



CITY OF LAS CRUCES

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

January 15, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

The following are minutes of the Historic Preservation Commission Meeting held January 15, 2025, in room 2007B, City Hall, 700 N. Main Street, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Judy A. Berryman, Chair
Ernie Campos
Dr. Paul John Deason
Dr. Jeffrey P. Shepherd
Dr. Jerry Wallace

MEMBERS ABSENT: Patricia Williams

STAFF PRESENT: Adam Ochoa, Senior Planner
Chris Faivre, Deputy Director Community Development
Cathy Mathews, Parks & Recreation

OTHERS PRESENT: Michael Lee
George Pearson
George Lopez
Barbara Lopez
Edward "Dennis" Flores
Corrina Miramontes
Martha Rodriguez
Greg Shervanick
Jo Ruprecht
Rose Garcia

1. CALL TO ORDER (6:00)

The meeting was called to order.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2.1 December 18, 2024 HPC Minutes

Paul Deason moved to approve the minutes as corrected; seconded by Ernie Campos. Motion passed unanimously.

1 **3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

2
3 Ernie Campos stated he invited a contractor, representative from Tierra Del Sol, a
4 Commissioner from the Planning and Zoning Commission, and a Commissioner
5 from the Board of County Commissioners, who are all involved in the historical
6 Mesquite area; however they were unable to attend.
7

8 George Lopez stated he is a fifth generation mason from Las Cruces. His family
9 has fought to retain main street, the old churches, and old buildings. He has been
10 restoring and patching adobe houses in Las Cruces and Santa Fe. He has a
11 passion for the history of New Mexico. He is bitter about what has been done to
12 the City with renovations. He would be willing to be a member of this board.
13

14 Paul Deason stated he and Ernie Campos have been discussing the properties in
15 Doña Ana county, especially properties in Tortugas. Possibly work with the Pueblo
16 of Tortugas for what can be done with resources that are available to the HPC on
17 saving those properties. There is one that three years ago was fairly intact but
18 now the north and east walls have collapsed, and he believes it is salvageable.
19

20 **4. ACTION ITEMS**

21
22 **4.1 Election of 2025 Chair and Vice-Chair**

23
24 Jerry Wallace was nominated as Chair, and seconded by Jeffrey Shepherd.
25 Motion passed unanimously.
26

27 Ernie Campos was nominated as Vice-Chair, and seconded by Jeffrey
28 Shepherd. Motion passed unanimously.
29

30 **4.2 Case 25-HPC-001: A Certificate of Appropriateness application for a**
31 **new City project known as the Fielder Memorial Safe Haven Shade**
32 **Structure and Water Fountain Project at 901 N. Tornillo Street**
33

34 Cathy Mathews stated in 2021 the City Council approved funding to replace
35 play equipment and a shade structure at the Safe Haven facility. The City
36 was frugal with the funding and had some monies left over. The users of
37 that facility are interested in installing a shade structure to help the kids as
38 they use the area for play, and an indoor/outdoor drinking fountain. They
39 are currently seeking a permit for this work.
40

41 Paul Deason asked if the structure would be robust from any damage, and
42 if the structure could be made to look more appropriate for the Mesquite
43 Historic District; brown instead of blue, wood-like appearance. Cathy
44 Mathews stated they can make the fabric a tan color. Typical in the park
45 system is black painted post as they tend to disappear visually. Ernie
46 Campos suggested building a wooden pergola to blend in, and put the tan

1 fabric over it. Cathy Mathews mentioned longevity and maintenance as
2 priorities, but also budget constraints.

