



CITY OF LAS CRUCES

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

August 20, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

The following are minutes of the Historic Preservation Committee Meeting held August 20, 2025, in the conference room at the Armijo House, 150 E. Lohman Avenue, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Jerry Wallace, Chair
Ernie Campos
Paul John Deason, Ph.D.
Jeffrey Shepherd, Ph.D.
Norma Chairez-Hartell
Fernando Baeza
Rosanna Torrez

STAFF PRESENT: Caitlin Beesley, Historic Preservation Specialist

OTHERS PRESENT: Eric Liefeld
Cassie McClure
George and Barbi Lopez
Deb Dennis
John Verploegh
Greg Shervanick
Marc Mintz
Candace Bonlay
Jo Ruprecht
Pat Taylor
Rebecca Colligan
Bud Colligan
Dennis Daily
Rosemary Taylor Stolberg
Mary Helen Taylor Ratje
Irene Oliver Lewis
Sylvia Camunez

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Wallace called the meeting to order at 6:04.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES -

a. July 16, 2025 HPC Minutes

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2 Motion to approve by Paul Deason; seconded by Jeff Shepherd. Motion passed
3 unanimously.
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5 **3. NEW HPC MEMBERS**
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7 Caitlin Beesley asked the new HPC members to introduce themselves. Rosanna
8 Torres stated she is a local Las Cruces, born and raised. She is a local realtor and
9 works at a local title company. Norma Chairez-Hartell stated she was raised in
10 Las Cruces. She is curator for borderland regional museums including the City of
11 Las Cruces Museums, NMSU, and El Paso History Museum. This is a way for her
12 to work with her passion of historic preservation. Fernando Baeza stated he is
13 from Deming. He is a regional project manager for the state of New Mexico,
14 overseeing construction for the public schools. He also has a private practice in
15 residential design. In his spare time he volunteers with Big Brothers Big Sisters.
16

17 Other members introduced themselves. Jerry Wallace stated he is the Chair of
18 HPC and also the director of public history at NMSU. He is very passionate about
19 bringing all the different communities that gather to discuss the current issues that
20 face historic preservation. He stated that Norma is the founder of Murals Las
21 Cruces. HPC is working to start a City register to nominate historic buildings that
22 are part of the identity of the City and the community. Every January the HPC will
23 create a watch-list of buildings in the community, and open for the public to add to
24 also. The murals will be discussed at the state's history conference, held at the
25 Convention Center, September 25-27. They currently have about 700 murals
26 documented in southern New Mexico and El Paso. Jeff Shepherd is a professor of
27 history at the University of Texas at El Paso. He has been on the committee for
28 one year. His research is on Native American Indigenous history, history of
29 US/Mexico borderlands, public history. He is currently working on the second
30 phase of a contract with the National Park Service to document indigenous peoples
31 along the Camino Real. The second project he is consulting on is with the
32 Branigan Cultural Center Museum on a 2.5-year long exhibit highlighting
33 indigenous people of the US/Mexico border. The exhibits opens September 6th
34 for the whole exhibit and the opening for Isleta del Sur is on the 20th. Ernie
35 Campos is currently employed with Doña Ana County, community development.
36 He got on the board many years ago, when it was an ad hoc. His grandfather was
37 a carpenter, and Ernie helped him with repairs etc. Paul Deason stated he is a
38 recent move to Las Cruces. He spent 33 plus years with Department of Defense.
39 He got a degree in anthropology. He was introduced to the Camino Real de Tierra
40 Adentro Trail Association. He is one of the original members of the HPC.
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42 Chair Wallace asked for any other locations people would like to see the HPC hold
43 meetings at.
44

