

CORTEZ CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2026

1. The meeting was called to order in the City Council Chambers at 7:41 p.m., with the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll Call was taken and the following Councilmembers were present: Mayor Dennis Spruell, Mayor Pro Tem Bill Lewis, April Randle, Carly Wolf, Kathleen Swope, Clarisa Osborn and Claire West. Staff present included: Chief of Police Vernon Knuckles, Parks and Recreation Director Creighton Wright, Finance Director Randy Bailey, Library Director LeRoy Harris, Community and Economic Development Specialist Helen West, Contract City Planner Nancy Dodsall, Deputy Community and Economic Development Director/City Planner Jason Armstrong, Community and Economic Development Director Rachael Marchbanks, Airport Director Kyle Sloan, IT Support Technician Aaron Holleman, Public Works and General Services Director Casey Simpson, Public Works Project Engineer Noah Peterson, Court Administrator/Clerk Carla Odell, City Clerk Danielle Wells, City Manager Drew Sanders and City Attorney Patrick Coleman. There were 8 members of the public present in the audience.

Mayor Pro Tem Lewis moved that Council approve the Agenda as presented for September 22, 2026. Councilmember Wolf seconded the motion and the vote was as follows:

Lewis	Osborn	Randle	Spruell	Swope	West	Wolf
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

2. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approval of the meeting minutes from September 8, 2026.
- b. Approval of the Expenditure List for September 22, 2026.
- c. Approval of a Special Event Permit to allow The Cortez Area Chamber of Commerce to host a Business After Hours event on October 8, 2026, from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., at 20 West Main Street, Cortez.
- d. Approval of a Hotel and Restaurant Liquor License for Loungin' Lizard, located at 2 West Main Street, Cortez.
- e. Approval of a Hotel and Restaurant Liquor License for Mi Mexico Mexican Food LLC, DBA Mi Mexico, located at 801 East Main Street, Cortez.

Councilmember Swope moved that Council approve the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Randle seconded the motion and the vote was as follows:

Lewis	Osborn	Randle	Spruell	Swope	West	Wolf
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Susan Hakanson, Executive Director of the Durango & Cortez Adult Education Center, addressed Council. She noted the Center is in its 39th year serving the five-county region and opened its full-time Cortez location ten years ago. The Center is the region's only provider of in-person high school equivalency (GED) and English as a Second Language

classes for adults, and is among the top-performing centers in Colorado. It also operates in the La Plata County Jail, and offers career counseling. Ms. Hackinson invited Council to an open house on October 8, 2026, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Center's new facility at 640 East 2nd Avenue, and to a literacy luncheon on October 20 in Durango.

Susan Kemnetz, city resident, urged Council to prioritize the needs of residents and infrastructure over tourism, expressing concern that past civic focus had favored visitors.

4. PRESENTATIONS: None

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. New Fermented Malt Beverage and Wine Liquor License for UPOP Holdings LLC, DBA Gopher (Store #49) presented by Danielle Wells, City Clerk.

City Clerk Danielle Wells reported that the application for a new fermented malt beverage and wine liquor license for UPOP Holdings LLC, DBA Gopher (Store #49), located at 2410 Fairway Drive, was submitted on August 14, 2026, and was complete, with all fees and materials in order. The location complies with City zoning, building, and fire codes and is not within 500 feet of a school; the hearing was properly noticed and published on September 9, 2026; the neighborhood was set as the City limits; and the applicants' background investigation returned no issues. Petitions submitted in support included more than 70 signatures in favor, with one opposing signature.

Chief of Police Vernon Knuckles presented the Police Department's report, dated September 15, 2026, stating that a neighborhood poll returned six responses in favor and one against, and that the location complies with Colorado liquor rules and creates no known public safety issues. The applicant's representatives appeared remotely: Adam Stapen, attorney for the applicant; Joseph Lienhop, Chief Operating Officer of UPOP Holdings; and Eva Garretson of Liquor Licensing Professionals. Ms. Garretson testified that surveying was conducted September 15–16, 2026, with 269 contacts and 74 signatures obtained (34 business and 40 residential), all in favor. Mr. Lienhop described the company's operation of convenience stores and fuel locations, its purchase of the Cortez store in March 2026, consistent customer demand for beer and wine, and the company's identification and alcohol-compliance policies. The Mayor opened the public comment portion; no one spoke, and the public comment portion of the hearing was closed.

