

**CITY OF ALAMOGORDO, NEW MEXICO
CITY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
6:30 PM, DONALD E. CARROLL COMMISSION CHAMBERS
June 9, 2026**

**SHARON MCDONALD, MAYOR
JOSHUA RARDIN, MAYOR PRO-TEM
BAXTER PATTILLO, COMMISSIONER
STEPHEN BURNETT, COMMISSIONER
WARREN ROBINSON, COMMISSIONER**

**AL HERNANDEZ, COMMISSIONER
MARK TAPLEY, COMMISSIONER
STEPHANIE HERNANDEZ, ACTING
CITY MANAGER
VACANT, CITY ATTORNEY
RACHEL HUGHS, CITY CLERK**

CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Mayor McDonald called the meeting to order at 6:30 AM. Roll Call was taken by the City Clerk. City Clerk Hughs announced there was a quorum present.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Invocation was delivered by Pastor Jerry Martinez, and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Tapley.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**Commissioner Robinson moved to Approve.
Commissioner Burnett seconded the motion.
Motion Passed with a vote of 7-0-0.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Helen Sweeney stated that she had sent an email to the Commission on May 18 regarding and no one had responded to her. She remarked that while she believed some members on the left side of the dais had done a fairly good job, others had not. She concluded by stating that the letter she gave to the City Clerk had been submitted to the Department of Justice for investigation.

2. Thaddius Gilmore, referenced the April 28 session where he pleaded for the preservation of the city's workforce and noted that his appeal had been ignored. He called into question the exclusive involvement of the outgoing golf course contractor, Grant Dalps, and the integrity of the procurement process. He stated that the city was withholding a factual public record, the sign-in sheet from the original contractor walkthrough, which he believed was a "smoking gun" proving a violation of the procurement blackout period. He noted that an Open Meetings Act lawsuit was filed on June 1 to track executive sessions.

3. Grace Nagamine thanked Dr. Stephanie Hernandez for her service and leadership, calling her a strong, accomplished, and highly educated Hispanic role model. She highlighted the strengthened partnership between the City and Holloman Air Force Base, which resulted in the city receiving the Altus Award for a second time. She expressed hope that the city would continue to build upon this foundation of collaboration and transparency regardless of future leadership directions.

4. Ryan Sawers encouraged the Commission to think about the underlying causes of addiction, such as chronic pain, mental illness, trauma, and poverty, rather than just the symptoms. He stated that the strongest communities were those that created opportunities for people to recover, participate, and contribute.

5. Pastor Jerry Martinez thanked Dr. Hernandez for the great job she had done and stated she was a very qualified candidate who should have been the city manager. He mentioned that there were complaints coming from the state government regarding local corruption and pleaded with the Commission to do the right thing.

6. Kim Great White Owl Murillo thanked Dr. Hernandez for her steady and brilliant leadership during a period of "manufactured chaos" and thanked Mayor McDonald and Commissioners Robinson and Tapley for their integrity. She reminded the body that under state law (NMSA 3-14-14), the city manager has exclusive administrative authority while elected officials set policy. She reported micromanagement and harassment by certain commissioners and mentioned an upcoming EEOC hearing regarding the Open Meetings Act.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Acting City Manager Dr. Stephanie Hernandez announced this was her final commission meeting and delivered her final report, noting she would remain in the office through June 30.

1. She reported that due to an executive order, the city fireworks display would likely be moved to city-owned property for safety.

2. She explained to the public, the difference between the city manager and the assistant city manager. The assistant city manager oversees the administrative and quality-of-life departments including finance, the city clerk, HR, community development, parks and recreation, and community services. The city manager oversees critical services including police, fire, utilities, public works, legal, and the direct communication with the governing body. Citizens' concerns usually follow that same structure, and outside partnerships are either divided between the city manager and assistant city manager or handled jointly depending on the issue. That structure works well when both positions are filled; for the last 21 months, and she had been performing both roles. She said more recently, she had also taken on portions of the city attorney functions as we are still actively recruiting.

She noted that with her last day approaching, staff have been concerned about what July will look like. July is a heavily transactional month for the city: we begin the new fiscal year, close out the prior year, implement the new budget, enter new contracts and requisitions, and move forward with numerous operational items. She stated that while she could simply leave on June 30th and allow others to figure that out, she respected her directors, employees, and citizens too much not to do what she could to help create some stability.

She stated she has appointed an Acting Assistant City Manager to assist with the transition and help maintain continuity in city operations. She announced that after long consideration, she appointed Chief David Kunihiro to provide stability during the heavily transactional transition into the new fiscal year. He already oversees one third of city employees and the most challenging departments.