45 **4. PRESENTATION**
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1 **a. Armijo House Presentation by Eric Liefeld, Mesilla Valley**
2 **Preservation, Inc.**
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4 Eric Liefeld stated he is the president of Mesilla Valley Preservation.
5 Mesilla Valley Preservation was involved with the renovation of the Armijo
6 house starting in 2009. There is ongoing maintenance etc. with the house.
7 They have focused on three areas preservation advocacy. Preservation is
8 possible. They have done historic research, particularly on Henry Trost.
9 There was also adobe technology research. There has been a lot done to
10 keep this house standing. MVP wrote the initial grant from the National
11 Trust for Historic Preservation. Also got another grant in 2015 from Historic
12 Preservation Division to restore the extensive woodwork within the house.
13 This house has been featured on home tours to help build community
14 awareness of the house. This is probably the best documented house in
15 Las Cruces. There has been a lot written about the house and its history.
16 This was the first property considered for nomination by the Doña Ana
17 County Historical Society in 1967. It was placed on the register in 1972.
18 Bainbridge Bunting, architectural historian at UNM, did documentation of
19 northern New Mexico. He was in Las Cruces at the Armijo house in 1963,
20 and managed to document the house for which that information is preserved
21 at UNM. They have created new resources, the structural assessment from
22 Fred Webster. Architectural Resources Group came from California and
23 took historical photographs, documenting the whole house prior to
24 renovation. They are working on updating the National Register for the
25 house. What they thought they knew became obsolete fast. Numerous
26 pictures were shown starting in approximately 1908. The building has a ton
27 of integrity. During the restoration they gained some of the integrity back.
28 There is a story that the building was built in stages, but the building has
29 been thoroughly vetted and inspected and there is no evidence that this was
30 built in stages. Instead, it was built all at once. Liefeld tracked the house
31 price over the years, it is a clue to what is going on with the property.
32 Benjamin Franklin Harper was a carpenter before and after he was a
33 soldier. The theory is he is the builder of the house. Sanborn map from
34 1893, earliest of Las Cruces. Various house owner history was mentioned.
35 Nestor Armijo purchased the house in 1877. The bed is 11.5 feet tall and
36 purchased in Manchester, England, brought to Mexico and then up to Las
37 Cruces. Various Armijo family history is shared.

38
39 The house was built in one phase and was first owned by John Barncastle.
40 Between 1877 and 1880, Nestor made modifications, including vaulting the
41 ceilings in the upstairs bedrooms. In 1914 Josefa inherited the house and
42 wanted a modern house; parlor, dining room, butler's pantry, a kitchen, and
43 bathroom inside the house. By 1980, the house had fallen into disrepair.
44 Pioneer Savings and Trust came and made it their branch office. 2013
45 partial structural collapse. Two story adobe building with adobe second
46 story. There were extreme water issues. Cement and elastomeric coatings

1 which are not ideal for adobe. Over a hundred years of deferred
2 maintenance, extensive interior HVAC trenching, lots of openings that were
3 not original, inadequate backwards grading so the rain came towards the
4 house, shallow eaves, ineffective gutters, lack of maintenance.
5 Reconstruction was explained in detail. The foundation was further
6 described. There was severe water damage that had to be dealt with.
7 Retained what they could and contracted with woodwork experts to replace
8 what was missing. Liefeld included various pictures of the renovation and
9 the process during his presentation to illustrate the property's uniqueness.
10 It is one of the oldest standing structures in Las Cruces dating back to 1865-
11 66. Directly related to founding families; Melendrez, Barncastle. Early
12 example of ongoing mercantile trade in the valley.

13
14 Someone asked how much the renovation cost. It was "more than anybody
15 wished." People shared some family history. Someone commented that
16 without Liefeld and Pat Taylor, the project may not have been completed.

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18 **5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

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20 Handled above with the presentation.

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22 **6. STAFF AND COMMITTEE INPUT**

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24 Caitlin Beesley had a slide for the exhibit that Jeff Shepherd discussed earlier. Jeff
25 Shepherd stated this is a wonderful exhibit with roots a few years ago and is a
26 collaboration with six native groups in the area; Mescalero, Ysleta del Sur,
27 Chiricahua Apache Nation, Chihene Nde Gila Apache, Tortugas, and Piro-Manso-
28 Tiwa. This began in May 2024 with a good kickoff meeting. And since then they
29 have been having collaborative meetings with representatives from each group. It
30 is driven by the community interests about what they want to represent in their
31 history. The exhibit will consist of the first main primary room focusing on
32 cultural landscapes, food, lifeways, stories, use of the land, relationships with the
33 river and mountains. A secondary room that will showcase each group for about
34 12 weeks. This will go through May 2027. It opens September 6, 2025.
35 September 20th opening for Ysleta del Sur. Each group's turn in the secondary
36 room there will be a lot of educational programming; guest lectures, singers,
37 dancers. Opening nights will be every 12 weeks or so when each group's exhibit
38 opens in the secondary room.

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40 Jerry Wallace reiterated that the Historical Society of New Mexico conference is
41 September 25-27th. They will present on the murals project. And some tours too.

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43 Caitlin Beesley stated the state's Preservation Conference is the first week in
44 October, or the weekend after the History Conference, in Las Vegas, New Mexico.

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46 **7. ADJOURNMENT**

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

Chairperson