Councilmember Randle moved that, after considering the reasonable requirements of the neighborhood, the desires of the adult inhabitants, the necessity of any restrictions on the license, the good character of the applicants, and in compliance with all the provisions of Colorado Revised Statutes 44-3-301, Council approve a new Retail Fermented Malt Beverage and Wine Liquor License for UPOP Holdings LLC, DBA Gopher (Store #49) located at 2410 Fairway Drive, Cortez. Councilmember West seconded the motion and the vote was as follows:

Lewis	Osborn	Randle	Spruell	Swope	West	Wolf
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

B. Resolution No. 17, Series 2026 presented by Nancy Dosdall, Contract City Planner.

Planner Dosdall presented a request for a conditional use permit and minor deviation for a carport at 1411 Montelores Avenue in the R-3 zone, which would place the carport at a zero-foot front setback and a 2.5-foot side setback. The carport had been partially constructed after the applicants purchased a kit without realizing permits were required; they stopped work and cooperated once contacted by code enforcement. Staff explained that the adjacent alley is unimproved and dead-ends at a mobile home park, and that conditions of approval include leaving the carport open-sided to preserve visibility. Both staff and the Planning Commission recommended approval, with one dissenting Commission vote. The Mayor called for public comment; none was received.

Councilmember Osborn moved that the Cortez City Council approve Resolution No. 17, Series 2026, a resolution approving a conditional use permit for a carport closer than 10' to the property line and minor deviation for a 2.5' side yard setback on property located at 1411 Montelores Avenue, in the R-3 zone, as submitted by Maria and Ezequiel Avila, with the conditions as stated in the resolution. Councilmember Swope seconded the motion and the vote was as follows:

Lewis	Osborn	Randle	Spruell	Swope	West	Wolf
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

C. Ordinance No. 1376, Series 2026 presented by Helen West, Community & Economic Development Specialist.

Specialist West reviewed the three levels of historic designation — local, state, and national — noting that local designation does not restrict what a property owner may do and that designated properties become eligible for state historic tax credits and grant funding. She presented the Garland Home at 120 East North Street (Colorado site 5MT2033), surveyed in 2012 and built in 1942, as a representative example of working-class infill housing from the City's 1940s oil and uranium boom. The structure, approximately 84 years old, meets the architectural and geographic criteria for designation, and the Historic Preservation Board unanimously recommended approval. The Mayor called for public comment; none was received.

Councilmember Lewis moved that the City Council approve, on second reading, Ordinance No. 1376, Series 2026, an ordinance approving the Garland Home building located at 120 E. North Street for Historic Designation and to include this property on the City Register of Historic Resources. Councilmember Wolf seconded the motion and the vote was as follows:

Lewis	Osborn	Randle	Spruell	Swope	West	Wolf
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

7. NEW BUSINESS

a. Ordinance No. 1377, Series 2026 presented by Helen West, Community & Economic Development Specialist.

Specialist West presented, on first reading, the historic designation of the building at 209 West Main Street, noting it is one of the few commercial buildings to come before Council for designation and that commercial buildings have a higher likelihood of receiving state historic grant funding. The property is owned by Denkai Animal Sanctuary and leased by Fundamental Needs, both nonprofit organizations that may pursue state historic fund grants once designation is complete.

Councilmember Osborn moved that Council approve, on first reading, Ordinance No. 1377, Series 2026, an ordinance approving the building located at 209 West Main Street for Historic Designation and to include this property in the City Register of Historic Resources, and set the ordinance for second reading and a public hearing on October 13, 2026. Councilmember West seconded the motion and the vote was as follows:

Lewis	Osborn	Randle	Spruell	Swope	West	Wolf
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

b. Resolution No. 14, Series 2026 presented by Casey Simpson, Director of Public Works & General Services.

Director Simpson explained that voters approved a charter amendment in 1993 authorizing Council to set procurement benchmarks by resolution, most recently updated in 2001. Because outdated spending limits create procurement inefficiencies, staff proposed updated benchmarks: informal purchases of \$1,000 or less; informal quotes for purchases from \$1,000 to \$10,000; formal quotes for purchases from \$10,000 to \$50,000; and City Council and City Manager approval for anything over \$50,000. The proposed limits are on the low end of current best practices and carry no fiscal impact. Council members agreed the update was appropriate and overdue.

Mayor Pro Tem Lewis moved that City Council approve Resolution No. 14, Series 2026, a resolution that supersedes Resolution No. 34, Series 2001, and amends spending authority limits for the City. Councilmember Wolf seconded the motion and the vote was as follows:

Lewis	Osborn	Randle	Spruell	Swope	West	Wolf
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

c. Resolution No. 16, Series 2026 presented by Casey Simpson, Director of Public Works & General Services.

