



MICHAEL NEALEIGH  
Mayor

ROBERT WILSON  
Mayor Pro Tem

## VILLAGE OF JEMEZ SPRINGS Municipal Office

080 Jemez Springs Plaza  
PO Box 269, Jemez Springs, NM 87025  
Phone: (575) 829-3540 • Fax: (575) 829-3339  
Heather Gutierrez, Interim Clerk  
[voffice@jemezsprings-nm.gov](mailto:voffice@jemezsprings-nm.gov)  
Website: [www.jemezsprings-nm.gov](http://www.jemezsprings-nm.gov)



JUDY BOYD  
Trustee  
JAMES MCCUE  
Trustee  
MANOLITO SANCHEZ  
Trustee

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### Jemez Springs Village Council Meeting Minutes Tuesday, March 18, 2025, 6:00 PM Governing Body Conference Room

#### 1. Call to Order

Mayor Michael Nealeigh called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

- a) **Council Members Present:** Mayor Mike Nealeigh, Trustees, James McCue, Manolito Sanchez, and Robert Wilson
- b) **Council Members Absent:** Trustee Judy Boyd
- c) **Also in Attendance:** Interim Clerk Heather Gutierrez, Finance Director Consultant Jim Cox, Wastewater Operations Manager Rose Fenton, Librarian Janet Phillips, IT Consultant Fred Simmank, Police Chief Joe Moreno, and community members Greg Mertz and Renee Guthrie.

#### 2. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Nealeigh led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### 3. Approval of Agenda – *to be removed as an Agenda item as per OMA & RRO*

Mayor Nealeigh announced the removal of the Approval of Agenda item from future agendas, following guidance from the New Mexico Municipal League under the Open Meetings Act (OMA) and Robert's Rules of Order (RRO). He noted that while published agendas cannot be altered, the mayor as presiding officer may reorder items during meetings. Moving forward, draft agendas will be shared with Council members by the end of day on the Thursday preceding a regularly scheduled council meeting, with additions due by end of day Friday when the final agenda will be published.

#### 4. **Approval of Minutes**

**Regular Council Meeting on 2-25-2025:** Mayor Nealeigh asked the Council to review and approve the February 25, 2025, Regular Council Meeting minutes. Trustee Wilson pointed out a typo in "summarized" under the Streets section. No further corrections were made. Trustee McCue then moved to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by Trustee Sanchez. The motion passed unanimously.

#### 5. **Public Input**

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

#### 6. **Court Report**

Mayor Nealeigh presented the monthly Court Report, noting that it was informational only, as the Council has no jurisdiction over the court. He invited questions from the Council, which he would pass on to the presiding judge, but none were raised.

#### 7. **Mayor's Report**

##### a) **Code Enforcement**

No code enforcement actions were required during the reporting period.

##### b) **Administration**

###### i. **General**

**OMA Claim and IPRA Claims:** Mayor Nealeigh updated the council on the continued open OMA claim, as well as the Inspection of Public Records Act (IPRA) claim filed by resident Stephen Anderson. He reiterated that all requested documents had been provided and that he considered the request fulfilled.

**Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) – Call for Projects:** Mayor Nealeigh acknowledged that the July 2024 ICIP submission deadline had not been met. He stressed the need to begin early this year and requested Council members submit infrastructure project proposals promptly for review at the next meeting.

###### ii. **Project Updates**

**Modular Building at Community Park:** Mayor Nealeigh noted the modular building project remains an active agenda item, as there are still available funds

with additional funding expected once the Village completes its audit and is not subject to the Governor's executive order.

**Dark Sky Lighting Project:** Mayor Nealeigh reported the Dark Sky Lighting Project is moving forward again after resolving an interpretation issue with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that allows the Village to install lights on JMEC poles.