Acting City Manager Hernandez clarified that the Acting Assistant City Manager was not an Acting City Manager. The appointment as acting assistant city manager does not elevate Chief Kunihiro to the acting city manager role; those are separate positions with separate authority and separate responsibilities. A person can only hold one acting city role at a time. The City Manager decision still needs to be made by the Commission. She said she would remain in the office through June 30th with the sole objective of transitioning assistant city manager duties to Chief Kunihiro and doing what she could to assist with continuity. She addressed the pattern of commissioners bypassing the city manager to go directly to directors, which she stated undermined the position and created unnecessary conflict. She hoped Chief Kunihiro would be given the ability to oversee the directors assigned to him and be successful when the decisions.

She shared the history of her recruitment, noting she had been the highest-ranked candidate in April 2025 before the process was canceled, and detailed a January incident where her scheduled interview was canceled after other candidates withdrew. When it became official that she would not be the permanent City Manager, she continued to show up to work because of her work ethic, and the employees and citizens mattered. She had been doing both jobs for 21 months and she was getting burned out. She stated she was advised that the EEOC process was an effective negotiation avenue when traditional contract discussions were delayed. She stated she did what she has always tried to do in difficult situations: she made a decision. She provided two options that she believed could move this

matter forward depending on the direction the commission wanted to take. While the outcome was difficult, she recognized the commission ultimately made a decision she asked them to make. Continuing without a resolution was no longer sustainable for her, her family, staff, or this organization. She further said that she may not agree with every part of this process, and that she had been honest about that, but also knew that leaving the matter open indefinitely was not an option.

She said she had been accused of being a "leak" to the press. She stated that her priority has always been to protect her family from the ugliness that sometimes comes with this job. When something appears in print or online, she can carry the weight of that because it comes with the job, but unfortunately, it does not stop with her. It affects my supportive husband, children, parents, and brother, and because of that, I would never willingly place that burden on them and publicly disclose anything about me. She stated, that for those of you who have suggested it could be her leaking confidential information: it is not. At times, it appeared that the information may have come from executive sessions or private discussions.

She praised the hard work and sacrifices of city employees. She said they are constantly criticized in public, on social media, and under the microscope of a community of more than 31,000 people. She hoped people remembered that when they criticize a city employee, that employee may have given up time with their own family, sacrificed their own health, or their own peace of mind to try and make today a little better for the citizens of Alamogordo.

Acting City Manager Hernandez said that the past seven years have been some of the best years of her professional life. She loved what she did and loved the impact she was able to make. Working for the citizens is truly a gratifying experience. Over the past few months, people from different corners of this community have reached out to thank her and spoken about the progress they have seen in this city.

She thanked the partnerships the city has built with local agencies, community organizations, and Holloman. She said she has heard repeatedly that over the past two years people feel the city has changed for the better. They see more investment, they see progress, and they think Alamogordo is heading in the right direction and stated it gives her peace. She said she can leave knowing that she did what she could by God's grace; and believed the city is a little better today than when she started.

She stated that the Commission's main priorities should be the budget, future planning through ordinances, and then the city manager, in that order. The budget should receive more time and attention because the budget tells the story of where the city is headed. It should never be treated as anything less than one of the most important responsibilities and documents of the commission; without the funding in the appropriate place, nothing else matters. Policy and ordinances should be viewed through the lens of where the city needs to go, not simply what the city has always done. The city needs to increase its tax base; it needs clear direction, modernized ordinances, and consistent planning if it is going to meet the needs of the future.

She said the city manager's role is straightforward in principle but difficult in practice. The city manager is responsible for carrying out priorities, policies, ordinances, and the budget, all adopted by the commission. When those priorities are unclear, inconsistent, or constantly shifting, the city manager becomes a battleground for unresolved policy disagreements. She said in her view, that is one of the reasons why there has been so much city manager turnover in Alamogordo. The issue is whether the Commission as a whole and not individually behind closed doors has provided clear priorities and stable policy direction and the organizational discipline to allow the city manager to execute them. She hoped that this commission gives the budget the attention it deserves, updates the policies and ordinances with the future in mind and not the past, and then selects and supports a city manager who is allowed to carry out the direction, including making hard decisions that will unavoidably upset some people or special interest groups. Change is hard but is vital to the success of Alamogordo.

She concluded with special thanks to many people. Her family who have stood by her, protected, encouraged, and carried her through the hardest parts of this journey. The present and past mayor and commissioners who supported her leadership in good faith. Her directors, managers, and employees, who have carried this organization through uncertainty, criticism, tragedy, transition, and constant change. She said they kept showing up, serving, and doing the work, often without recognition and often under pressure most people will never fully understand. The citizens and community partners who have supported, challenged, and worked alongside her. The city is stronger because of the people who are willing to stay engaged, build partnerships, and believe in Alamogordo's future. It has been an honor of a lifetime to serve my hometown; thank you.