Director Simpson presented the City of Cortez 2026 Water System Master Plan, summarizing a system that serves approximately 3,784 metered customers, multiple bulk users, and two consecutive systems outside City boundaries, with more than 71 miles of distribution pipe. The plan concludes the City is not facing an immediate crisis but requires proactive work, identifying four guiding priorities: dam safety and the raw water line, treatment capacity, rehabilitation of aging treatment facilities, and systematic renewal of distribution lines. The raw water line, installed in 1986 and not inspected since, is the highest priority, with an inspection estimated at \$500,000 to \$750,000 scheduled for 2027. Forecasted demand may exceed the current firm supply of 2,300 acre-feet per year around 2059, and roughly 11,000 linear feet of pipe were

identified as in the poorest condition. Council discussed staffing and equipment needs over a three-to-five-year horizon, the recent Carpenter-area transmission line break, and the framing of the plan's conclusion regarding the urgency of infrastructure needs.

Councilmember Swope moved that City Council approve Resolution No. 16, Series 2026, a resolution accepting and adopting the City of Cortez 2026 Water System Master Plan as a guiding policy for the City of Cortez. Councilmember Wolf seconded the motion and the vote was as follows:

Lewis	Osborn	Randle	Spruell	Swope	West	Wolf
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

d. Intergovernmental Agreement with Montezuma County concerning 309 North Broadway presented by Danielle Wells, City Clerk.

The City Clerk explained that the property at 309 North Broadway includes a building split between the jurisdictions of Montezuma County and the City of Cortez, which complicates licensing and land use regulation. The proposed intergovernmental agreement, unlike a prior license-specific agreement, would establish the City's authority going forward across multiple license types. Montezuma County approved and signed the agreement earlier that day, and staff recommended the Mayor be authorized to sign on behalf of the City.

Mayor Pro Tem Lewis moved that City Council authorize the Mayor to sign an intergovernmental agreement with Montezuma County establishing the City's authority to regulate and enforce liquor, marijuana, and natural medicine licensing, and other land use matters, on the entirety of the property located at 309 North Broadway, Cortez. Councilmember Wolf seconded the motion and the vote was as follows:

Lewis	Osborn	Randle	Spruell	Swope	West	Wolf
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

e. New Application for a Tavern Liquor License presented by Danielle Wells, City Clerk.

Ms. Wells reported that Junction Enterprises LLC, DBA The Junction, filed an application on August 17, 2026, for a new tavern liquor license at 309 North Broadway. State regulations require Council to set a public hearing no less than 30 days from the application date and to establish neighborhood boundaries. Staff requested that the hearing be set for the next meeting.

Councilmember Osborn moved that City Council set a Public Hearing date of Tuesday, October 13, 2026, for review of a new Tavern Liquor License for Junction Enterprises LLC, DBA The Junction, and set the neighborhood boundaries as the Cortez City limits. Councilmember Randle seconded the motion and the vote was as follows:

Lewis	Osborn	Randle	Spruell	Swope	West	Wolf
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

8. DRAFT RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES: None

9. CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT: None

10. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

City Manager Drew Sanders reported that he has been working on the FY2027 budget.

11. CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS**a. Mayor's Report on Workshop**

Council heard from Parks and Recreation Director Creighton Wright regarding a green ash beetle infestation and the contract arborist's plan to address it. Council also went into executive session regarding contract negotiations concerning Municipal Judge Padilla's professional services contract and a fiber express line issue.

b. Other Board Reports

- i. Parks and Recreation Advisory Board met on September 17, 2026, and is focused on its master plan, which anticipates a capital need exceeding \$23 million over the next ten years; they encouraged community involvement in the upcoming listening sessions.
- ii. The Golf Advisory Committee met on Friday, September 11, 2026. Rounds of golf are still above last year's numbers. MVI irrigation water was shut off August 31, 2026, though favorable weather has limited potable water use. The women's club championship was held the prior weekend, with the men's senior open and other tournaments upcoming.
- iii. The Airport Advisory Committee's meeting was rescheduled to Thursday, September 24.
- iv. The Library Advisory Board reported more than 6,000 patron visits in August, a range of programming for all ages, new community partnerships, a switch of its e-library service to Hoopla, receipt of an Onward endowment grant, volunteer hours already exceeding 2025 totals, and a recent hiring.

12. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None

13. OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS: None

14. The meeting was adjourned at 9:19 p.m.

Dennis Spruell, Mayor

ATTEST:

Danielle Wells, City Clerk