3
4 Paul Deason moved approval; seconded by Judy Berryman. Motion passed
5 unanimously.
6

7 **5. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

8 9 **5.1 Status of the proposed historic preservation architectural guidelines**

10
11 Chris Faivre stated that these guidelines are going to be a top priority upon
12 the hiring of a preservationist. Also need to be sure the document is ADA
13 compliant. Also needs an evaluation to finalize the information and
14 available to the public for input. For public comment City staff recommends
15 the website but also a work session or a regular meeting to have a
16 presentation about the content and allow the public the opportunity to review
17 it, engage, etc. The public input can be done prior to the preservationist
18 being hired, but do want the preservationist involved in the process. It would
19 be nice to get this completed by the end of the spring. The board would like
20 to receive the most recent version for review for which Judy Berryman will
21 e-mail out, but staff will also get it on the City website. Also look at the
22 definitions of architectural styles for review.
23

24 **5.2 Status of structure located at 615 N. Mesquite St.**

25
26 Judy Berryman stated this building is on the state historic register, is historic
27 eligible contributing. Right now it is City owned property. Last year she met
28 with the City Manager and discussed transferring ownership from City to
29 private. An official posting mid-last year that the property would be on the
30 auction block to be sold. When the historic preservationist left everything
31 stopped. Paul Deason added that the City bought that property as well as
32 May street with the intention of demolishing them to build affordable
33 housing. When people expressed interest in both of the properties for
34 restoration was when efforts were made to release the properties for sale.
35 Chris Faivre stated that there were efforts to move forward to place the
36 property for auction, but also potential requests for conditions on the sale.
37 There is a meeting next week with Chris Faivre and the City Manager on
38 these properties. Judy Berryman stated there was a requirement that who
39 ever bought the property could not demolish it, and had to rehab as a
40 historic structure. Chris Faivre stated he understands that some of the
41 original buyers are still interested. For the next meeting there will be an
42 update from staff.
43

44 Israel Chavez stated his law office is fairly close to the property. He is in
45 shock about how very little the City does when it comes to one of the most
46 concentrated numbers of adobe buildings in this area. He stated the City

1 continues to breach trust among the public in putting it up for auction and
2 then blaming the continual blame game of who the staff is. He recommends
3 this board request the attendance of the City Manager at the next meeting.
4 He feels it is unacceptable that the City is governed by people who do not
5 have respect for the history of the community, and allow adobe buildings to
6 just sit. He feels this building (City Hall) symbolizes the incompetence of
7 the City government. He feels this board has to hold staff to account. He
8 continued his diatribe of the City. He thinks the board should request an
9 audit of all the historic assets the City owns.

10
11 Corrina Miramontes stated it is a sad situation to look at the possibilities of
12 what it could be, but also safety is an issue.

13
14 Martha Rodriguez stated there are probably more than one person
15 interested in purchasing.

16
17 George Pearson stated the City is capable of auctioning building as he lives
18 in one that was done back in 1985.

19
20 **5.3 Status of structure located at 414 E. May St.**

21
22 Judy Berryman stated that at the last meeting they requested structural
23 information, more detail on the building. Jo Ruprecht is working with
24 possibly the granddaughter and with the neighbor at 422 E. May. She
25 brokered a meeting with the City attorney and the neighbor at 422 E. May.
26 They had a structural engineer look over the situation at 414 E. May. The
27 agreement was to try and figure out a way to make the structure more safe
28 in terms of removing public use of it. Ownership is still undetermined. She
29 stated the notice of condemnation has been removed as well as notice to
30 the owner of the property was removed. Chris Faivre states the City staff
31 did not remove them, but probably by people illegally entering the building.
32 The building is a liability issue of the highest order. Jo Ruprecht believes
33 there are interested buyers. She is hoping the façade can be preserved
34 and repurposed. Jo Ruprecht stated it is a shared wall with 422 E. May and
35 that that neighbor will sue the City if it is torn down. Chris Faivre stated it is
36 not a shared wall, there is a gap in between the two walls. The façade in
37 the front is shared but the actual wall going between the two is actually
38 separate. Jo Ruprecht stated the evaluation by the engineer is that without
39 doing something that amounts to partial demolition and risking having
40 something come down, you cannot tell what is supporting what in the wall
41 that runs between the two properties. Jerry Wallace stated they need to
42 first determine owner to see if they are willing to sell. Christ Faivre stated
43 the City is having to deal with life safety issues and public safety issues that
44 have resulted from the property not being maintained for many years. Jerry
45 Wallace mentioned following-up on this next month. Doing an abstract title

1 for the property was mentioned. Jo Ruprecht stated a lawyer has
2 recommended getting a clear family tree to identify who is who.