Purchase orders for fixtures and mounting arms were issued to the vendors. Final details are being worked out with the arm vendor. JMEC is prepared to begin installation as soon as materials arrive. The final order was increased to 31 replacement lights (from 29) to improve uniformity along Highway 4 and Mooney Boulevard. The project remains under budget and is expected to be completed by June 1, well ahead of the June 30 deadline.

**Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Station at Jemez Springs Plaza:** Mayor Nealeigh presented findings from a Charge Point feasibility study on a proposed Electric Vehicle (EV) charging station at Jemez Springs Plaza. The vendor analysis revealed significant costs, primarily due to a "demand charge" of **\$15.75** per kilowatt – a rate typically applied to large industrial users. This charge, in addition to standard energy costs, would result in an estimated first-year loss of **\$10,000**, and even with projected usage increases, profitability is unlikely for at least five years.

Given the cost of electricity, the Charge Point point-of-sale fees and the maintenance contract, Mayor Nealeigh concluded that the project is financially untenable, even with the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) covering equipment and installation. He expressed his disappointment, noting that rural fast-charger projects will remain unfeasible without state intervention (through the PUC, legislature, or governor) to address these high costs.

Trustee Wilson asked about the demand charge, and Mayor Nealeigh confirmed his understanding that it is a pass-through charge from Tri-State Electric via JMEC due to the fast charger's high power requirements. Trustee McCue noted slow chargers would be impractical for visitors and noted the Pueblo of Jemez had removed similar chargers near Walatowa C-Store. Mayor Nealeigh stated that the project will not return to the agenda unless more viable solutions emerge.

**Pueblo of Jemez Broadband Project:** Mayor Nealeigh discussed potential collaboration with the Pueblo of Jemez on broadband expansion. He met with the Pueblo's IT contact, Kevin Winner, regarding their application for Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Project funds, which aims

to expand internet, cell service, and emergency communications through fiber optics and towers.

The Pueblo currently has fiber connectivity from Albuquerque and plans to connect over 600 homes internally within two years, with future expansion toward Los Alamos, La Cueva, and Cuba. Mayor Nealeigh reported that the Pueblo requested a letter of support from the mayor for their application. He stated that in his view, the letter would be more appropriate if issued jointly by the mayor and Council with formal Council approval. He said he would seek the Council's approval for the letter under New Business later in the meeting.

### **Events – 4th of July, Father’s Day Car Rally, Earth Day, Farmer’s Market, Trim and Chip Day**

Mayor Nealeigh provided updates on several upcoming events:

- **4th of July:** The final date has been confirmed for Friday, July 4. The organizing committee has met twice, with another meeting scheduled. A parade permit application is in process. The theme is "4th of July," and floats will be judged based on their interpretation.
- **Father’s Day Car Rally:** The Village is exploring the idea of hosting a car rally around Father's Day (June 15) and has reached out to local car clubs to gauge their interest. Mayor Nealeigh highlighted the importance of attracting diverse entries—including lowriders, antique cars, and other vehicle types—to ensure broad community appeal. A final decision has not been made.
- **Earth Day:** Earth Day falls on Tuesday, April 22, with community activities scheduled on Saturday, April 26.
- **Farmers Market:** The first Farmer’s Market of the season will occur the first Saturday in June. Mayor Nealeigh distributed a handout detailing the market's new name and management.
- **Trim and Chip Day:** Plans are underway for a community "Trim and Chip Day" to beautify the Village and reduce wildfire fuel, tentatively scheduled for April, May, or June. The Village hopes to partner with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), local chipping companies, and Sandoval County to maximize the result.

c) **Personnel Matters**

Mayor Nealeigh updated the Council on several personnel items:

i. **Library Director Search Committee**

The committee has met twice and reviewed 11 applications. After clarifying salary and benefits, the pool narrowed to six candidates, with three selected for interviews to be conducted in the next 2-3 weeks.

ii. **Clerk/Finance Director Search Committee**

The committee has received three applications but has not yet met. Mayor Nealeigh anticipates convening the committee soon.

