to read that much  
8 text, enlarge the font, include text in Spanish as well. Question on when  
9 this would be started. There is the report on August 12th, and this could be  
10 also be mentioned. Commission requested to review all text. On the map  
11 a different color scheme to help it stand out, and incorporate numbers that  
12 will correspond on the boards. Suggestion of a QR code. Also suggestion  
13 of artists and then auctioning the artwork as had been done with Doña Ana  
14 Arts Council years ago.

15  
16 Since several of the paintings were done from downtown, also working on  
17 a walking tour, with a possible tri-fold handout.

18  
19 Suggestion of a Commissioner to specifically help with the text. The present  
20 buildings are commercial, but this could be expanded.

21  
22 Item for future is to go to various schools and do lectures on historic  
23 resources to give an introduction.

### 24 25 **3.2 REALIZE LAS CRUCES**

26  
27 Chapter 40 outlines the duties of the Historic Preservation Commission, the  
28 members, the responsibilities. Also defines what the historic preservation  
29 specialist is supposed to do in terms of collecting historic data, doing  
30 surveys to determine what properties are eligible for nomination. Also gives  
31 guides for individuals of "I have a historic building. I want to make a  
32 modification. What do I do?" Go to planning department ask for building  
33 permit, demolish permit, etc. Staff will determine if it is a historic building.  
34 Historic preservationist would then determine if building is eligible under  
35 national or state register guidelines, an important event occurred there, an  
36 important person, or additional information important to historic fabric. Then  
37 it goes to HPC with a set of plans and pictures and what they are doing for  
38 review. If approved then they can get a permit, but if not approved there  
39 are various steps. This was done four years ago. Now there are  
40 inconsistencies, deficiencies, and items should be altered to have a more  
41 cohesive protection of historic resources.

42  
43 Realize Las Cruces calls it Chapter 2. In the opinion of the Commission  
44 has a lot of issues that diminish historic integrity. Chapter 40 has seven  
45 Commissioners; Chapter 2 has five Commissioners. By diminishing it to  
46 five, no every District is represented. Another change, the position of the

1 historic preservation specialist was replaced by the term "City staff." City  
2 staff is not specific enough to state that people have historic background  
3 able to determine whether buildings are historically accurate. Another item  
4 in Chapter 2 said any City owned buildings that were historic could be  
5 demolished without any review. If the public has to go through a process,  
6 the City should do the same process. Another change, the term "historically  
7 designated district." If a historic structure or resource is not in a district, it  
8 is not protected under Chapter 2.  
9

10 Chapter 2, Section 2.1.F - this is against federal law. If a property is City  
11 owned in a historic district or is designated or can be designated as a  
12 historic property or potential historic property, by state and federal law it  
13 cannot be demolished without review.  
14

15 What is needed in the City is a building survey to know the historic  
16 properties. It seems there are only two historic districts discussed, but there  
17 seems to be University district that is not discussed. There is no University  
18 district, but there is University Corridor. There are four historic districts:  
19 Mesquite, Alameda, Mesilla Park, Rio Grande. There is the requirement of  
20 the 50 year by the Secretary of the Interior standards and there are lots of  
21 buildings in our community, outside of the historic districts that do fall in that.  
22 There is bad literature in town about historic preservation; a Trost walking  
23 tour about campus designating it as a historic district on campus, with no  
24 confirmation. In Chapter 40 there is a requirement for surveys, and also a  
25 requirement to nominate buildings to the local register, both of which have  
26 not been done.  
27

28 Certified Local Government (CLG), and there are only 10 in New Mexico.  
29 Part of that process is recognizing the importance and protection of historic  
30 resources. A requirement of the CLG is to have a historic preservationist,  
31 which City of Las Cruces no longer has. Applied for and received funding  
32 from SHPO to do a survey of a part of the City. Unfortunately, no responses  
33 we received to do the survey or a two-year plan. It is now the Commission's  
34 responsibility to write the two year plan. Hope for an intern to work with the  
35 City and GIS data on historic documentation.  
36

