

CORTEZ CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION/SPECIAL MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 26, 2026

1. The worksession/special meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.
2. Region 9 Executive Director Laura Lewis Marchino appeared in person, and Deputy Director Shalako Powers, appearing remotely, presented the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and reviewed the organization's work in Montezuma County over the past year. She explained that Region 9 is one of Colorado's 14 planning and management regions, covering five Southwest Colorado counties with a quasi-governmental structure and local representation from each municipality. Cortez generated 91 inquiries to Region 9, ranging from data requests to tax credit questions, and local businesses benefited from gap-financing loans totaling \$320,000 that supported 85 new jobs. Director Marchino noted that Montezuma County is considered a distressed area, making most businesses eligible for assistance, and highlighted Economic Development Specialist Helen West's strong outreach on enterprise zone tax credits. Broadband and housing were major focus areas, with the region securing significant Capital Project Funds and Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment program funding and supporting projects that will eventually create a redundant fiber loop across the county. Housing work included developing automated tools to help municipalities meet new state requirements for recurring housing needs assessments. Region 9 returned roughly a ten-to-one value on Cortez's dues through loans, grants, and tax credit benefits. Director Marchino also described ongoing updates to the five-year regional economic strategy, noting that childcare has emerged as a new priority alongside housing, broadband, and opioid response efforts. She emphasized the importance of local input on priority projects, which are updated every two years and help guide grant funding. Finally, she encouraged continued collaboration, stressing that strong local leadership, stable governance, and foundational investments in infrastructure and placemaking are essential for long-term economic development.

3. Interviews of Applicants for City Boards and Committees

a. Historic Preservation Board Applicants

1. Linda Towle

Linda Towle has over two decades of experience on the Historic Preservation Board and previously worked in prehistoric preservation, including at Mesa Verde. She has helped secure numerous grants, supported major local inventory projects, and is passionate about educating the community during Cortez's 140th anniversary. Ms. Towle emphasized the importance of preserving Cortez's unique architectural history and highlighted several favorite historic buildings that reflect the city's character and resilience.

2. Jennifer Dimond

Jennifer Dimond does not have direct historic preservation experience but wants to volunteer and support community heritage. She views preservation as a way to protect historic buildings and promote economic vitality, and she appreciates the board's educational and grant-related work. Ms. Dimond is still learning Cortez's history but enjoys local architecture, especially the ZU Gallery block.

b. Library Advisory Board Applicant

1. Abdel Berrada

Abdel Berrada has lived in the area since 1993 and is a longtime library user and supporter. He wants to give back by helping expand programs, especially for seniors, and by learning

from other libraries to strengthen local services. Mr. Berrada believes the library's greatest assets are its diverse resources, events, and community-building programs, and he hopes to contribute as both a patron and a new novelist.

c. Planning & Zoning Commission Applicants

1. Richard Landreth

Richard Landreth has prior city experience working as the Director of the Water Department and service on the Parks and Recreation Board, and he sees Planning & Zoning as a natural next step. He views the commission's role as ensuring compliance with the land use code and helping Council make informed decisions. Mr. Landreth emphasized communication, adherence to regulations, and supporting responsible community growth.

d. Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Advisory Board Applicants

1. Neco Escoe - Did not attend.

2. Steven Moore

Steven Moore currently serves on the board and brings landscaping experience and involvement in local trail maintenance. He sees budget limitations as the biggest challenge and believes Cortez's parks are a community treasure worth sustaining and improving. Mr. Moore supports using community input and the master planning process to prioritize meaningful, widely supported improvements.

3. Ernie Padilla - Did not attend.

4. Steven Etter

Steven Etter wants to give back to the community and brings long-term project planning experience from previous municipal involvement. He emphasized the importance of safe, well-maintained parks and making fiscally responsible decisions, including seeking grants when possible. Mr. Etter prioritizes seniors and youth and aims to work collaboratively with staff to support practical, long-term improvements.

5. Alan Klein

Alan Klein has served on the board for eight years and is a strong supporter of Cortez's high-quality parks and recreation programs. With a background in economic and community development, he sees funding and prioritization as the primary challenges. Mr. Klein values structured decision-making tools, such as scoring matrices, and relies on staff leadership to guide data-driven choices.

6. Dave Stamm

Dave Stamm is an active user of local facilities and trails and wants to give back through board service. He identifies outdated policies and red tape as challenges and supports reducing waste and considering user fee adjustments when appropriate. Mr. Stamm brings experience from pickleball, mountain biking, and HOA leadership and hopes to help improve parks through practical, community-focused decision-making.

The worksession/special meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.