



MICHAEL NEALEIGH
Mayor

ROBERT WILSON
Mayor Pro-Tem.

VILLAGE OF JEMEZ SPRINGS

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JUDY BOYD
Trustee
VICTORIA MARTINEZ
Trustee
JAMES McCUE
Trustee

Jemez Springs Village Council Meeting Minutes Tuesday February 17, 2026, 6:00 PM Governing Body Conference Room

1. Call to Order

Mayor Nealeigh called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. and announced that Trustee Judy Boyd would not be present at the meeting.

Council Members Present: Mayor Michael Nealeigh, Trustees: Victoria Martinez, James McCue, and Bob Wilson.

Also in Attendance: Interim Clerk Heather Gutierrez, Finance Director Consultant Jim Cox, Police Chief Joe Moreno, Fire Chief Manolito Sanchez, Library Director Andrew Adaryukov, IT Consultant Fred Simmank, Wastewater Operations Manager Rose Fenton, and community members Tom Swetnam, Mark Michel, Merced Baca, and Olympia Holliday.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Certification of Agenda

Mayor Nealeigh certified that the agenda was posted to the public in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

4. Approval of Minutes

Mayor Nealeigh asked for corrections to the minutes as presented. Interim Clerk Gutierrez noted a correction was needed on the letterhead. Since the correction was not tactually to the minutes he then asked for a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Trustee Wilson made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Trustee McCue. The motion passed by a unanimous "aye" vote.

5. Public Input

Mayor Nealeigh opened the floor for public input on matters not on the agenda. No one came forward to speak.

6. Court Report

Mayor Nealeigh presented the court report.

7. Mayor's Report

a. Code Enforcement

Mayor Nealeigh reported that it had been a quiet month for code enforcement.

b. Administration

i. General

Mayor Nealeigh presented four areas of economic development for the Village Council to consider for securing the Village economy. He stated the first was to capitalize on the Village's investment in Dark Sky by securing a certification, which would allow for Dark Sky-related activities and events consistent with the Village's brand without affecting the quality of life of residents. The second area he identified was film, noting the Village is uniquely positioned within a 60-mile radius of metropolitan centers and offers diverse terrain. He added that encouraging film production might require creating new ordinances and that the Community Park could serve as a base camp, a topic he would be researching. The third area was general tourism. The fourth area was broadband, which he described not as a direct source of funds but as an economic driver that would benefit residents, visitors, and attract more working nomads. Mayor Nealeigh presented these as conversation starters to inform the Village Council and the public of his thinking.

Library Director Adaryukov asked if it was within the Village's purview to think strategically about real estate and the capacity to accommodate both tourists and new residents, citing his personal experience of the challenge in finding permanent housing. Mayor Nealeigh agreed it was an excellent point, acknowledging that broadband would lead to growth in service industries and increase pressure for housing. He suggested that a sufficient demand for housing might eventually prompt development. He stated that the Village could play a facilitating role, though not likely as a real estate owner, and noted that while there is an inventory of property, much of it is held by the federal government or long-term owners with no apparent incentive to develop.

ii. Project Updates

1. Community Park Building

Mayor Nealeigh stated that the water supply line still has a small leak of about 100 gallons per day, requiring the water to be turned on and off for building use. He mentioned that a local contractor, Jemez Gold, will find and repair the leak in the next week or so. Mayor Nealeigh also reported that the electrical panel boxes have been replaced. He stated that the remainder of the G2988 Capital Outlay Grant, which rescinds on June 30, will be used to connect the building to WIFI, and a quote is being obtained. He reported that IT Consultant Simmank had developed a WIFI-based system for exterior lighting that emits an orange glow at night and brightens when someone approaches, staying bright for about 10 minutes before returning to a glow. Mayor Nealeigh praised this as a solution that addresses Dark Sky concerns and helps establish the building as a model. He then announced that, assuming the legislature concludes on February 19 and the Governor signs all legislation by March 11, he would present a resolution at the next meeting to establish the Jemez Springs Community Center/Welcome Center at this location.

