



**NOTICE OF CITY OF ELEPHANT BUTTE
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
DISCUSSION ONLY, NO DECISIONS TO BE MADE
103 Water Avenue, Elephant Butte, NM 87935
Wednesday, May 6, 2026 – 2:00pm**

Minutes*

1. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Holcomb called the meeting to order, and Councilor Arnold led the pledge of allegiance.

2. ROLL CALL

Mayor Richard Holcomb – Present
Mayor Pro Tem Kim Skinner – Present by Zoom
Councilor Cathy Harmon – Present
Councilor Mike Williams – Present
Councilor Skylar Arnold – Present

City Clerk Cobleigh conducted a roll call and declared a quorum.

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Council Declaration of Conflict of Interest
STATEMENT OF OPEN MEETINGS RESOLUTION & 3 MINUTE LIMIT PER SPEAKER ON ALL ISSUES**

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comments can be made in person, by phone or given to the City Clerk by email (l.cobleigh@cityofebnm.gov) before the meeting.

None Submitted.

5. PRELIMINARY BUDGET

a. Finance Director, Laura Whiteside

Laura Whiteside introduced the Mayor and Council to the interim budget which was presented both by hardcopy and on the TV screen within the council chambers. Whiteside went over the table of contents attached to the interim budget and what all the sections were. Whiteside asked the council if they had a particular way they wanted to review the budget, council requested to review it as printed, department by department.

Whiteside began the review with page one which highlighted all projected revenues. Whiteside noted that all revenues are shown in Tyler as a negative. It was noted that GRT is currently down by \$20,000 - \$30,000 from this time last year. Whiteside stated she was very conservative with the revenue budgeting as to not over promise to different departments. Whiteside stated that Rachel Black has gained access to the NM Tax & Rev to review the GRT payments and find out where the loss is at. Whiteside stated that Black had to go through a confidentiality class before receiving access to the information.

Councilor Harmon asked where the interest income is from? Whiteside stated to look at the column to the right which shows what is accumulated so far. This interest is from CDs and Money Market accounts. Whiteside stated the interest is 3% on these accounts.

Whiteside presented page two Admin Expenses. Whiteside asked the council if they wanted to continue paying into the Sierra Joint Office on Aging an annual \$5,000. Councilor Arnold who

sits on the SJOA Board stated that the funding is being cut for SJOA and she is in favor of continuing the payment to the SJOA. No opposition. Whiteside went over the Animal Control budgeted amount and stated she will be meeting with Gary Whitehead, Manager of TorC, as well as Sheriff Baker to work on a solution.

Councilor Williams stated that he had calculated and compared the figures in salaries and it did not match. Whiteside noted the issue of unaccounted water salaries and made the correction during the workshop. Mayor Pro Tem Skinner requested that the Code Enforcement position be budgeted for a full-time position not a part-time position. Whiteside stated there is not enough funds to cover a full-time code officer. Mayor Pro Tem Skinner stated to take funds from the projected City Manager salary. Whiteside asked what amount the total benefits to be at for the city manager. Mayor Pro Tem Skinner stated \$150,000 including all employee benefits for the city manager.

Mayor Pro Tem Skinner reported on the reduced GRT. The county as well as TorC also has a decrease in GRT due to a miscalculation and a required repayment of \$70,000.

Councilor Williams asked for clarification on the SCRDA expense if that is both the city and fire department combined. Whiteside stated that amount is for the city only and the fire department will be billed separately,

Whiteside went on to go over Council Expenses. Whiteside stated that she felt this portion of the budget was straight forward. Mayor Holcomb stated he was in favor of more training and all employees and council should have the opportunity for training. Whiteside clarified this budget is only for the council and general admin has its own training budget for employees.

b. **Field Operations Supervisor, David Smith**

David Smith, Field Operations Supervisor, began his portion of the presentation on budget with Maintenance. Smith stated there were adjustments within the maintenance budget for Carousel Park and the walking path. Smith stated this budget is fairly close to where it has been in the years past. Mayor Holcomb asked if Smith felt that \$40,000 was enough for these projects. Smith stated he would be looking into grant funding for the event site as well as carousel park.

Councilor Williams asked about the \$21,000 in health insurance under maintenance for one employee. It was clarified that this is one employee, but it is a family premium, and the city pays 75% of the coverage and the employee pays the other 25%.

Smith continued into the Parks & Rec Budget. Smith stated that there had been one adjustment due to the upgrades wanted for the community center. Councilor Williams asked about additional sound proofing tiles for the ceiling in the community center. Mayor Holcomb requested that the thresholds be addressed as people continue to fall over these. Smith stated that there are numerous small concerns with the community center that the contractor would still be liable to correct under that project.

Smith continued into the Streets Budget. Whiteside stated there is a large portion in this budget of \$192,000 that is grant funding from NMDOT for street maintenance. Within this amount there is \$172,000 in the grant and \$20,000 allocated in the budget making the total \$192,000. The plan is to repair the following roads; Cimarron, Chama, Brazos, Hawthorne, and Santa Fe Court.

Mayor Holcomb asked Smith about street lighting and signage. Smith stated he has a large order for street signs to bring them into compliance. These signs will be larger than what is currently there, making them more visible. Smith stated he is planning for park lighting and solar lighting along the walking path. Councilor Williams asked that Smith hold off on ordering the signs as Mayor Holcomb wants to add to them.

