



CITY OF LAS CRUCES

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

January 21, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

The following are minutes of the Historic Preservation Committee Meeting held February 18, 2026, at W.I.A. Building, 340 N. Reymond Street.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Jerry Wallace, Chair
Ernie Campos
Paul John Deason, PhD
Jeffrey Shepherd, PhD
Fernando Baeza
Rosanna Torrez

MEMBERS ABSENT: Norma Chairez-Hartell

STAFF PRESENT: Caitlin Beesley, Historic Preservation Specialist
Henry Becker, Deputy City Attorney
Kevin Doyal, Building Official

OTHERS PRESENT:	Jennifer Howell	Gary Camunez
	Lupe & Rene Corona	Guinivere Mayse
	Liana Aguirre	Michael Kinney
	John Verpluegh	Pat Taylor
	Eric Liefeld	Marco Dominguez
	Myriam Dominguez	Yvonne Del La O Jasso
	T.J. Jesso	Erma Giron
	Trent Christopher	Satai Guerro
	George Perason	Greg Shervanick
	Dennis Daily	Jennie Del La O Carabajal
	Fernando Mathias	Henrieta Podhajecka

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Wallace called the meeting to order at 6:10.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES -

2.1 January 21, 2026, HPC Minutes

Motion to approve by Paul Deason; seconded by Ernie Campos. Motion passed unanimously.

3. TRAVELING NMSU EXHIBIT

3.1 Regional African American History Exhibit Introduction by Dr. Laura Hooton

Dr. Hooton had to leave early. Chair Wallace stated this was a project last semester in a graduate class which focused on Black history in the Western U.S. at the turn of the 20th century. Students put together the short panels that commemorate different figures in the borderland. Students felt it is an awesome project and now it is more than just a project. Paul Deason asked if a booklet would be produced and then available in the City museum system and City Visitor's Center.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Greg Shervanick asked about the design for the gazebo extension in Pioneer Park. Caitlin Beesley stated this project was approved before she started. The pergolas extending out from the gazebo towards the four corners of park follow the circulation quarters/sidewalks and have historic precedence. Greg suggested the changes to the park "happened in the dark" without public participation.

George Pearson stated some years ago there was money for a master plan for Pioneer Women's Park. Part of the process was an extensive working with neighborhood design charettes. Neighborhood bought into going back to the 1920's design with the pergolas extending to the east and west. It did not "happen in the dark." The neighborhood liked the idea.

Trent Christopher of Community Power Doña Ana discussed plans for a community garden in the historic district at 628 N. Mesquite Street. He is seeking support/permission from the committee for the garden. The first year they plan to just get things in the ground, no real major improvements. Second year to build structures and a community kitchen for residents of the neighborhood. He has a letter of support from Las Esperanzas. He also went door-to-door in the neighborhood. Chair Wallace stated it would be best to make this an agenda item on a future HPC meeting for further discussion. In the meantime partner with Caitlin Beesley as there is a bureaucratic process he has to go through.

Gary Camunez stated that he worked on the charettes and that they were well done and it is exactly what they wanted (Pioneer Women's Park). He is also interested in the gardens, and remembers there used to be winter gardens.

5. PANEL DISCUSSION

5.1 Adobe Heritage and Preservation in the Mesilla Valley

1 Caitlin Beesley stated the panel idea came from asking Pat Taylor to give a
2 presentation on adobe and it was suggested to do a panel.

3
4 **PANELISTS:**

5 Pat Taylor from Mesilla and has worked with adobe most of his life.

6
7 Eric Liefeld, native Las Crucian, but lived half his life in Mesilla. He has
8 been involved in a lot of adobe rehabilitation projects and the Armijo House.

9
10 Marco Dominguez from Anthony, New Mexico. Most of his projects are in
11 Mesilla. He has been doing adobe restoration for 10 years.

12
13 Liana Aguirre is the historic preservation specialist for the Town of Mesilla
14 which is a new position.