2. Conversion of Stage to ground-level Pavillion

Mayor Nealeigh reported that the conversion of the stage is going well with trash removal scheduled for February 28 and final demolition the following week. He noted that over 300 chairs have been stored underneath the stage for over 17 years, more than 200 of which are upholstered. He suggested throwing away the 200 upholstered chairs, calling them a liability

due to the risk of Hantavirus or other health concerns for anyone handling them. The all-metal chairs will be cleaned and stored at the park in a cargo container. The five ten-foot chair carts with wheels will also be stored. He concluded by stating he had been assured by the Commissioner's office that the funds for this project would be arriving shortly.

3. South Mooney Bridge Project

Mayor Nealeigh reported he had participated in a training session on February 2 regarding the handling of funds for the South Mooney Bridge project. He stated the Village is preparing a request for proposals (RFP), which will be reviewed by NMDOT. The selection will be based on qualifications, not the dollar amount. The Village will negotiate a price with the top-qualifying firm, staying within the **\$1 million** limit. If an agreement cannot be reached, they will move to the next qualified vendor. Once a vendor is selected, a Notice of Award and a Notice to Proceed will be issued, and a letter will be sent to NMDOT to request the funds, which will then be deposited in a Village bank account and distributed to the vendor on an agreed schedule. Mayor Nealeigh also announced he is applying for two other Transportation Project Fund projects: a reapplication for the North Mooney Bridge plan and design, and an application for plan and design funding for the entrance to the Community Park. He explained the need for an engineer and funding to develop a plan to make the entrance more attractive, which could involve some expansion, curbing, and lighting, to encourage visitors to stop and use the facilities.

4. Broadband

Mayor Nealeigh reported that the Village's application for the public WiFi access project was not funded, as the money had been expended prior to the deadline. A Grant Writing, Engineering, and Planning (GWEP) grant application also has been submitted to help prepare for the next steps in broadband development.

Mayor Nealeigh also reported that he submitted a letter to the new Governor of the Pueblo of Jemez, Governor John Galvan, regarding potential collaboration on broadband. He mentioned that Windstream may be extending fiber from Sierra Los Pinos to La Cueva and that the Pueblo of Jemez's JNET may have received significant funding for broadband expansion and has a plan to bring fiber to Pueblo residents and surrounding communities. He stated the Village's desire to join this effort, suggesting a collaboration might double the money spent on bringing fiber to the area. There was some additional discussion on whether Windstream had brought fiber to the Village.

Mayor Nealeigh recounted attending Broadband Day at the Capitol on the previous Thursday, where he met with the Director of the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE). He anticipates additional discussions with OBAE once the legislative session concludes.

c. Personnel

Mayor Nealeigh announced that there will soon be a vacancy in the Court Clerk's office.

d. Community Relations

Mayor Nealeigh reported that he attended the New Mexico Municipal League Municipal Day on February 5. After the Municipal Day event, he went to the Capitol and met with Representative Christine Chandler. They discussed potential funding for the Community Center, assistance with high insurance costs, and several Capital Outlay projects. While at the capital Mayor Nealeigh became acquainted with a possible workaround for rural areas involving a battery that could be charged slowly to avoid the demand charges and then used for quick-charging vehicles. Mayor Nealeigh found the idea intriguing and will research the technology further. He also confirmed

his meeting with Pueblos of Jemez Governor John Galvan on March 2nd to discuss collaborating on broadband issues.

e. Boards and Commissions

Mayor Nealeigh noted that the minutes from the last Library Board meeting were available. He stated that minutes for the recent Planning and Zoning Commission meeting were not yet available. He reported that a public hearing was held with at least 40 people in attendance to address an application by Ben Shendo regarding property at 496 Mooney Boulevard. Mr. Shendo sought a zoning amendment for a commercial after-school cultural education program. Mayor Nealeigh relayed that while the program received near-universal applause, its proposed location did not. Following the hearing during their regular meeting the Planning and Zoning Commission voted to deny the application.