37 The City is advertising for a replacement historic specialist will come out in  
38 August and be posted for 45 days. See the candidate list and reviewed by  
39 HR, list provided for interviews, and then select a candidate. Hopefully  
40 totally completed by the end of the year. It was asked if the Commission  
41 would be involved in interviewing, since they will be working with the  
42 individual. City employees are the only ones that can be on the reviewing  
43 committees. Commission stated there is a requirement and rigid  
44 qualifications for a historic preservationist. A Commissioner stated that a  
45 former chair of HPC and other people with historic preservation background  
46 were part of the interview process for the hiring of the previous historic

1 preservationist. Argued that because you have a degree does not mean  
2 you are qualified. They may not be familiar with adobe. Restated there  
3 need to be people from the Commission or people from the community that  
4 are well aware of the architectural and historic needs to be on the interview  
5 panel. Staff will check with HR. Mentioned that Marshall McClellan was  
6 interviewed and was with SHPO with the state of Michigan for years. His  
7 concern at the time was how many people were interviewed that were not  
8 qualified. It was mentioned that non-City, non-scoring people could possibly  
9 be part of the interview process, just as ex-officio members, and this will be  
10 looked into.

11  
12 Besides the building survey, there are multiple historic districts, these  
13 should also be part of the survey. NMSU classes have done surveys of El  
14 Paseo (the commercial corridor), Motel Boulevard, Antique District (West  
15 Picacho), Crescent (behind Las Cruces High School), and Bellamah (most  
16 of it), and these should also be included in the surveys. There needs to be  
17 some type of historic plan/goals/objectives for the City. Question of what  
18 historic preservation projects are being worked on now. And what is the  
19 role of the HPC.  
20

21 The CLG was the main project. There are many buildings over 50 years  
22 old in the City. Many of those buildings are not maintained, and some  
23 become unsafe structures. And some property owners will not get them  
24 into habitable condition, and then becomes incumbent on Community  
25 Development and building official to follow through to do something.  
26 Property ownership has rights and privileges, and responsibilities. The  
27 demolished Kilby Hotel was discussed. It was suggested that if there was  
28 an inventory of the entire City then they could target some of these buildings  
29 to take action as a community for whether to save it or it is beyond  
30 rehabilitation. Right now seems more reactionary rather than preventative.  
31 There is a difference between public owned and private owned. Request  
32 that before demolition occurs, comes to HPC to say, "this building is historic,  
33 we've taken these steps to record." Demolition by neglect for buildings that  
34 are not maintained, as there seems to be a double standard of private  
35 property has to follow rules, but others do not, (example: courthouse).  
36 There does not seem to be a maintenance budget for maintaining City  
37 owned buildings. Staff stated there is budget for maintenance for City  
38 owned structures. The municipal courthouse was mentioned four years in  
39 a row and kept hearing "we don't have any money." The building does not  
40 comply to ADA, railing rusted, therefore no maintenance, no repairs. Klein  
41 Park railings have been stripped and maintained. Paint and scraping on  
42 windows is all the courthouse needs. It was stated that if there is  
43 maintenance money it is going somewhere else because not going to  
44 structures that are used by thousands of people. The Branigan Cultural  
45 Center columns were mentioned, and the City did not get permission from  
46 this Commission or the feds to touch that building. City told they need to

1 get permission from the feds to cut those columns down, etc. Emphasis  
2 again for the need of a one, two, five year plan. They need an  
3 understanding of historic resources; survey, nomination of districts, and  
4 then a clear plan from the Commission, the City, and the public what is the  
5 direction in terms of protecting the integrity and the ambiance and the  
6 feeling of Las Cruces. If we are proactive, because we are CLG, because  
7 these could be designated as historical or potentially historic, there is a lot  
8 of federal money, a lot of grant money, lot of businesses and institutions  
9 around the U.S. that will preserve, rehabilitate buildings and residences.

10  
11 Again, the CLG depends on having a historic specialist. Right now missing  
12 \$250,000 that could be applied for from Department of Interior to do a  
13 survey, but cannot do it as there is no specialist. The specialist's listing of  
14 jobs to do, this was on his list of things to do, that was not accomplished in  
15 the four years. The Commission feels they have to push the issue, push  
16 the agenda and got pushed back. Commission has talked to SHPO about  
17 the grants, and they have to wait until next season because no specialist.  
18 David Chavez stated the Commission has bent over backwards to push  
19 agendas, to get jobs done, to get some recognition, and got pushback. Lack  
20 of communication from the specialist and from Community Development.