15
16 **WHAT DOES ADOBE MEAN TO YOU?**

17 Eric Liefeld stated that growing up here he did not think there was much
18 history. At age eight he went to an open house that Paul Taylor was doing
19 in Mesilla which opened his eyes.

20
21 Marco Dominguez stated it was something he did when he was small. He
22 developed a passion for it. He gets to help people repairing their homes.

23
24 Liana Aguirre stated that when working with adobe it is a time to connect to
25 people working with. And becomes a community event.

26
27 Pat Taylor thanked the City and the HPC. Did lose a lot with urban renewal,
28 but things are looking different.

29
30 **IS THERE A NEED WITHIN THE COMMUNITY TO COME TOGETHER AND**
31 **HELP DO THIS WORK ACTIVELY?**

32 Liana Aguirre stated yes. Need more people to come out and help restore
33 historic buildings. Funding is always an issue. Need to be able to offer a
34 service. Need a community of people for this.

35
36 Pat Taylor recognized the Doña Ana Village Historic Preservation
37 Committee. That committee four years ago saved the church in Doña Ana.
38 Thirty-five years ago saved the oldest church in the valley. Also the
39 community center and the building next to it. And the cemetery.

40
41 **PROJECTS**

42 Pat Taylor started a nonprofit upon retiring. They have taken the concept
43 of workshops and turned it around to paying people to attend rather than
44 charging. They lost two interns last week, and have slots open for two more
45 in starting wage is \$18. They have an ongoing workshop and working on
46 the Provencio house. Adobe can absorb soluble salts. When salts expand

1 to 800 lbs. per square inch, there is degradation at the base of the walls.
2 Their work centers at the base or top of the walls.
3

4 Eric Liefeld stated he and his wife own two 1850 adobes in Mesilla. They
5 are slowly bringing those back. What is unique is that they are in their
6 original footprint. These buildings represent to them a story of the valley as
7 they were owned by two brothers, Barela family. He thinks in terms of
8 ecosystem. Bigger projects need help. Marco has helped lots.
9

10 Caitlin Beesley asked about training the younger generation to understand
11 and respect the heritage and mechanics of adobe construction.
12

13 Liana Aguirre stated the National Alliance Preservation Commission hosts
14 monthly discussions of different topics. And last month was on historic
15 trades and make it more available to local schools and integrate to already
16 functioning businesses and construction. Rio Grande Prep in Mesilla is
17 looking to incorporate trades vocation department. Get the youth involved
18 is important. Respecting historic properties and putting that knowledge and
19 the hardware and hard work into it. Lot goes into maintaining a historic
20 structure, but having the tools and getting youth involved.
21

22 ADDING ON TO AN ADOBE STRUCTURE WITH ADOBE.

23 Eric Liefeld stated he would recommend it. He has done it.
24

25 Marco Dominguez recommended that if it is adobe, keep it adobe. But often
26 times it comes down to funding.
27

28 ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES OF ADDING USING ADOBE VERSUS 29 OTHER

30 Eric Liefeld stated if you have a frame building add adobe walls not a good
31 idea. A lot comes to cost per square foot too. They did mud plaster and it
32 has done well since 2008, with updates every five to six years. Mud plaster
33 is less expensive. In paying every five to six years for the mud plaster, it is
34 almost entirely for labor.
35

36 Liana Aguirre stated there is a difference between walking into an adobe
37 building and the newer homes. An older home seems to feel more solid.
38

39 PRESERVATION CONFERENCE IN OCTOBER, A SPEAKER STATED THAT 40 ADOBE HAD NO FUTURE IN THE BUILDING CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY - 41 WHAT WOULD YOU RECOMMEND FOR NEW BUILDINGS?