REMARKS AND INQUIRIES BY THE CITY COMMISSION

Mayor Pro-Tem Rardin inquired about maintenance at properties on 15th and Cuba, noting that while weeds were recently cut, they were left in the road. He said he didn't know what our contract was, are we supposed to pick it up. He asked where we were on the LEDA applications. Acting City Manager Hernandez stated that she had not put those properties back on because she did not think she should add them without a lawyer. The applications are still the same. She noted that a third-party review of applications had been suggested by the state, to keep everything out of conflict. If she can get an attorney by the next meeting, she will bring it forward.

Mayor McDonald clarified for the public that the city is in the process of recruiting for a city attorney and assistant city attorney position. If anyone is concerned, that is something that is under the process of our acting city manager and it will be ongoing even after the 30th. Commissioner Hernandez asked Mayor McDonald for clarification because there had been some misconceptions. The city attorney does not work for the Commission; the city attorney works for the city manager. She confirmed it is the city manager.

Mayor McDonald welcomed the new 49th Wing Commander Colonel Michael S Mullins amid the historic transition to air combat command with Chief Scott Piper as the incoming Command Chief. She reminded the citizens about the District 5 city wide cleanup scheduled for July 18, 2026.

Commissioner Robinson shared information regarding a free leadership and reading event for youth ages four to seven at Dudley School on June 27, at no charge.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve the minutes for the Regular Commission Meeting on May 26, 2026. (Rachel Hughs, City Clerk)

Mayor Pro-Tem Rardin requested that Item 2 be pulled for separate discussion.

Commissioner Rardin moved to Approve item 1.

Commissioner Burnett seconded the motion.

Motion Passed with a vote of 7-0-0.

ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

2. Consider, and act upon, Ordinance 1724 for adoption and final publication, an Ordinance repealing Chapter 22, Subdivision Requirements, of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Alamogordo, New Mexico, and adopting updated Subdivision Regulations in Chapter 20, Land Development Code. (Shelley Dowhanik-Baron, Community Development Director, Liz Treat, Planner Bohannon Huston, and) (Roll Call Vote Required)

Community Development Director Dowhanik-Baron presented the second reading of subdivision ordinance changes and addressed the questions the Commission had from the first reading. She explained the impact that performance financial guarantees of 110%, were optional to allow developers to sell lots before infrastructure was complete. The provision in the ordinance provides is assurance to homeowners that the construction of the infrastructure the water to their homes, the sewer the roads the sidewalks will be constructed even if the developer decides to not finish the subdivision. The City is going to be taking over the infrastructure, so we want to make sure that it's constructed correctly it's going to have longevity. She also went over a warranty financial guarantee to protect taxpayers from infrastructure defects. Regarding detention ponds, the city proposed taking ownership but assessing a 3% impact fee on new developments for future maintenance. Under the current ordinance, the developers submit seven copies

of plans which can be costly, under the proposed ordinance they only have to submit one copy plus an electronic copy. She addressed the question that was raised about traffic studies. We looked at that very closely and we agreed we really don't have a lot of traffic jams. We propose that we should have framework in place to address any new traffic impacts that might arise from development growth. and recommend that any new subdivision completes a one-page form. A decision would be made on whether a further traffic impact analysis study would be required. She said they tightened the language from the first reading. They added in the language of the ordinance that a final plat application and fee will be submitted because we are not requiring an upfront subdivision review fee.

Commissioner Pattillo asked if there were any the references where the city reviews the estimated cost of infrastructure improvements for either the technical standards or a part of this ordinance. Community Development Director Dowhanik-Baron stated they are still working on the technical standards and will make a note to include that.

Commissioner Hernandez asked if there was a current fee schedule for the detention basins. Community Development Director Dowhanik-Baron said yes, in the current ordinance the developer shall provide the city a 3% fee to cover any further improvements or long-term maintenance of the subdivision. In the new ordinance, we are proposing that that 3% fee be levied to still provide for that long-term maintenance. Commissioner Hernandez stated that while 3% was not too bad, it would still add to the cost of development and each lot.

Commissioner Pattillo noted that the lack of legal counsel at the meeting was a reason to support tabling the item. Mayor McDonald asked for an example of what the infrastructure maintenance fee would cover. Answer: Shelley Baron stated it was 3% of the installed infrastructure cost and provided an estimate of \$30,000 to \$40,000 per year per pond for maintenance.