iii. **Renee Guthrie Hired as Clerk Aide Pending Confirmation by Council**

Mayor Nealeigh announced the hiring of Renee Guthrie as Clerk Aide, pending formal Council confirmation later in the meeting under New Business. He noted that Ms. Guthrie was present, is relatively new to the area, and has become active in the community.

d) **Community Relations**

i. **Representative Christine Chandler:** Mayor Nealeigh attended Municipal Day at the capitol on February 28th, where he met with various public officials, and visited the Roundhouse to request a meeting with Representative Christine Chandler. As Representative Chandler was unavailable, he met with her aide, Laurel Minter. He noted he had previously submitted a "case for support" document to the Representative's office outlining village projects focused on improving self-sufficiency and asset management.

ii. **Commissioner Joshua Jones:** Mayor Nealeigh then shared that he had received a call from County Commissioner Joshua Jones, who relayed that he was in Senator Martin Heinrich's office when the Senator inquired about the Village's recent sanitary sewer overflow.

iii. **Senator Martin Heinrich's Office:** Mayor Nealeigh reported that shortly after the call from Commissioner Jones, Jasmine Yeta, Senator Martin Heinrich's field representative, also reached out regarding the wastewater situation. He explained that he provided a detailed account of the incident and outlined the Village's immediate response, which included notifying the Pueblo and USFS; posting updates on Nextdoor, Jemez Chat, and the Village website; sending text alerts to residents; and submitting formal letters to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED).

Mayor Nealeigh also recounted receiving a message the next day from one of the Pueblo's lieutenant governors, who expressed concern about the overflow. Mayor Nealeigh reiterated that the Pueblo leadership had been promptly notified by the Village and emphasized their shared concern, as well as the considerable time and resources already committed to addressing the underlying infrastructure issues.

Mayor Nealeigh concluded by framing these interactions as a positive public relations opportunity, allowing him to clearly communicate the Village's proactive response, progress on funding, and the overall status of the wastewater infrastructure project to both Commissioner Jones and Senator Heinrich's office. He confirmed that a letter of intent for congressional designated spending was submitted to Senator Heinrich's office, and applications for other funding sources are currently in process. To strengthen these efforts, the Village is requesting letters of support from the Pueblo of Jemez, USFS, The Sierra Club, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife. He invited questions from the Council, but none were raised.

e) **Boards & Commissions**

- i. **Library Board:** Mayor Nealeigh stated the Library Board Chair was out of town, but noted that minutes from their last meeting were included in the meeting packet. No questions were raised.
- ii. **Planning & Zoning Commission:** Mayor Nealeigh noted the February Planning and Zoning Commission minutes were included in the meeting packet and acknowledged Commissioner Fred Simmank was present. No questions were raised.

Mayor Nealeigh explained that the Lodgers Tax Board report, which traditionally occurred at this point in the agenda, would be moved to the Finance Board section going forward. He distributed ordinance details clarifying that unlike the Planning & Zoning Commission or the Library Board, the Lodgers Tax Board serves in an advisory capacity only and has no delegated authority over funds. Since disbursement decisions remain with the Village Council, the Lodger's Tax Board will report under the Finance Board.

f) **Department Reports**

- i. **Bath House:** Mayor Nealeigh noted the Bath House report was included in the meeting packet. No questions were raised.

- ii. **Fire Department:** Mayor Nealeigh noted the Fire Department report was included in the meeting packet. He emphasized the importance of the monthly fire department report and commended the department for responsibly and conscientiously handling a recent dispatch failure. He noted that Fire Chief Craig Francois is currently on medical leave to care for his wife and invited Interim Fire Chief Manolito Sanchez to update the council on the department's recent activities.

Interim Chief Sanchez reported that the department held the first bi-monthly training last Saturday, which focused on familiarizing volunteers with the main fire engine and its controls. Chief Sanchez described their incremental approach, starting with basic steps to build comfort and understanding. Participants provided positive feedback, and the training successfully helped them better understand fire truck functions. Mayor Nealeigh commended the Interim Fire Chief and his team for their efforts. No questions were raised.