42 Liana Aguirre stated "booo."
43

44 Pat Taylor stated it is better for the environment building an adobe. There
45 are two ways to heat an adobe, thermos effect where it insulates the outside
46 and heats the inside, and other is time where you have thick walls and takes

1 so long for the elements to move through. With economic and social issues,
2 many think adobe is past its prime and use different materials. There are
3 many contractors in Las Cruces and very few do adobe. There are
4 amendments to the adobe code that provide of continuing the practice of
5 materials for buildings. Also inspectors are learning too.
6

7 Eric Liefeld stated the feel of the building is important – nothing like an old
8 adobe house. In Santa Fe, an adobe house is a marketing characteristic of
9 the house, demanding a higher price. Fortunate to have an adobe code in
10 New Mexico as most states do not.
11

12 Liana Aguirre stated that there is a discussion on sustainability and how
13 adobe offers sustainability. Environmentally abode is very sustainable.
14 Trame buildings are not as good as much of their materials come from
15 around the world and that is part of the price too.
16

17 Eric Liefeld stated the home he lives in has been added onto many times.
18 The two oldest rooms, the best rooms, have 24-inch walls. And additions
19 only have 18-inch walls. And then years later more addition with only 10-
20 inch walls. This shows that cost of labor had a lot to do with this.
21

22 WHAT WOULD YOU ADVISE TO CARE AND EXTEND THE LIFE OF AN ADOBE 23 BUILDING

24 Pat Taylor stated he first explains the dynamics of adobe and the salt
25 issues. The hidden damage that people do not realize. He was told need
26 to keep the water from getting in, but in reality need to get the water out.
27 There are intangibles, like the history that accompanies the building. He
28 greatly appreciates what the City, Mesilla, Doña Ana have done.
29

30 Marco Dominguez stated using permeable materials. Cement is not good
31 for adobe. Keep up with maintenance.
32

33 Eric Liefeld stated there are a unique set of problems in this valley. He and
34 Pat have been in research together for this. The problem is a function of
35 the soils, function of the climate. Most contractors want to seal up the wall,
36 but the evaporation starts to cause problems behind the seal.
37

38 WHAT WOULD THEY LIKE THE GOVERNMENT TO KNOW TO HELP THE 39 TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE ADOBE HERITAGE?

40 Pat Taylor stated pulling a permit only allows about six months to a year,
41 but usually their process takes much more time. And so there needs to be
42 some flexibility in the inspections part to help facilitate renewing permits.
43 Inspectors are going to be hesitant to sign off on something they do not
44 completely understand. When the understand the dynamics and there are
45 building codes and amendments to the building codes, then they have more

1 confidence in being able to allow a contractor to do something that might
2 seem strange but it has been done for centuries.

3
4 Marco Dominguez agreed with what Pat Taylor just said. Inspectors need
5 to be fully aware of all of the issues with adobe.

6
7 Eric Liefeld stated places can be saved but have to do the right things to it.
8 He heard it would be cheaper and easier to tear down the Armijo house
9 than fix it up.

10
11 Pat Taylor stated when working with homeowners and they finish the work,
12 they say now the maintenance begins. Maintenance is preservation.

13 14 QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

15 Paul Deason asked on rebuilding the ancient ways of doing things there
16 was a program in Nova Scotia for coal miners that no longer had jobs and
17 they were retrained to work in the old trades for preserving places. This
18 also might be good for those in prison that need remediation and a trade for
19 return to society. Instead of demolition, deconstruction, and salvage, and
20 how to promote the deconstruction and salvage.

21
22 Eric Liefeld stated he hopes the City can look at this differently and do
23 something prior to getting to the demolition point. Caitlin Beesley stated
24 they want that to be the last resort and it is never the option they choose.

25
26 Chair Wallace stated there are educational opportunities, particularly the
27 salt issue. How to have more panels like this that just focuses on that
28 preventative issue? Discussions of creating a bone yard of adobe, but
29 different. Come together as a community to start building adobe to give.
30 How to think of Doña Ana as a whole place to have these conversations as
31 they seem to be somewhat siloed?