Commissioner Pattillo moved to Table for further information.

Commissioner Rardin seconded the motion.

Motion Passed with a vote of 6-1-0. Commissioner Warren Robinson voted nay.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

3. Consider, and act upon, approval of Loan Grant Agreement, and adoption and final publication of Ordinance No. 1725 authorizing the execution and delivery of a loan and subsidy agreement in the total amount of \$3,083,455.00 by and between the City of Alamogordo and the New Mexico Finance Authority. (Evelyn Huff, Finance Director) (Roll Call Vote Required)

Finance Director Huff explained that the Water Trust Board loan totaled \$3,083,455, of which \$1,850,000 was a grant. The city would only be responsible for debt service on the remaining \$1,233,455.

Commissioner Rardin moved to Approve.

Commissioner Hernandez seconded the motion.

Motion Passed with a vote of 7-0-0.

NEW BUSINESS

4. Discussion and clarification on natatorium financing. (Mark Valenzuela, Managing Principal, Bosque Advisors, and Chris Muirhead, Shareholder Modrall Sperling)

Mark Valenzuela presented the transition from Bank of Albuquerque to Flagstar Bank for the natatorium financing. He explained that Bank of Albuquerque mandated the completion of FY24 and FY25 audits before closing, which posed a risk of delaying the project and increasing interest rates. Flagstar Bank offered a 10-year fixed rate of 4.25%

without those audit requirements. The total financing came out to \$12,110,000; the users are about \$110,000 for cost of issuance that's for all the professionals involved, and \$12 million to the pool construction.

Commissioner Pattillo asked who brought up the audit requirement. Mr. Valenzuela stated that Bank of Albuquerque insisted on the audits. Commissioner Pattillo asked when the transaction would close. He answered, by Thursday of this week.

Chris Muirhead explained on the legal side that in terms of the motion that was made at the end of April when we were here for the ordinance. He said the ordinance itself allows for that decision ultimately made by the mayor, the administrative staff manager, and the finance director which is how it played out. In this situation, to allow this delegation really worked to the benefit in exactly how it's supposed to here where in the world is up and down the rates are up and down to give a little bit of lightness of foot to the city to adjust and to adapt as things happen. He said he can definitely say they are on solid legal grounds to close the transaction and we will give a legal opinion that says exactly that. Commissioner Hernandez said that he did not consider the shift in financial institutions to be transparent, as the Commission had directed staff to work with Bank of Albuquerque. Mr. Muirhead stated that the ordinance allowed for the final decision to be delegated to the Mayor and administrative staff to adapt to market conditions and that the city was on solid legal ground.

Commissioner Pattillo asked how likely it was that a lack of audit completion would affect future financial issues. Mr. Muirhead stated that audited financial statements were always relevant to lenders and depended on what a specific credit committee was comfortable with.

Mayor Pro-Tem Rardin asked if the city was prohibited from paying off the debt early in 2026 or 2027. Mr. Valenzuela stated that the city was required to maintain the debt through 2028 before the early call redemption period began.

Commissioner Pattillo asked for the schedule for completing the 2025 audit. Finance Director Huff said the goal was to have the 2025 audit submitted by the end of November and the 2026 audit submitted by February.

The item was for discussion only.

5. Consider, and act upon, appointing a member of the Alamogordo City Commission, and appointing a member of the public who is a resident of Alamogordo, to the Transportation Master Plan Steering Committee. (*Shelley Dowhanik-Baron, Community Development Director*)

Community Development Director Dowhanik-Baron recommended appointing Commissioner Pattillo and resident Pablo Atayde to the committee for a two-year transportation study.

Mayor Pro-Tem Rardin asked if a similar study of roads and pavement had been conducted three or four years ago. Utilities Director Nunnelley stated that a prior study was conducted but the data was useless. Mayor Pro-Tem Rardin asked what the prior study cost and what the current one would cost. Utilities Director Nunnelley stated the prior study was under \$200,000. Public Works Director Vargas stated the new comprehensive plan would cost \$3.8 million in total.

Commissioner Tapley asked if there was a maintenance fee after the study. Public Works Director Vargas stated there was not. Mayor Pro-Tem Rardin asked where the \$3.8 million was coming from. Public Works Director Vargas stated Fund 109. Mayor Pro-Tem Rardin asked where the \$3.8 million was coming from. Public Works Director Vargas stated Fund 109. Mayor Pro-Tem Rardin remarked that \$3.8 million was a lot of roads the city could fix.

Commissioner Pattillo requested to table the item until he could discuss the time commitment with his wife.