21  
22 Various areas of the town were mentioned, Sheva town, Beverly Hills,  
23 Blueberry Hill, Bown Lee, Hadley, West Side area, Fourth Street, University,  
24 University Hills, Mesilla Park. And needing a map that shows all of these  
25 areas for the new specialist. There was mention of needing leadership so  
26 the Commission knows their role. Know about buildings before issues  
27 rather than after.

28  
29 It was stated her biggest problem is there is no open communication. If a  
30 historic building is to be demolished it is Friday afternoon and no one  
31 responds. Community Development needs to appoint a liaison that is  
32 responsible for updating and keeping this board informed. She questions  
33 the lack of Certificate of Appropriateness as there were none this month,  
34 none last month, none the month before, pretty much since the HPS  
35 (Historic Preservation Specialist) left. Questions if the planning department  
36 knows what rules they should be following.

37  
38 Jo Ruprecht mentioned buildings on the university campus being on the  
39 national register. Asked for when someone would be hired and in the  
40 position of specialist. Staff mentioned there are 17 steps in the hiring  
41 process for the City; requisition to hire, advertisement, candidates, etc. It  
42 takes approximately three to four months to go through all the steps.  
43 Approximately expected hiring a specialist will be at the end of the year.

44  
45 Deb Dennis has spoken with Cultural Property Review Committee and they  
46 provided information HPD should be a resource to this board. This City

1 resists historic preservation. A whole culture needs to be changed to have  
2 a preservation minded community. HPD should be helping, and can ask for  
3 that from Karla McWilliams when she evaluates the status of the CLG. Ask  
4 for assistance from HPD staff as they do help Albuquerque, including  
5 interns. What can HPD do to help develop the two, five year plan? Judy  
6 Berryman did state she contacted SHPO, Karla McWilliams upon the  
7 resignation of the City specialist and asked for help. An e-mail was sent  
8 from Karla McWilliams to the City and no response has been received. Not  
9 known where that e-mail was directed. Maybe follow-up with Karla  
10 McWilliams request so she can come down.

11  
12 Jerry Wallace mentioned having a meeting with Tracy Smith from Utah, and  
13 he and another scholar are putting together an anthology of 30  
14 intermountain west cities and historic preservation. Tracy Smith asked what  
15 the goal of the City of Las Cruces and historic preservation, and stated he  
16 had been trying for months to breath through with the City of Las Cruces  
17 and have this conversation and nobody will talk to him.

18  
19 Paul Deason moved to accept the Chapter 2 comments; David Chavez  
20 seconded. Motion passed.

21  
22 **DISCUSSION OF HPC MAIN GOALS**

23  
24 **4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

25  
26 Carlos Melendres stated he is the great, great grandson of Pablo Melendres who  
27 founded the City in 1849. He has information for recognizing an important  
28 historical person. He thanked Judy Berryman for her e-mail and inviting him. He  
29 stated very few people are aware of the important role that Pablo Melendres had  
30 in the history and development of southern New Mexico. He wrote a couple of  
31 books, one about Pablo Melendres and one about Geronimo. He discussed  
32 remains uncovered at a church. He also mentioned Native American meeting  
33 north of Mesquite Street before Las Cruces was a City, and he is wanting to get  
34 together with Farm and Ranch Museum to recognize and bring those meetings/  
35 celebrations back. He wants the Commission to write a resolution to support these  
36 efforts.

37  
38 Judy Berryman wanted to emphasize that under Chapter 40 it is not just structures,  
39 so responsible for looking at structures, heritage, locations, Native American  
40 locations, people, locations associated with significant individuals or areas of  
41 events. Due to separation of church and state, the Commission has no authority  
42 to look at any discussion in terms of church business. She also stated Native  
43 American concerns are extremely important. At this particular time and period they  
44 are addressing other issues.

45  
46 **5. OTHER ITEMS**

1 Next HPC meeting is August 21st, 6:00 p.m.

2  
3 They want a meeting with Realize Las Cruces in terms of Chapter 2 before the  
4 next Commission meeting. She would like 120% of the changes to be added but  
5 maybe get 50%.

6  
7 **6. ADJOURNMENT (7:30)**

8  
9 Paul Deason moved to adjourn; David Chavez seconded. Motion passed.

10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15 \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

DRAFT