

May 5, 2026

Elephant Butte Mayor's April Constituent Update

Over the past couple months, I've received valuable input from staff, constituents, and business leaders. In addition, doors are opening to amazing opportunities for our community.

The first big achievement was a three-day planning session at which your city leaders worked on a Strategic Plan to identify and detail key initiatives for the coming year as well as topline plans for subsequent years. It was gratifying to realize how closely we were aligned in our thinking, with all excited about the next steps. We will meet again this month to formalize the plan.

One of the key topics discussed in the three-day meeting was the need to overhaul our City Ordinances, some of which have not been updated for more than 20 years. In addition, amendments over the years have made many ordinances lengthy, cumbersome, and very difficult to decipher. After reviewing the extensive volume of existing ordinances, City Councilor Mike Williams offered to prioritize the ordinances and also determine if some ordinances should be eliminated in their entirety. After assessing the immense volume of work, he informed us that a total re-do could take months or even a few years.

In conversations with New Mexico Municipal League's (NMML's) Executive Director, AJ Forte, we learned that the NMML will assist with the ordinances by applying an AI program that will review the ordinances, determine which parts are no longer relevant, and recreate them as concise, effective, easy-to-understand documents for administrative, constituent, and business applications. They believe it is feasible to deliver our first priority, the Land Use Ordinance, back to the City in under three months, including a review by three expert attorneys. During this three-month period, we will identify and prioritize additional ordinances and begin funneling them to the NMML. Thanks to this process, our much-needed, long-overdue ordinance updates will take only weeks or months rather than years.

Another key initiative centers on our collaboration with the City of Truth or Consequences, the Village of Williamsburg, and Sierra County. Our Interim City Manager, Laura Whiteside, and I met with appointed administrators and elected officials of these communities to discuss progress on grant applications and approval processes. On that same subject, we met with the South Central Council of Governments (SCCOG) and learned they have staff to assist us whenever needed to help write and shepherd our grant applications through the governmental process. This was exciting news as that means SWNMCOG assist us in areas where we lack the financial resources or staff to tackle the complex task of grant writing. Now we can aggressively move forward with submitting grants for our City and broader grants that collectively could include TorC, Williamsburg, and/or Sierra County. In addition, SWNMCOG will keep us informed of grant opportunities that we may not

have otherwise known about, thereby opening new doors for us to obtain more state and even federal assistance in addressing our challenges and help us achieve our goals. Very good news!

Regarding our collaborative efforts with the county, TorC, and Williamsburg, we are hearing from state officials, NMML, and SWNMCOG that they have rarely seen communities work in such harmony to address specific challenges and work together as group to explore mutually-beneficial solutions. It is a new day in Sierra County!

I am learning that the wheels of government do move slowly, with what sometimes seems to be overly restrictive rules and regulations that slow processes down and sometimes bring them to a standstill. At the same time, your City administrative team, Councilors, and I are working closely together to find new ways to expedite and facilitate the work that needs to be done to help ensure that we address issues that matter to residents, some of which have been ignored for many years.

I will certainly understand if you are less than confident and feel you've had your fill of empty promises. I will say this, however. After working in the private sector my whole life, it has been exciting to find new ways to breathe life into an old, tired and often broken system. I truly find myself smiling every day with what we are accomplishing by planning and thinking differently and working cohesively.

I look forward to reporting to you again next month with what I am certain will include more forward motion for our City and our county as a whole.

My office at City Hall is open every day. If you have comments, concerns, questions, or just want to talk, please give me a call to set a time to meet. Or, if you are driving by, just stop in. My door is always open!