3 4 **5.4 Grant opportunities from New Mexico Historic Preservation Division**

5
6 Judy Berryman stated they get listings from State Historic Preservation
7 office and there is a grant that the City can go after that would fund, example
8 project planning, survey work. The proposals have to be in my March. Chris
9 Faivre stated last year Quality of Life submitted for this grant for a project
10 and they were denied. The City does have a quite a few facilities that would
11 qualify for these grants. There is a meeting tomorrow with staff to discuss
12 which projects are going to pursue with this grant. The grant is the cultural
13 properties restoration fund grant and due in two months, and then be
14 informed who was awarded by April 29th. Question on if the board can do
15 the application for the grant or if only City staff works on. Chris Faivre stated
16 if there are recommendations for projects now is the time to mention that.
17 HPC can offer information to be included in the grant. Unknown if the City
18 can submit for more than one project or not. Chris Faivre will contact the
19 Chair after tomorrow's meeting with the grant department.
20

21 Judy Berryman stated the last SHPO grant received was written by HPC,
22 for which they did go through the grant department with some statements
23 of "not qualified" by the department, but the grant was won for \$60,000, but
24 was cut twice down to \$29,000. She feels someone from the HPC should
25 be in the meeting with the grant department tomorrow. The board stated
26 many of them have written grants and are qualified to do so. Chris Faivre
27 states that the grants department has all new staff from a couple of years
28 ago. There are two grants available at SHPO right now. The City could not
29 find a qualified person to do the work for the amount that was awarded, and
30 therefore the money returned to SHPO. The City can submit an application
31 for each grant. Chris Faivre encouraged the HPC to recommend projects
32 they would like to see the City prioritize.
33

34 Paul Deason mentioned the Mesilla Park district as it needs a survey. Also
35 the restoration of the former post office that is now the municipal court,
36 needs funding for upkeep and maintenance of the exterior. Judy Berryman
37 mentioned the development of a historic preservation plan. Matching funds
38 for grants was mentioned. The City is prepared for that. Judy Berryman
39 asked for more notice than one day for a meeting that is happening
40 concerning grants. Chris Faivre mentioned it is just City staff for tomorrow's
41 meeting. He will of course inform HPC of any information from that meeting.
42

43 George Pearson stated a list of buildings to look at was mentioned and he
44 wants the WIA building is on the list. Martha Rodriguez stated the grant
45 department is severely understaffed and she thinks the City should be open
46 to assistance from HPC.

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2
3 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
4

5 Ernie Campos asked if there could be more public participation as some
6 people came late.
7

8 Rose Garcia from Tierra Del Sole housing corporation. This is a nonprofit
9 affordable housing producer for 50 years. She passed around some
10 examples of homes they have built in the neighborhood. She is proposing
11 they could do the same thing with looking at vacant parcels and then make
12 sure meet all environmental clearances, flood plain, and buildable and then
13 patch to a new buyer. Something they are doing now is taking youth from
14 the neighborhood that do not have jobs or skills and have the construction
15 supervisors to have the youth learn.
16

17 Mel Acosta from the Doña Ana County Planning and Zoning Commission.
18 He said the preservation of historic buildings is a key issue for them as well
19 as for the City. Ernie Campos stated that Mel Acosta is a general contractor.
20 He has restored La Posta and the Fountaine theatre. Ernie Campos asked
21 for a separate website for historical preservation. He would also like the
22 meetings to be videotaped.
23

