

Regular Meeting Minutes–May 21, 2025

The Mayor and the Board of Trustees of the Village of Tularosa met in a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, May 21, 2025, at 6:00 P. M. in the Court Conference Room of the Public Safety Facility located at 609 St. Francis Drive, Tularosa, New Mexico.

Present: Mayor Deborah Cooksey
Trustee Patrick Garcia-Absent
Trustee Robert Sainz
Trustee Manuel Brusuelas
Trustee Mark Garwood

Also present was Rebekah Bryant Village Clerk

At 6:00 P. M. Mayor Deborah Cooksey called the meeting to order asking that all rise and join her in the Pledge of Allegiance and the Salute to the Flag of the State of New Mexico.

1. Trustee Sainz made a motion accept the agenda; Trustee Garwood seconded the motion. All members voted aye; motion carried.

2. Unscheduled Correspondence:

Cesar Ramos- Stated that his name is Cesar Ramos and announced his candidacy for Otero County Sheriff, he has 34 years of law enforcement experience working with the United States Navy, Department of Defense and just retired from the United States Border Patrol after 24 years. He is running for Sheriff because he sees a lot of inconsistencies and the citizens are unhappy with the policies coming out of that office. He wants to use his experience to try and rectify that and provide better service for the citizens of Otero County

Jen Gruger- Stated that she is here to give a report on behalf of Michael Gruger the organizer of the duck race. She stated that they all feel really good about this year's duck race, thank you for all the participation. They had 26 vendors, 53 total sponsors both financial and in-kind donations, local community attendance was amazing as they wish they could somehow count. They are still adding up all the expenses and donations, but they are confident that they will make their intended contribution to the high school community college fund as well as making a good step towards purchasing the luminarias this year. She gave a special shoutout to Angel Voorbach and his team for juggling four separate events that week and getting them their barricades and trash cans as well as picking up afterwards. John Montoya and the Tularosa Fire Department for being present and also the Tularosa Police Department for a great representation with two booths and full presence and a great introduction of the new police chief. Of

course, our Tularosa Mayor and Trustees for the continued support of our local community events. And the residents of Tularosa for increased attendance, cooperation and support and all the well wishes. And to our volunteers, so many hands that go into making events like this possible, so many moving parts and there are all individuals behind each of those moving parts to make it happen, we are so lucky to have a great network of folks in the community helping this project and all of our projects along the way including those recruited the day of the event.

Larry Berry-This is about my Kokopelli, I've been coming to these meetings for over two years, and you all have repeatedly said that the village has no say so over the highway and you all have told that to the community on several occasions. And then I was also here when you all encouraged Rusty to get people to quit planting watering plants and to get people to put items that didn't need water. He took that to understand that the state highway department has say so over that. He took a picture of the Kokopelli to give to Rusty, and I assumed everything Rusty tells me is true, I'm not gonna fact check him I believe him. He gave it to the state and the state said fine it looks good put it up, so I painted it and put it up. The rest of this is all text messages from Rusty and I'm assuming they are all right too. On the 12th he got a text from Rusty that says he was having people complain about the Kokopelli. He asked him if it was a cultural issue because he thought that might be offensive to some. The next text he got was from him and it said Bekah says take it down asap or the village will take it down for you, he's assuming that is true also. Then at 11:45 he got a text on the 13th from Rusty stating the Mr. Baker from the NMDOT asked us to remove it until they can do some background on it for the fact that they were getting some complaints so I told him that I would take it down the next morning. Now apparently you all had an unscheduled meeting and voted to tell Rebekah to tell me to take it down or somebody took it upon herself, or she took it upon herself to make that executive decision, but right now I just want to know who made the decision for me to take it down asap. Mayor Cooksey stated that Mr. Baker told them. Mr. Berry said no that is not what happened. Mayor Cooksey stated that when Rusty Helton gets up here for his agenda request, they will explain in detail.