- iii. **Information Technology:** Mayor Nealeigh noted the IT report was included in the meeting packet and acknowledged IT Consultant Fred Simmank was present. No questions were raised.

- iv. **Library:** Mayor Nealeigh noted the library report was included in the meeting packet and acknowledged that Library Director Janet Phillips was present, stating this would be one of her final reports before her retirement.

Director Phillips clarified she would submit one final report at the end of the month covering the transition period. She thanked those she worked with and described a project to honor the library's founders, specifically Grace Swetnam, as well as volunteers and staff. She created a display featuring a historical photo of Ms. Swetnam taken at the original library location, which will be hung in the New Mexico section.

Trustee Sanchez expressed deep appreciation for Director Phillips' years of service, emphasizing her positive impact and the community's high regard for her. His remarks were met with applause by all in attendance.

- v. **Police Department:** Mayor Nealeigh noted the Police Department report for February was included in the meeting packet and acknowledged that Police Chief Joe Moreno was present. He stated the adoption of new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) would be discussed under New Business and invited Chief Moreno to speak.

Chief Moreno explained the provided SOP documents contained minor revisions to adapt standard templates to Jemez Springs' needs. He clarified these

templates were widely used and approved by the New Mexico Municipal League's law enforcement division. The current review focused on simpler procedures due to time constraints, with more complex policies—such as use-of-force and pursuit protocols—to follow later. He assured the Council would have sufficient time to review those as well.

- vi. **Public Works:** Mayor Nealeigh noted the Public Works report was included in the meeting packet. No questions were raised.
- vii. **Streets:** Mayor Nealeigh noted the Streets report was included in the meeting packet and reported that road shoulders across the Village have been cleared and the off-street parking area at 28 Lucero is now in use. In addition, new signs were installed at the North Mooney bridge, Armenta Road, and at the corner of Luciano and Mooney Blvd.

Mayor Nealeigh then provided an update on the Transportation Project Fund (TPF) application process for bridge funding. Seth Tinkle, MRCOG planning coordinator, prepared the application package, which included a cover letter, Preliminary Feasibility Form (PFF), map, and cost estimate. The South Bridge replacement project is estimated at approximately **\$2.75 million**. The North Mooney Bridge engineering and design project is estimated at **\$1,000,000**. The applications have been submitted and will go through an initial review in mid-April.

- viii. **Wastewater:** Mayor Nealeigh noted the Wastewater report was included in the meeting packet and invited Operations Manager Rose Fenton to speak.
  - **Sanitary Sewer Overflow Report:** Operations Manager Fenton began by noting she had omitted copies of the official Sanitary Sewer Overflow (SSO) report and the five-day follow-up letter submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding the recent event but confirmed they were filed as required. She then presented a document packet with overhead imagery of the Jemez Hot Springs property, which she had prepared in response to questions about building permits, and confirmed that her research has found no permits issued for structures beyond the original cabin and bathhouse.

Operations Manager Fenton then highlighted a May 2016 floodplain development permit showing previous owners were required to obtain permits for any structures. The imagery revealed potential encroachments onto the Village's sewer line easement by existing structures. She specifically referenced a December 2021 permit request from the current owner containing plats that showed two buildings (bathroom and

toilet/shower) encroaching on the easement, but omitted the sewer line easement itself.

While these encroachments might have contributed to the SSO, Operations Manager Fenton clarified the November 2023 overflow initially resulted from a separate issue: an improperly sloped sewer line segment running from the hot springs property. This grading issue causes accumulation and has prevented contractor Pro Pipe from completing full camera inspections.

- **Progress on Scoping and Clearing Collection Lines:** Operations Manager Fenton updated the Council on Pro Pipe's inspection and clearing of sewer lines, which began February 24 but was delayed by equipment issues. Work recently resumed, progressing from the National Park Service property southward.

