



# CITY OF LAS CRUCES

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

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

The following are minutes of the Historic Preservation Committee Meeting held October 15, 2025, at Frank O'Brien Papen Center, 304 Bell Ave, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dr. Jerry Wallace, Chair  
Ernie Campos  
Paul John Deason, PhD  
Norma Chairez-Hartell  
Fernando Baeza  
Rosanna Torrez

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Jeffrey Shepherd, PhD

**STAFF PRESENT:** Caitlin Beesley, Historic Preservation Specialist

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Gregory Shervanick  
Craig Bird  
Sally Bird  
Claudia Chavez  
George Pearson  
Deb Dennis  
Norman Hortell  
Mike Taylor

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Wallace called the meeting to order at 6:07.

### 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES -

#### 2.1 September 17, 2025 HPC Minutes

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

### 3. GHOST TOURS AND DARK TOURISM IN THE MESILLA VALLEY PRESENTATION BY DAVID CRIDER, SOUTHWEST EXPEDITIONS

David Crider stated this is very popular around the world. They have a video for people coming into the courthouse that are doing either a guided ghost tour

1 through the entire building or a full version paranormal investigation. They show  
2 them how to do a session, séance. They record voices, have night vision cameras,  
3 trigger optics. They get to explore by themselves throughout the building. It is a  
4 two hour tour. They have had professionals from all over the country come and  
5 stay overnight. Several TV shows have filmed there. Dark tourism thrives on  
6 people wanting to experience all aspects of history, we cannot escape history.  
7 There is a reason why those entities are in that building.

8  
9 A video was played with David Crider commenting throughout.

10  
11 They do a paranormal workshop every year. Claudia Chavez, staff with the City  
12 of Las Cruces, stated she has been in the building for 10 years. There has been  
13 a lot of activity in this specific room. The first part of the building was built in 1907.  
14 The majority of the paranormal activity is in the basement. This building was an  
15 old school and obtained by the City in early 1990s, and was storage and then  
16 became a repurposed community center. David Crider stated PRI has done  
17 investigations on every building around the courthouse in the downtown area, all  
18 have reports, audio or visual captured of little boy/girl, shadow people, full  
19 apparitions, talking. It's bigger than just the courthouse. They do a tour in Mesilla  
20 and every building on the plaza has been investigated and has activity.

21  
22 Crider began his presentation with slides. Titled "Dark Tourism, Las Cruces, New  
23 Mexico: History, mystery, and memory." Work involves visiting places linked to  
24 death, tragedy, and suffering to understand human history. Historical events,  
25 historical buildings, ghost towns of the old west, Native American sites. Mentioned  
26 Gettysburg, battleships. There are always reason why entities are in a place.  
27 Understanding historical tragedies. Visitors desires to comprehend the cause and  
28 impacts of tragic events can connect with history deeply. A lot going on in the  
29 Mesilla Valley, settlers coming in, Arroyo Road going through from Mexico, gold  
30 prospectors coming through, union and confederate soldiers, outlaws, merchants,  
31 wagon trains. Various locations have been proven with recordings: 1937  
32 courthouse and jail, 1866 Amador hotel, Masonic cemetery, Rio Grande Theatre,  
33 old memorial hospital, Iconic Record store, former bank building across from the  
34 courthouse, Ostos Memorial Museum, whole Village of Mesilla. Rich local folklore  
35 enhances the mysterious atmosphere of drawing dark tourism enthusiasts. Crider  
36 shared various stories of some of the local characters through the years. Billy the  
37 Kid and Pat Garrett and their stories, Camino Real Trail with thousands of travelers  
38 from Mexico City which all left a mark here. The Three Crosses, Apache ambush  
39 approximately 1849. Maria, La Llorona, the weeping woman, a legend that is here  
40 and in Mexico. Fountain murders in 1896. The Double Eagle restaurant has many  
41 hauntings. Entities when they are active will drain batteries, drain cameras,  
42 anything that is powered. La Posta in 1939. There are seven in the courthouse  
43 that have been identified in the last 10 years. There are two rules for any  
44 paranormal people that come to town, no Ouija boards as can welcome darker  
45 energy where not wanted.

1 Unsolved crime and local ghost stories. Every community has this. People like to  
2 get scared, that little thrill. There is a Ramada Inn ghost story. Crider stated he  
3 had an entity pass through him, he knew because it was the middle of the summer  
4 and he suddenly got very cold. Las Cruces Downtown, possibly doing a van tour  
5 with stop and go, stop and go, as it is a long walk. They do an overnight at Black  
6 Range Lodge. They do sleep over at the jail and they sleep in the jail cells. They  
7 get dinner and breakfast and tell ghost stories. They also have a laser tag game  
8 in the 18,500 square foot jail.  
9

