City of Santa Fe

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
September 17, 2026, AT 6:00 PM

Vice Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

A. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present:
Vice Chair Peter Smith
Commissioner Thomas (TJ) Rieland
Commissioner Sasha McGhee
Commissioner Katherine Rivera
Commissioner Brian Gutierrez
Commissioner Kelly McReynolds

Vice Chair Peter Smith served as
Acting Chair during the meeting.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice Chair Smith led the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Rivera moved, seconded by Commissioner Gutierrez, to approve the agenda.

VOTE: The motion was approved on the following roll call vote:

For: Commissioner Thomas (TJ) Rieland
Commissioner Sasha McGhee
Commissioner Katherine Rivera
Commissioner Brian Gutierrez
Commissioner Kelly McReynolds

Against: None

MOTION: Commissioner Rivera moved, seconded by Commissioner Gutierrez, to change the order of presentations under Staff Communications to first hear the transportation impact assessment, followed by the training on ethical and statutory rules and the development review process.

VOTE: The motion was approved on the following roll call vote:

For: Commissioner Thomas (TJ) Rieland
Commissioner Sasha McGhee
Commissioner Katherine Rivera
Commissioner Brian Gutierrez
Commissioner Kelly McReynolds

Against: None

Abstain: None

D. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

There was no consent agenda.

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There were no minutes to approve.

F. APPROVAL OF FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS

There were no findings and conclusions to approve.

G. CONSENT

There were no items under consent.

H. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

1. Transportation Impact Assessment

Traffic Engineer Leroy Nicholas Pacheco described how the city reviews the transportation effects of developments, including through transportation impact analyses (TIAs).

Commissioner Rivera inquired whether the letter grades presented in the TIA are determined by calculations or by the transportation department. Mr. Pacheco responded that they are a professional standard based on intersection flow, typically during peak hours. An “F” grade may trigger improvements such as additional turn lanes or signal adjustments.

Commissioner Rivera inquired how the data was translated into letter grades. Mr. Pacheco responded that it is a mathematical model that incorporates projections for assumed growth.

Commissioner Rivera inquired how affected entities are included in scoping meetings. Mr. Pacheco responded that each case is unique, and it is necessary to assess which

jurisdictions are impacted.

Commissioner Rivera inquired how road sections, particularly Cerillos Road, have been transferred from the state to the city. Mr. Pacheco responded that he believes the department intends to transfer the section of Cerillos Road from I-25 to St. Francis Drive to the city.

Commissioner Rieland inquired how the TIA accounts for differences in traffic patterns throughout the year. Mr. Pacheco responded that the TIA includes factors such as school traffic patterns and tourist traffic.

Commissioner Gutierrez inquired regarding the importance of traffic in cases reviewed by the Commission and how to mitigate unacceptable levels of service. Mr. Pacheco responded that traffic is always an issue in public hearings, and some issues cannot be addressed in the TIA. The impact fee capital improvement plan is updated approximately every seven years. The impact infrastructure capital improvement plan (ICIP) is an annual resolution with funded and unfunded needs in the city. A committee is investigating ways to communicate impacts to those lists.

Commissioner Gutierrez inquired whether sufficient emphasis is placed on bicycle and pedestrian access and safety. Mr. Pacheco responded that it is, as a trail system is maintained, including urban trails.

Commissioner Gutierrez inquired regarding Mr. Pacheco's relationship with Wilson & Company. Mr. Pacheco responded that he and Wilson are both contractors; however, Wilson is not involved in private development and does not review its own work.

Commissioner Gutierrez suggested phrasing certain aspects of traffic reports in a way that non-engineers can understand.

Commissioner Rivera inquired whether details of sealed recommendations could be changed after the Commission approves a project. Mr. Pacheco responded that, often, the engineer of record overseeing the development plan for infrastructure is not the engineer who sealed the TIA; however, there will be no significant changes after approval.

Commissioner Rivera inquired whether there have been changes to the city's TIA document since the end of June, 2026. Mr. Pacheco responded that there have been no changes since its implementation in 2024.

Vice Chair Smith expressed concern that the city's roadway infrastructure may reach a point where traffic concerns cannot be further mitigated and inquired whether a TIA could

result in a denial of a development in such a case. Mr. Pacheco responded that there is typically a way to make a development work with conditions of approval. The city's long-term transportation planning and modeling drive decisions.

Commissioner McGhee inquired whether a post-development process exists to ensure that the TIA projections are correct. Mr. Pacheco responded that there is typically none, as the TIA has a shelf life. Mr. Esquibel noted that the TIA is typically kept with the development plan.

Commissioner McGhee inquired whether factors aside from a development project, such as a neighborhood request, can trigger a TIA. Mr. Pacheco responded that neighborhoods typically use the city's traffic-calming program and policy or petition to add an item to the ICIP.