24 Martha Rodriguez thinks it is good to have people sign-in, but also have e-
25 mail addresses. Jerry Wallace stated that it is his goal to keep the meetings
26 to the third Wednesday of every month. Chris Faivre stated there cannot
27 be a separate website but once there is a page they can put whatever
28 content and direct people there. Paul Deason stated that in 2022 there was
29 a historic preservation website that was underneath the City. Judy
30 Berryman wants the website to be able to accept comments. She also
31 wants the public to come up with agenda items as well.
32

33 George Pearson mentioned the City's agenda center does have
34 subscription mechanism where you can sign up and when the agenda is
35 published you get an e-mail.
36

37 Jeffrey Shepherd asked if doing a presentation on maneuvering around the
38 City website would be helpful.
39

40 Mel Acosta mentioned the recent fires in California and the need for
41 alternative building materials. Jeff Shepherd asked if the City had an expert
42 in adobe. Chris Faivre stated that the historic preservation specialist
43 position/authority would be. Jo Ruprecht stated there are two lime plaster
44 projects in the City; former civilian conservation corps schoolhouse on
45 Melendres, and the Amador Hotel. Larry Limon did both of these projects.
46 She also asked how to get the Amador Hotel to completion.

1
2 Chris Faivre stated the there is a million per year from the TIDD budget towards
3 the continued renovation of the Amador. The Amador is an ongoing current project
4 the City is working on. The next challenge is to find the funds to renovate the
5 inside and based on current construction costs is more than \$14 million. Judy
6 Berryman requested that any City owned historic building, the Branigan, the
7 Amador, any other, that they get a monthly report on the progress. Chris Faivre
8 stated approximately 10 years ago it was a functioning building. And there was an
9 effort to get it on the historic registry and in order to do that had to prove how much
10 of the historic building was left, and that is why they had to go in and strip to down
11 to studs and remove the addition. The board asked for more information on where
12 the Amador stands on the historic register. It was mentioned that the older area in
13 town needs to be preserved and cared for. She wants to see the youth to be able
14 to continue the uniqueness of New Mexico culture, etc. Paul Deason repeated a
15 statement from December 2023 HPC Minutes "Corrina Miramontes stated the
16 Mesquite Historic District is the most impact historic district from San Antonio to
17 San Diego. Jerry Wallace stated it is called Hispanic streetscape, Hispanic places,
18 Hispanic spaces. There are over 700 adobes in the neighborhood." He stated
19 that is inspiring but also in Albuquerque, Tucson where they emphasized the
20 history and the streetscape for the gentrification and betterment of the people living
21 in the neighborhood, bringing in businesses, food stores, etc. Jerry Wallace
22 corrected the term to "Mexican Streetscape," not Hispanic. He has a whole slide
23 presentation on the differences and will share that. He appreciates the comments,
24 but his concern is that it is not a tale of two cities but of 14 cities here.

25
26 Corrina Miramontes asked about the preservationist job. Chris Faivre stated the
27 job has been reposted and still soliciting applications.

28
29 **6. STAFF AND COMMISSION COMMENTS**

30
31 Jeffrey Shepherd stated he has worked with Tortugas for about 12-14 years.

32
33 Ernie Campos said he echoes comments about the other parts of the City;
34 Bellamah, Loma Heights, Las Alturas, neighborhoods around Turentine, University
35 Hills. It would be nice to have a map indicating and acknowledging the entire City
36 and various named areas. He asked who were the planners at the City, and asked
37 for somebody to fill in for the preservationist. He stated he is helping to retrain
38 older buildings in the county because staff is aware and wants the same for the
39 City. Jerry Wallace recommended a list of endangered properties list, and a watch
40 list. Use of interns were brought up again to look at historic issues that come up.
41 Chris Faivre stated they are going through that process now.

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43 **7. ADJOURNMENT (8:00)**

44
45 Judy Berryman motioned to adjourn; seconded by Paul Deason. Motion passed
46 unanimously.

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Chairperson

DRAFT