10 Dark tourism attracts visitors, increases tourism, supports local shops, restaurants,  
11 service providers. They offer staying at the Ramada or Marriott and get 15%  
12 discount. With the courthouse they hope they can save the building. It is  
13 scheduled for renovation, planned 19 years ago and wanted to turn it into a four-  
14 star hotel and conference center. They were going to tear down the jail since it  
15 was 1969 and not on the historical register, but the courthouse is. He discussed  
16 the country club building as being significant from a well known architect, but it had  
17 been left too long unoccupied. Pre-COVID the rebuild for the courthouse would  
18 be about \$35 million, after COVID price is now about \$65 million. This is on hold  
19 now as there is almost no downtown activity at all and need a return on investment.  
20 Also the City is slow about getting them on the market for tourism, etc.  
21

22 Need to bring awareness to our buildings. Everybody goes to Mesilla, to eat, to  
23 shop, but Las Cruces is right next door.  
24

25 Museums and educational programs. We have a fantastic museum here, Farm  
26 and Ranch. The Farm and Ranch Museum is instrumental in bringing education  
27 and awareness to historical sites. Dark tourism is a great way to educate some of  
28 the younger ones about the history of some of the buildings. This is a sustainable  
29 tourism growth with dark tourism. He is looking for funding to buy a trolley to do  
30 tours. Every year for the last five years they have buses of people coming through  
31 for walk around guides. Lots of buses use this as a night layover.  
32

33 In 2003 it was about \$32 billion a year for dark tourism. In 2030 they expect that  
34 to go to \$38 billion. A lot of money involved.  
35

36 At the courthouse there are seven confirmed entities. Two shadow-men, about 6'  
37 tall. He has seen some of them himself. Children are very perceptive. They have  
38 heard of the names Katy, Rachel, Maria, Edgar on recordings. There were a lot of  
39 deaths in the courthouse.  
40

41 Paul Deason mentioned the Organ Mountain Lodge as a very haunted place, and  
42 also that it is going to be torn down. It was closed in 1978-79 due to haunting.  
43 David Crider talked about the machine he brought that measures small amounts  
44 of electromagnetic energy.  
45

1 Chair Wallace stated there is a company in Tucson called Strolls and Story Tours.  
2 They offer self-guided walking tours of Las Cruces for \$10.99, downtown, Mesilla,  
3 and NMSU. One of the challenges for us may be a company like this not even  
4 from here offering this.  
5

6 **4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**  
7

8 Deb Dennis with the Amador Hotel Foundation spoke. She feels this is perfect  
9 timing as the City announced this past week that there is going to be an update of  
10 the Downtown Master Plan from 2016. In 2016 listed three priorities, the third one  
11 was to create a heightened sense of arrival in the downtown by leveraging the  
12 appeal and stature of the Historic Hotel Amador and the Doña Ana County  
13 Courthouse. She asks for help, support, and advocacy for this to happen. The  
14 Foundation was created in 2007. In 2009 the City Council and the Mayor accepted  
15 the adaptive reuse plan for the Historic Amador and it is to become the City event  
16 center with a museum component. Hopefully ghost tours would happen again as  
17 they had been before the City had to close the building for construction. Looking  
18 at 2028 to finally finish. Part of the issue was funding, but not that far. Wednesday,  
19 October 22, 10:00 - 12:00 is a drop in session for community members can view  
20 draft concepts, talk with the planning team, and provide feedback.  
21

22 Greg Shervanick there is only day that the public is allowed to do this. The other  
23 days are for the stakeholders and business owners from downtown. On Monday,  
24 the City will take historical documents for Realize and make them part of the City  
25 documents.  
26

27 George Pearson asked about future meeting locations. Chair Wallace stated that  
28 conversations have been had about that. He would like to have a permanent  
29 residency in the WIA building in the Alameda District. They will be back in Council  
30 chambers in November. There is work to be done still on the exterior of the WIA  
31 building, and the interior has no chairs, tables, no screen, no projector, no Wi-Fi.  
32 Doing the meeting in the community and different places a couple of times a year  
33 seems good. Suggestion of the train museum if the WIA does not work out. Also  
34 Bellamah was mentioned, but no specific building in that area.  
35

36 **5. STAFF AND COMMITTEE INPUT**  
37

38 Caitlin Beesley stated there are flyers on the table for a Doña Ana County Historical  
39 Society lecture tomorrow night in the Las Cruces Village, social center. This will  
40 be on the Battle of El Brazito by Albert Burnham. The rummage sale in the  
41 Alameda Depot in Pioneer Women's Park is happening starting at 8:00 on  
42 Saturday. The Border Archival group is having their bazaar at the Farm and Ranch  
43 from 10:00 - 4:00 on Saturday. She and Liana Aguirre, the Historic Preservation  
44 Specialist from Mesilla, are going to have a table. Next Saturday a talk of ghost  
45 stories Salvatore Patricolo on the courthouse ghost, Mary Alzada-Waters at  
46 Nopalitos.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20

Chair Wallace stated his class met with Caitlin and Leona to discuss historic preservation in the Mesilla Community Center. The idea is to start thinking about the next generation of preservationists in the community and moving them around. The following day his class went to Taylor Mesilla Cultural Property/almost historic site and they were a test group. John Paul Taylor school is having people come and teach preservation activities.

Person apologized for her phone ringing.

**6. ADJOURNMENT**

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

---

Chairperson