f. Department Reports

Mayor Nealeigh drew attention to the Bath House report, stating that the Village will need to address well-flow issues as the cauldron is not filling quickly enough. An attempt to drill out the well with existing equipment was unsuccessful. He said the issue may require hiring a professional drilling company. He noted this was not the original well but a repurposed geothermal project. Wastewater Operations Manager Rose Fenton reported that she is still working to secure easements in order to complete the EPA grant's site certificate. Mayor Nealeigh stated that she was being modest and had done a tremendous amount of work with Daniel B. Stephens engineers to identify and verify historic easements. He reported that about 30 easements are still being worked on, some with known property owners and others still being identified. He stressed that failing to complete the site certification would mean losing **\$3 million** and all the effort invested so far. He urged residents to sign an easement document if asked, as it only confirms the Village's right to use easements that have existed for 55 years. Trustee McCue asked how many people still needed to provide easements, and Mayor Nealeigh confirmed the number was around 30. He added that the County Clerk's office does not appear to attach easement documents to parcels. Ms. Fenton added that the easements were filed as miscellaneous documents, not as easements, which has complicated the process.

Police Chief Moreno reported on a Joint Commission meeting in Corrales. He relayed that while the Skymira project was working, testing in the local area revealed some interference on the handheld radios. The system is working in his police vehicle but not as well as desired on the handhelds. However, he learned from the State Police Director that the handhelds might have a smart connect capability that could use the Starlink internet connection in his unit, potentially eliminating the need for Skymira. The director took one of his radios to determine if it had this feature, which is an upcharge, or if it could be upgraded. Police Chief Moreno stated that he has been told that we are further along than any other rural community and can communicate with State Police via Skymira in a critical incident. He assessed that they are 90% of the way there. Fire Chief Sanchez stated that he had nothing to add to his written report.

8. Trustee's Report

Trustee Boyd was absent. Trustee Martinez, Trustee McCue, and Trustee Wilson stated they had nothing to report.

9. Finance Board

Trustee McCue made a motion to convene the Finance Board, which was seconded by Trustee

Martinez. The motion passed with a unanimous "aye" vote. Mayor Nealeigh convened the Finance Board at 6:53 p.m.

a. Interim Clerk Report

Interim Clerk Gutierrez reported that sewer bills were sent out late due to system issues that have since been resolved.

b. Lodgers' Tax Board Report

Trustee McCue, Chair of the Lodgers Tax Board, stated that the board discussed a proposal from Cat Mesa Technology to improve the jemezsprings.org website at a cost of **\$1125** and a request from Mayor Nealeigh for **\$5,000** to purchase an 8 by 20 storage container for the Community Park. The Board recommended both expenditures. Trustee McCue moved to approve both expenditures. Trustee Martinez seconded the motion. Trustee Wilson asked for clarity on the website cost, noting the agenda listed the cost as **\$1,225**. Trustee McCue and Mr. Simmank confirmed the correct amount was **\$1,125** and that a digit had been transposed. With the correction noted, the motion was put to a vote and carried with a unanimous "aye."

Trustee McCue continued his report, stating that the 4th of July is the next event and the board is awaiting a budget from the events committee. He also mentioned a pending proposal from Clear Channel for digital billboards, which is contingent on the overhaul of the website.

c. Finance Director Report

Finance Director Consultant Jim Cox reported that three prior Capital Outlay grants had been fully executed, while two NMED grants are still in process. For the NMED grants, a required detailed project description has been submitted. He reported that auditors have begun reviewing the files and he hopes the three overdue annual audits can be completed soon, bringing the Village into compliance. He also reported that the second quarter report was submitted and approved by the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA). As part of their review, DFA asked for a response to the Village's corrective action plan for the FY22 audit findings. He noted that he will bring a resolution to the Council at the next meeting to formally approve the audit and accept its findings, as requested by DFA.