32
33 Eric Liefeld stated relative to the salt issue they have tried to evangelize on
34 that as much as they can. Mesilla Valley Preservation got a grant from the
35 National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, and they
36 developed a test kit that lets you literally drill into an adobe wall and
37 determine if salts are the issue. There is an eight-part video series as part
38 of that, which is on YouTube.

39
40 Ernie Campos stated he works for the county and there are a lot of old
41 houses in the county. Most cannot afford to keep the house and will tear it
42 down. Even though mentioning keeping the house as a casita, but it is too
43 costly. Consider this throughout the county as adobe to expensive.

44
45 Pat Taylor stated the county and region are losing places. We are literally
46 losing a cultural landscape.

1
2 Liana Aguirre stated north of Socorro gets tons of funding and south of
3 Socorro does not, and we are struggling down here. We need to get the
4 word out that we have historical properties and land that tells amazing story,
5 but it is deteriorating physically. How to educate the youth if not proponents
6 of the preservation? Chair Wallace states even though we are the second
7 largest City yet the preservation is so far behind many other communities in
8 the state.
9

10 There is interest in identifying the various problems, and identify assets,
11 identify knowledgeable and experienced people, look at different
12 institutions, the City, county, NMSU, bring people together to create
13 pathways that solve the problems over time. A dedicated core of people
14 that can pull things together.
15

16 Eric Liefeld is on the Cornerstones Board, and he wants to expand
17 cornerstones, reach into other parts of the state that are south of I-40. They
18 bring expertise. He is interested in projects in the southern part of the state
19 that he could be proposing to Cornerstone as a part of their program. Pat
20 Taylor also mentioned necessitating good grant writers. Bring together
21 STEM and humanities. Write grants to address all, cultural landscape,
22 history, community stories, family genealogy, and then the engineering
23 map, the physics, the salt, height, width ratios. Adobe sits in that nexus of
24 science, history, and humanity.
25

26 Paul Deason says we are looking for a community to build on several
27 different levels, look at Pueblo Tortugas with many buildings and some
28 falling down. Bringing that community together with the education, with all
29 of that it may possibly/potentially advance them in their attempts to be
30 recognized.
31

32 Gary Camunez stated he was applying for a demolition permit. He lived in
33 Florida but returned here in 2008. On 634 N. Tornillo, three buildings, he
34 bought there. In 18 years he did shore up the two apartment buildings from
35 1920s. The front one is in question, big holes, not good. He hopes to not
36 need that demolition.
37

38 Caitlin Beesley stated there may be opportunities to do public workshops.
39 Eric Liefeld stated there is a biannual conference called Earth U.S.A. held
40 in Santa Fe. They charge bus loads of people from the east to come out
41 and make adobes and help build houses for habitat. This is great. Just
42 need to market things right.
43

44 A member of the public would be interested in a walking tour for people that
45 are not familiar with adobe can go inside, learn how they are structured.
46

1 A member of the public talked about if the owner will not care for it at least
2 get the building stabilized. Chair Wallace suggests what is needed in this
3 community is friends groups that raise money that then can purchase those
4 properties. Also to bring together people wanting to sell with people wanting
5 to buy these older properties.
6

7 **6. STAFF AND COMMITTEE INPUT**
8

9 Caitlin Beesley stated that for those living in Mesquite there is a community
10 meeting next Thursday. The Main Street program got a grant to establish an art
11 heritage trail along Camino Real. Also, the historic district design guidelines, the
12 content draft will be discussed next week with two work sessions, one Wednesday
13 at 6:00 at the Papen Center, and another Saturday, 2:00 p.m. W.I.A. building.
14 March will be Paul Deason's last meeting. Next month's meeting at City Hall in
15 Council Chambers.
16

17 Ernie Campos asked if the endangers building list was going to be online. Caitlin
18 Beesley stated that will be discussed next month.
19

20 **7. ADJOURNMENT**
21

22 Motion to adjourn by Jeffrey Shepherd; seconded by Paul Deason. Motion passed
23 unanimously.
24
25
26
27
28

29 _____
Chairperson