Mayor Nealeigh encouraged Council members to review the property layout documents, highlighting how structure locations relative to the sewer line—particularly potential encroachments—could affect insurance claims filed against the Village for overflow damages. Trustee McCue added historical context.

Discussion focused on the sewer line easement (extending five feet on either side) and the technical challenges posed by the improperly sloped pipe, which may necessitate excavation.

Operations Manager Fenton confirmed that she met the April 1 deadline for certain Congressional Designated Spending applications and is now awaiting updated support letters from USFS and the Pueblo of Jemez.

## 8. Trustees' Report

Trustees McCue, Sanchez, and Wilson had nothing to report. Mayor Nealeigh indicated Trustee Judy Boyd was out of town and unable to attend.

## 9. Finance Board

Trustee Sanchez moved to convene the Finance Board, seconded by Trustee Wilson. The motion passed unanimously, and the Finance Board convened at 6:56 PM.

- a) **Interim Clerk's Report:** Interim Clerk Heather Gutierrez reported Sandoval County had contacted her to ask whether the Village preferred to hold its own municipal election in March, which would be at the Village's expense, or have the County manage it in November at the County's expense.

Mayor Nealeigh asked about the status of pending state legislation that might require November elections for all municipalities, noting the New Mexico Municipal League's opposition. Interim Clerk Gutierrez was uncertain, but emphasized the June deadline to opt in for County management. When asked about cost differences, she said she lacked exact figures but could review past expenses. Mayor Nealeigh said he would track the legislation and keep the Council informed.

- b) Lodgers Tax Board Report:** Trustee McCue, Lodgers Tax Board Chair, reported the April 15 meeting was postponed due to scheduling conflicts. The board is working to reschedule for the Tuesday after Easter, pending member availability. There were no questions from the Council.
- c) Finance Director Report:** Mayor Nealeigh introduced the Finance Director Report and invited Finance Director Consultant Jim Cox to speak.
  - i. Prior Fiscal Year(s) –2022, 2023, 2024:** Mr. Cox reported positive progress, confirming the Village is now fully current on all outstanding prior-year payments. The Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) audit material has been submitted to the auditor and is approximately 60% complete. Once finalized, the FY23 audit will follow.

Mr. Cox mentioned a potential opportunity for state funding—**\$16,000** each for FY23 and FY24—to help cover audit costs. He applied for these funds and committed to sharing updates when information is available.

- ii. Current Fiscal Year –2025:** Mr. Cox stated the Village is operating within budget, with the March quarterly financial report to be presented at the next meeting. He highlighted a **\$90,000** small cities assistance payment received in February, providing significant cash flow relief alongside strong Gross Receipts Tax (GRT) performance.

However, he raised a major concern regarding the proposed FY26 insurance premium from the New Mexico Self-Insurers Fund. The premium is set at **\$233,985**, a 429% increase from the current **\$44,202** premium. This represents roughly 40% of the Village's operating budget, which he stated is unsustainable.

Trustee Wilson expressed shock at the increase, acknowledging recent claims but finding the amount excessive. Mr. Cox agreed, stating he would seek clarification on whether the hike reflects a statewide trend or is specific to the Village. He assured the Council the issue would be addressed during FY26 budget planning.

- iii. **Resolution 2025-003: Providing For Adjustments in the Village’s Operating Budget:** Mr. Cox presented Resolution 2025-003, explaining it corrects the operating budget by properly carrying forward prior year state capital outlay grant funds. This adjustment resolves the appearance of being over budget.

The resolution increases intergovernmental grants revenue by **\$266,402**, covering existing grant funds for Community Park stage improvements, the Dark Sky Lighting project, and the administrative office project balance. Unspent funds will revert at year-end. Upon Council approval, the resolution will be submitted to the New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration (DFA).