Smith continued into the Water Budget. Smith stated one of the increased expenses in this budget is for the software, equipment, and training on the new meter system through badger meters. Smith stated he increased the uniform line to account for steel toed boots and pants. Mayor Holcomb stated how nice it would be to have the city logo on the back of the public work shirts or the department name.

Councilor Harmon asked about the credit card processing fees being assessed. Whiteside stated that she is currently in communication with Tyler to attempt to get a better rate on the processing of the credit cards. Currently the city does not charge the customers to use a credit card, and we are absorbing all the fees associated with the credit cards. Whiteside stated that it would be beneficial for the city to charge a 3% processing fee to customers who use credit cards. Councilor Harmon stated that the city should not be paying for customers convenience. Whiteside stated that Jane Tinon, Utility Clerk, is very overrun with work and we are looking to hire a receptionist to offset the workload.

Smith continued into the Wastewater Budget. Smith stated that he had factored in maintenance and repairs to the facility. There have been recent upgrades to the lighting and the next items to upgrade, and repairs will be to the lab and the restroom. Mayor Holcomb asked what the \$47,000 under professional services was used for. Smith stated that is used by Jesse Cole with 4x4 Service who oversees our water and wastewater systems.

c. **Fire Chief, Roger Long**

Chief Long presented to the Council the Fire Protection budget which he oversees as Fire Chief. Chief Long stated he had already turned in the FY2026-2027 application for Fire Protection Funding. Chief Long stated that there had been an additional \$10,000 budgeted for telecommunications which is the SCRDA payment and \$18,000 for insurance on all the apparatus for the fire department. Chief Long stated that one of the reasons the Fire Department was on probation last year was due to inconsistent amounts being provided to the state fire marshal of roll over funds. At one time it was reported as \$18,000 and the next time it was \$122,000. This then opened the department up to an audit of the fire protection funds.

Chief Long stated that he will be applying for grant funding to complete the building out of Station #1. Chief Long would also like to apply for grant funding for new apparatus as the new equipment the department has is 2010. Chief Long has a plan to apply for grant funding to build a full station at the golf course. Mayor Holcomb asked when the new station would be ready to move into and begin using. Chief Long stated that with the use of a portion of the rollover money they will be able to finish the interior design to make it more useable. Mayor Holcomb asked by doing this if it would aid in response time for calls. Chief Long stated with crew members at the station that it could potentially save 5-10 minutes of response time per call. Mayor Holcomb asked what private grants are as listed in the budget. Chief Long stated that the department applies for several grants every year to aid in the function of the department; there is a trauma grant that is used for the purchase of lifejackets, the NM Gas Grant that was used for Carbon Monoxide Detectors and Fire Extinguishers, and the Fire Stipend Grant. Chief Long stated he has applied for additional funding for this year through those grants.

Chief Long stated that there is a need for a full-time administrative staff member for the Fire Department. Chief Long stated this employee would help with reporting, hydrant maintenance, scheduling vehicle

maintenance etc. Whiteside asked if the city code split this position with code enforcement and fire admin. City Clerk Cobleigh stated the city has done this before and it is not of the best interest of the city or fire department to join those positions. Chief Long gave numerous examples of why these two positions of code enforcement and fire should not be joined. The council agreed to keep the two separate.

Chief Long spoke on the Wildland Fund budget for this year. Chief Long stated that wildland is a great opportunity for the fire department to make additional money by sending crews and equipment out on wildfires. Chief Long stated that at this time the department does not have a wildland coordinator, but they do have an engine boss currently. Chief Long stated when he came on there had been many wildland deployments that had not been billed for and he submitted those to the state for reimbursement; roughly \$250,000. Chief Long stated he was unsure why the wildland fire fund was in a negative balance. Whiteside stated there had been misappropriation of funds by prior administration as well as incorrect budget adjustments that led to the negative balance in this fund.

Chief Long mentioned that there had been a large transfer from the Fire Stipend Grant fund last August and asked Whiteside what the current balance of the stipend grant was. Whiteside stated she would need to look into that.

Finance Director, Laura Whiteside – Continuation of General Budget

Whiteside introduced the Land Use budget to the council. Councilor Harmon asked if Code Enforcement should be under Land Use rather than general admin. Whiteside moved over code enforcement to land use. Whiteside went over Fire Admin, this is the Fire Chief Salary out of General Admin.

Whiteside introduced the Law Enforcement Protection Funds. This is a restricted fund and is used by the Sheriffs department for items that they need for the department.

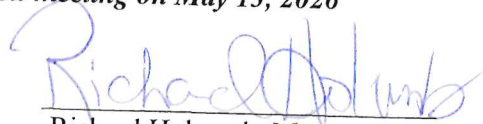
Whiteside went over the Lodgers' Tax funds and stated this is an estimate as the total fluctuates annually depending on the lodging within the city at that time. Whiteside did state that there had been a decrease since the closing of the Elephant Butte Inn.

Whiteside went over the Capital Improvements. Councilor Williams asked what was \$475,000 for. Whiteside stated that is a grant for maintenance equipment. Whiteside stated there is also a grant for \$600,000 for wastewater. Whiteside stated the city had applied for \$5.8 million in colonias funding and have yet to hear back on that application. Whiteside stated there is currently \$3,000 left in the fire station grant that is to be allocated to public art. The OHV project is underway with the construction of the bathrooms at the event site. Eventually, along with the bathrooms there will be a training course added to the event site.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Holcomb adjourned the meeting.

Minutes approved and adopted at the City Council meeting on May 13, 2026


Richard Holcomb, Mayor

ATTEST:


Lindsey Cobleigh, City Clerk