2. Training on Ethical and Statutory Rules Governing Planning Commission, Including Open Meetings Act and Inspection of Public Records Act

Assistant City Attorney Natalie Cauley shared a presentation on the ethical and statutory guidelines governing the Planning Commission, which she also emailed to the Commissioners. The presentation covered the Code of Ethics, Inspection of Public Records Act, and Open Meetings Act. The provided slides included links to the Governing Body rules for city committees.

The procedural guidelines will be presented at the next Planning Commission meeting. Ms. Cauley will remind the Commissioners who have not completed their paperwork related to the ethical code to do so.

Vice Chair Smith requested clarification on when Commissioners who are traveling can attend Commission meetings via Zoom. Ms. Cauley responded that, under the Open Meetings Act and Governing Body's rules, remote attendance should only take place if it would be difficult or impossible to attend in person. The Attorney General's office has suggested that Commissioners plan their travel such that they can attend scheduled meetings in person. If it would be difficult or impossible to attend in person, Commissioners may attend remotely.

3. The Development Review Process from Pre-Application to Public Hearing

Mr. Esquibel shared a presentation on the development plan and process, including the development plan's purpose, triggers, submittal requirements, acceptance criteria, individual elements, and department purview. He shared the review process, including the pre-application conference, early neighborhood notification (ENN), application submittal,

review period, public notice, and public hearing.

Mr. Esquibel will attempt to send the presentation to the Commissioners using OneDrive, as it is too large to send via email.

Commissioner McGhee inquired who owns the ENN process and who ensures that what is stated in the ENN is included in the packet. Mr. Esquibel responded that the ENN process is between the applicant and the neighborhood, and the applicant is responsible for disclosing what was discussed at the ENN. Staff attends the ENN to answer questions about process. If the application is significantly changed after an ENN, another ENN is needed. Staff assists in managing contentious ENNs and will remove belligerent individuals from the Zoom meeting.

Commissioner McGhee inquired whether an ENN is recorded and whether the recording is made available to the public. Mr. Esquibel responded that it is policy to record the ENN and provide it to staff in case of staff turnover. The recording is not posted but is available upon request. The ENN need not be repeated if the recording does not work. The applicant is required to have a professional Zoom account in order to accommodate over 100 participants.

Commissioner Rivera inquired regarding the relationship between the pre-application process and traffic scoping. Mr. Esquibel responded that the two meetings are independent but can run concurrently.

Commissioner Rivera inquired how debates are still possible, such as on the calculation of height in the historic districts, given the number of people reviewing the application. Mr. Esquibel responded that height in the historic districts is covered under a specific section of the code. Chapter 14 describes height requirements outside the historic districts clearly, using tables. Interpretation is needed when building on a slope.

Commissioner Rivera inquired regarding permitted changes to an application after Commission approval. Mr. Esquibel responded that Chapter 14 allows the Land Use Director to modify development plans, subdivisions, special-use permits, and master plans. The Land Use Director cannot approve increases in density but can approve other elements within their authority, such as changes to architectural features, shifting of building locations, and requests for a decrease in parking. If the Director determines that a change is significant, they may choose to send it back to the Commission for review and approval.

Commissioner Gutierrez inquired regarding the timeframes for scheduling a pre-application meeting and for subsequent activities. Mr. Esquibel responded that much of

the scheduling process depends on the applicant, as applicants often drop the application or take time scheduling a meeting. Pre-application meetings are typically scheduled twice per month; applicants can typically be scheduled promptly unless the department has an exceptionally full schedule. The ENN process takes 25 days in total, after which an application can be submitted. A case number is issued when the first application fee is received.

Vice Chair Smith inquired regarding the quasi-judicial role of the Commission, noting that the Commission could be subject to litigation if it denies a case that meets code and is recommended for approval by staff. Ms. Cauley responded that the Commission is restricted by the code but has discretion within it, particularly regarding whether a matter is in the public interest. This will be further described in a future meeting.

Commissioner Rieland inquired whether public interest is standardized. Mr. Esquibel responded that it is typically determined when the Governing Body performs a public review process while adopting resolutions and ordinances.

Commissioner Rieland inquired whether there were opportunities to make the development review process more efficient. Mr. Esquibel responded that all aspects of the process are necessary, and corners should not be cut. One planner aggregated the items each department needs to review and created clearer templates for the applicant, and this has decreased the review time. The second review at the building permit stage was also cut. The digitalization project will expedite the review process, as all items will automatically be sent to the departments that need to review them.

4. Business Related to Upcoming Meetings

Ms. Cauley noted that no cases had been scheduled for the next Commission meeting, which is October 1, 2026, and inquired whether the Commissioners would prefer to hear her next presentation on that date or cancel the meeting and hear the presentation at the October 15, 2026, meeting. The Commissioners expressed a preference to hear the presentation on October 1, 2026. Ms. Cauley noted that all Commissioners will take an oath of office at that meeting. The two oath options will be circulated for review via email prior to the meeting.

I. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

J. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

K. MATTERS FROM THE COMMISSION

There were no matters from the Commission.

L. ADJOURNMENT

8:27 P.M.

Liaison

Chair