Jeff Trembly- Stated that he just wanted to give an update on the disagreement he has with the Ditch Corp. on the new irrigation schedule, and to let you know that letters they have made it very clear that they do not believe the 49 blocks have superior water rights to the farmers. He is taking legal action against them to resolve this very important issue because he believes they are very wrong. If the superior right of the 49 blocks is not recognized, then he believes that they will continue to reduce their irrigation supply. He would encourage the village to support us in this action anyway that they feel best, he will leave his contact information with Ms. Bryant and also his attorney's contact information as well.

Greg Gutierrez- Stated that he just wanted to express some gratitude as the community garden is going well and he wanted to just thank everybody for

participating and being a part of it and encourage anyone who wants to volunteer you are welcome and to just get ahold of him and he will help you to learn the ropes. With that being said he just wanted to show an artichoke that was grown in the garden.

3. Deborah Cooksey, Mayor asked for approval of the appointment of Geraldine Martinez to Chief of Police at a pay rate of \$37.00/hr. Trustee Brusuelas made a motion, Trustee Sainz seconded the motion. All members voted Aye; motion carried.

4. Anna Vigil, Senior Center Director asked for approval of Resolution #2024-2025-16 adopting the ICIP for fiscal years 2027-2031. Trustee Garwood made a motion; Trustee Brusuelas seconded the motion. All members voted Aye; motion carried.

Roll Call: Brusuelas-Aye, Garwood-Aye, Sainz-Aye

5. Deborah Cooksey, Mayor asked to approve a pay raise for Angel Voorbach in the amount of \$1.00 for becoming the Safety Coordinator. Trustee Brusuelas made a motion, Trustee Sainz seconded the motion. All members voted Aye; motion carried.

6. Rebekah Bryant, Village Clerk asked for approval of the award to Bohannon Huston for RFP 2025-1 Wastewater Treatment Improvements for Project 22-C-RS-1-1-G-11. Trustee Sainz made a motion, Trustee Garwood seconded the motion. All members voted Aye; motion carried.

7. Chris Rupp, Planning and Zoning asked to approve a building permit for Randy Borrer at 701 Bosque St. Trustee Brusuelas made a motion, Trustee Garwood seconded the motion. All members voted Aye; motion carried.

8. Larry Berry, Municipal Judge asked to approve funding for the replacement of carpet and ceiling tiles in the courtroom office. Item tabled

9. David Chavez, Individual asked permission to have the Third Annual Ice Cream Social at Veterans Park on June 20, 2025, at 5:00PM. Trustee Garwood made a motion; Trustee Brusuelas seconded the motion. All members voted Aye; motion carried.

10. Matthew Vojik, Individual asked for the village to resurface and maintain the tennis courts. He just wanted to call their attention to the court itself because right now it looks good when you drive by and there is a new net, fence is great

and the lighting is great, but the surface of the court is kind of the most important thing. His wife and him used to play there a lot but comparing it to the courts somewhere else it's kind of even unsafe to play there with a lot of cracks so it's not really fun to play because the ball bounces in different directions. In the last year or so his wife has gotten more involved playing tennis with the Alamogordo tennis association and they have an active community tennis program up there so it's unfortunate that they have to go out of town to play. He just wanted to make them aware of the situation and that a new court would be a valued asset to the community and they are just asking the village to maintain it. Mayor Cooksey asked if he knew or anticipated how much this would cost. He stated that a couple of days ago he talked with a southwest representative of the U.S. tennis association, and he estimated resurfacing would be about ten thousand to fifteen thousand dollars. He stated that it is the village's property and should be maintaining it prior to him coming up here. Apparently, this year the U.S. tennis association has ten million in grants so it is the perfect year to give them the call. With the grant they can reimburse 50% of the cost and that's a resource that is available this year more than any other year. Mayor Cooksey stated that if they will give that information to Rebekah, but she cannot promise anything. There is no action taken discussion only.