Mayor Pro-Tem Rardin moved to Table.

Commissioner Hernandez seconded the motion.

6. Consider, and act upon, Resolution 2026-19, authorizing a conditional commitment of up to \$200,000 in opioid settlement funds for the Alamo City Dream Center project and authorizing the city to serve as fiscal agent. (Sharon McDonald, Mayor, and Anthony Torres, Pastor Mountain View Church) (Roll Call Vote Required)

Commissioner Burnett abstained from the discussion because his wife's business performs bookkeeping for the organization.

Pastor Torres presented plans for a Dream Center to provide homelessness services, including showers, laundry, and a soup kitchen. He noted the building would also function as an emergency shelter during crises.

Mayor McDonald stated that the project involved partnerships with the county and local representatives. Acting City Manager Hernandez said opioid money is to remediate the effects of opioids and this is one of the uses it could be used for. We are not just handing the check over, we are entering into this partnership, giving them the resolution, making sure that the money is available when they are able to complete some of these phases. Mayor McDonald asked for confirmation if the church was going to donate the land. Pastor Torres said yes.

Commissioner Hernandez asked about the property of the apartments to the south. Pastor Torres stated the property stopped at the driveway where the gate was located and would not include the apartments.

Mayor Pro-Tem Rardin asked when the city would kick in the \$200,000. Acting City Manager Hernandez stated the funds would be available once the building was inhabitable.

Commissioner Tapley asked if the money was for building or operational costs. Acting City Manager Hernandez stated it was to help get the project up and running. We are becoming the fiscal. Most of these nonprofits aren't allowed to take the money on their own, it must go through the fiscal agent and that fiscal agent has to agree.

Commissioner Hernandez asked if the contractor provided an idea of the cost for fire alarms, sprinklers, and IT systems. Church staff member Taylor stated it was too early in the project for specific numbers. Commissioner Hernandez noted those items usually represent 25% of total costs. Commissioner Hernandez asked for Chief Kunihiro's thoughts on the project. Chief Kunihiro stated that any facility willing to provide shelter and meals would help keep people off the streets.

Commissioner Pattillo asked for the total figure of opioid settlement funds and how the \$200,000 was determined. Acting City Manager Hernandez stated the city had over \$1 million and that \$200,000 was a starting point to show city support for other funding applications.

Commissioner Robinson moved to Approve.

Commissioner Pattillo seconded the motion.

Motion Passed with a vote of 6-0-1. Commissioner Stephen Burnett abstained from voting.

7. Appointments to Boards and Committees. (Sharon McDonald, Mayor)

The Commission reappointment of Linda Gililand to a second term on the Parks and Recreation Board. Mayor McDonald noted there were no objections.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

8. Motion to Recess into Executive Closed Session pursuant to NMSA 1978, § 10-15-1(H)(2) for the purpose of discussing limited personnel matters (City Manager recruitment) and NMSA 1978, § 10-15-1(H)(7) for discussions subject to the attorney-client privilege pertaining to threatened or pending litigation in which the City is or may become a participant. (Roll Call Vote Required)

Commissioner Robinson moved to Recess to Executive Session at 9:00 PM.
Commissioner Tapley seconded the motion.
Motion Passed with a vote of 7-0-0.

RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION

9. Motion to Reconvene into Open Session and read the statements related to the Executive Closed Session.
(Roll Call Vote Required)

Commissioner Rardin moved to Reconvene to Open Session at 9:55 PM.
Commissioner Burnett seconded the motion.
Motion Passed with a vote of 7-0-0.

10. Action, if any, related to the Executive Closed Session. (Roll Call Vote Required)

Mayor McDonald made the statement that for the item discussing limited personnel matters and city manager recruitment, there is no pending action. For the discussion for the attorney-client privilege pertaining to threatened or pending litigation in which the city is or maybe become a participant, is after Stephanie Hernandez filed a charge of discrimination with the United States Equal Opportunity Commission on January 26, 2026. The parties have successfully resolved all issues raised in the charge pursuant to the parties resolution. Dr. Hernandez will be leaving her employment with the city effective June 30, 2026.

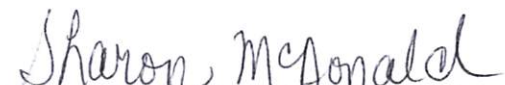
ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Rardin moved to Adjourn at 9:57 PM.
Commissioner Hernandez seconded the motion.
Motion Passed with a vote of 7-0-0.

ATTEST:



City Clerk Rachel Hughs


Mayor Sharon McDonald

(Prepared by Rachel Hughs, City Clerk)
Approved at the Regular Meeting held on June 23, 2026.