Mr. Cox presented the summary sheet for the current fiscal year, which recaps all Village funds on a cash basis. For the second quarter covering July through December, total revenues were **\$1,431,035.13**, largely from grants, with total expenditures at **\$1,323,560.34**, also with a large portion related to grants. General Fund revenues, without grants, were **\$277,652.28** and expenses were **\$319,000**. He explained that expenses exceeding revenue is normal for the second quarter, partly due to the expected, but not yet received, **\$90,000** Small Cities Assistance payment. As of December 31, the ending cash balance was **\$547,959** a significant portion of which is advanced grant funding. He stated that the Village is in a good financial position. At the same time, he is monitoring the Bath House budget where expenses are significantly higher than its revenues, which may necessitate a larger transfer or a reduced administrative fee.

Mr. Cox then explained that state statute requires a monthly report of receipts and expenditures to be submitted to the governing body. A report for July through January was sent via email. Trustee Wilson questioned the purpose of the report, expressing concern that the Council's review implied approval. Mr. Cox clarified that the statute requires the report be made available as information but does not require Council approval. Mayor Nealeigh added that they would prefer to err on the side of a larger role for the governing body acting as the Finance Board and that future reports would be shorter and easier to review. He agreed with Mr. Cox that they are presented for informational purposes, not for approval. Mr. Cox confirmed that establishing fiscal controls has made the process easier and more trustworthy.

Mr. Cox then presented Resolution 2026-005, the second budget adjustment for the fiscal year. It incorporates three completed grant agreements into the budget: **\$20,000** for HVAC improvements at the library, **\$130,000** for library renovations, and **\$100,000** for the purchase and equipping of a tractor. The resolution requests an increase to the Village budget by **\$248,700** within the Intergovernmental Grants category.

Trustee Wilson moved to accept the resolution, seconded by Trustee McCue. There was no further discussion. Interim Clerk Gutierrez conducted a roll call vote. Trustee Martinez, Trustee McCue, and Trustee Wilson all voted "aye." The motion carried and the resolution was approved.

A motion to adjourn the Finance Board was made by Trustee McCue and seconded by Trustee Martinez. It passed with a unanimous "aye" vote, and the Finance Board was adjourned at 7:19.

10. Old Business

There was no old business.

11. New Business

a. RESOLUTION 2026-006 A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF NEW AND IMPROVED MANAGEMENT OF SODA DAM FOR PRESERVATION AND EDUCATION

Mayor Nealeigh read the resolution, which resolves that the Village of Jemez Springs endorses and supports new and improved management of Soda Dam following a public review of alternatives, which may include transferring responsibility to the National Park Service or New Mexico State Historic Sites, or retention by the US Forest Service with a renewed commitment and funding. The resolution also calls for Jemez Pueblo to be included in a co-stewardship role. Trustee Wilson moved to approve the resolution, and Trustee Martinez seconded the motion.

During discussion, Dr. Tom Swetnam recounted a meeting with Senator Heinrich's staff where the Forest Service expressed interest in better managing Soda Dam but cited a need for funding. He reported that the Senator's office has since sent a letter to the Chief of the Forest Service encouraging improved management. Dr. Swetnam described the need for parking lots, road improvements, and a trail with bridges, acknowledging it would be a long-term process. He also reported that Governor John Galvan of Jemez Pueblo and their cultural resources officer, Chris Toya, were enthusiastic and that the Pueblo may prepare a similar resolution to present to the congressional delegation.

With no further discussion, a roll call vote was taken. Trustee Martinez, Trustee McCue, and Trustee Wilson all voted "aye." The motion carried and the resolution was approved. Mayor Nealeigh confirmed that his office would send the signed resolution to the congressional and state legislative delegations, as well as the Forest Service.

b. APPROVAL of Jemez Springs Police Department Policy on Child Abuse and Adult Abuse Trustee Wilson made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Trustee McCue. During discussion, Trustee Wilson commented that he was learning a great deal from the policy review and approval process. With no further discussion, a roll call vote was taken. Trustee Sanchez, Trustee McCue, and Trustee Wilson all voted "aye." The motion carried, and the two policy sections were approved.

12. Adjourn

With no other business on the agenda, Mayor Nealeigh adjourned the meeting at 7:28 p.m.