11. Rusty Helton, Keep Tularosa Beautiful asked to place a Kokopelli in the median. Rusty stated that they were having problems with the medians as far as watering and keeping everything alive he started trying to integrate to native plants and one of the ideas that he had was to add sculptures. He got the approval for the vases; he got some vases as far as pottery over there on Central and put those with metal flowers and he got two of those that were put in the median and they were approved by Mr. Baker. He was trying to solicit local artwork and put it out there to and it had to be approved by Mr. Baker to put it out there. He told him basically the dimensions and everything of Judge Berry's Kokopelli and what it was and truthfully, he thought as much trouble as it was talking to him about anything he thought they were gonna be shot down but Mr. Baker said that it was fine just be sure when you do it to show him a picture of it. He didn't realize and he had done research and he is not sure but he doesn't want to upset the Mescalero Apache's as they are our neighbors and are a part of our village as far as he concerned. He doesn't think there is any rejection of the Kokopelli by the Mescalero's. Mayor Cooksey asked if he had any phone calls and he stated that he had several phone calls, two of them from the INN of the Mountain Gods one lady he spoke to for almost two hours and it's not the rejection of it but it's respect for their traditions that should be promoted here instead of the Kokopelli. He thought he was following all the procedures he should have followed but apparently, he didn't follow something. Mayor Cooksey stated that she took it upon herself to call Mr. Baker, and she asked him so how does this work and can they just put up anything they want and he stated that no it had to be approved by him. He stated that he remembers the pots but not the Kokopelli. He stated that regardless of how things work you need approval from

the village and then you need approval from NMDOT. Mr. Baker stated that there is a big form that needed to be filled out to do that kind of stuff because of the height and how large it is, that is his words exactly and to change things in the median, DOT feels like it's a respectful thing to let their villages know what's coming into their village so if you just had to deal with the DOT and the DOT says it's okay for you to do that but, we still have our village people to consider. Mayor Cooksey also stated that she has nothing against Kokopellis as she has one on her house, so she is not here saying she doesn't like them or she don't want them, she has nothing to do with that but she has had about fifteen calls and some people think it's disrespectful and some people just don't like them. She also stated that when we do start putting statues up we have to stop and think about cultural things because what works for one person may not work for another, we need to find something that everybody likes, and this has nothing to do with her personal feelings. Mayor Cooksey also stated that she asked Rebekah to ask Mr. Berry to take it down reason being that they needed to vote on this. After she had talked to Mr. Baker, he told her that it came down to her making the decision. She asked Rusty if Mr. Baker had ever called him and Rusty said yes, he did. Rusty stated that Mr. Baker said that he didn't remember telling him that it was okay and that he needed to go through the correct process to get approval from the village first and then submit a permit through NMDOT and that is where we are at right now. Trustee Sainz stated that he received several phone calls from the negative side, the only positive that he heard was speaking to Mr. Berry and he's assuming Rusty is okay with it as well. Trustee Sainz said his question is what the statue or emblem signify or depict Tularosa, keep it simple if you put roses like you are trying to do now that would signify the city of roses, or if you want to represent the schools and wanted to put wildcats in the median he can understand that. Mayor asked or a motion and No motion was made; motion died.

12. Old Business: Trustee Garwood stated that as you all know for our TPF funding we have to go through SERTPO board that comprises of representatives from each town in district two. So, he went to a meeting this morning and we had a very good presentation with a new engineer for Tularosa who is Gary Ramsey's son, with that being said he is stepping right in to the role that David Shields once held. He just wants the public to know that there is a sheet that has voting criteria to award funding for district two with parameters in there regarding different things that they consider. We put in for 1st Street to get it redone completely and it was well received by the board itself. However, there are no criteria concerning safety, which that street is a safety problem so when he goes to the meeting next year, he is going to ask for them to consider that.

13. New Business: None

14. Adjourn: 6:51pm

Deborah Cooksey, Mayor

ATTEST: (seal)

Rebekah Bryant, Village Clerk