Trustee Wilson moved to approve the resolution, seconded by Trustee McCue. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Trustee McCue moved to adjourn the Finance Board meeting, seconded by Trustee Sanchez. The motion passed unanimously, and the Finance Board adjourned at 7:09 PM.

## **10. Old Business**

Mayor Nealeigh stated there was no old business to discuss.

## **11. New Business**

- a) **Approval of the first section of Police Department Standard Operating Procedures**

Mayor Nealeigh introduced Section 100 of the Jemez Springs Police Department Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). This section covers Law Enforcement Authority, Definitions, Oath of Office, Policy Manual guidance, and the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics.

Trustee Wilson moved to approve section 100 of the SOPs, seconded by Trustee McCue. Trustee Wilson then asked for clarification on jurisdictional limits, particularly outside Village boundaries and cross-commissioning. Chief Moreno referenced the Authority section, noting powers under state, county, and Village laws, as well as emergency provisions via an MOU with the Sheriff’s Department and a recent state bill allowing temporary commissioning. After discussion about Village boundaries (mile markers 15 to 19) and the need for clearer language, Mayor Nealeigh suggested postponing the vote.

Trustee Wilson moved to postpone action on the motion until the next meeting for further review, seconded by Trustee McCue. The motion to postpone passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

**b) Approval of Letter of Support for Pueblo of Jemez Broadband Project**

Mayor Nealeigh presented a letter supporting the Pueblo of Jemez Broadband Project's application to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) for Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) funding, which he then read into the record.

*"To whom it may concern, we affirm our support for the Pueblo of Jemez Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Project. Expanding broadband in our area is vital for improving quality of life and access to essential services. Many homes and businesses in our community still struggle with limited or no internet service, which creates barriers to education, healthcare, and economic opportunity. The Pueblo of Jemez Broadband Initiative will bring much-needed high-speed internet to Jemez Springs and the surrounding area. This investment will strengthen our community by supporting public safety, telehealth, small business growth, and remote learning. We urge the NTIA to approve this application so that our residents can have the connectivity they need to succeed. Please feel free to contact the mayor for further information."*

Trustee McCue moved to approve the letter of support as written, seconded by Trustee Sanchez.

Trustee Wilson asked if the project would reach beyond the Pueblo's borders, and Mayor Nealeigh explained that the Pueblo of Jemez IT department was working to install both fiber optic and wireless infrastructure serving Jemez Springs, Sierra Los Pinos, La Cueva, Seven Springs, and Cuba. He mentioned the project would provide broadband internet, cellular service, and emergency 800 MHz radio communications across the area.

Library Director Phillips raised concerns about large towers along the scenic drive and asked about chances for public input. Mayor Nealeigh explained that while some towers might be on sovereign land, others would require coordination with local authorities. Only an addition to the current Commnet tower would require Village approval. He noted the existing monopole may require structural upgrades by Commnet to support new antennas and microwave equipment, and the Village would be involved in that process. Police Chief Joe Moreno pointed out the project had the potential to deliver affordable internet service priced between **\$25** and **\$50** per month, significantly lower than current options.

The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

- c) **Confirmation of Renee Guthrie to Lodgers Tax Board:** Mayor Nealeigh highlighted Ms. Guthrie's qualifications, including customer service experience, administrative skills, and community involvement since moving to Jemez Springs. Ms. Guthrie greeted the Council and briefly shared her positive experience relocating to the Village.

Trustee McCue moved to confirm Ms. Guthrie's appointment to the Lodgers Tax Board, seconded by Trustee Sanchez. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Mayor Nealeigh welcomed Ms. Guthrie to the Lodger's Tax Board. He further noted that her appointment as Clerk Aide would be considered temporary until her confirmation by the Village Council at next month's meeting of the Village Council. He apologized for failing to place it on this month's agenda.

## **12. Adjourn**

With no further business on the public agenda, Mayor Nealeigh adjourned the meeting at 7:34 PM.