

MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL CITIZEN'S FORUM
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF YUMA, ARIZONA
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS - YUMA CITY HALL
ONE CITY PLAZA, YUMA, ARIZONA
May 14, 2019
5:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Nicholls called the City Council Citizen's Forum to order at 5:30 p.m.

Councilmembers Present: Shelton, Watts, Thomas, Knight, McClendon, Miller, and Mayor Nicholls
Councilmembers Absent: None
Staffmembers Present: Interim City Administrator, John D. Simonton
Various department heads or their representatives
City Attorney, Richard W. Files
City Clerk, Lynda Bushong

I. GOWAN SCIENCE ACADEMY – SUICIDE PREVENTION

Mrs. Jamie Haines, Principal of Gowan Science Academy (GSA), stated that GSA has been focusing on community projects for the last two years and basing those community projects on the Sustainable Development Goals. **Haines** credited teachers Mrs. Jenny Kaste and Ms. Holly Mecher (Teachers) as the true masterminds and the ones guiding GSA's young people. **Haines** then turned it over to the fifth graders for their presentation to City Council.

Fifth graders Brody, Keegan, Carter, Weston, Blaine, Ethan and Tyler (the students) introduced themselves and stated their community project, chosen from the Sustainable Development Goals, focused on goal three which is Good Health and Wellbeing. The students stated they wanted to tackle an issue that will make an impact in our community as well as the bigger world – suicide prevention – and shared the following information about their project:

- Arizona's suicide rate is 60% higher than the nation's.
 - This may be due to the absence of suicide policies and programs in Arizona that are currently in place elsewhere.
- Encouraging the Arizona State Legislature to establish these suicide prevention programs was necessary because the problem is too big for our community to try to handle alone.
- Yuma has many local campaigns and organizations that help with suicide prevention such as the *Yellow Ribbon Campaign* and the military base has active programs for veterans who struggle with mental illness. Yuma's *Miss Yuma County* pageant had many participants with a platform focusing on suicide prevention and the Regional Center for Border Health has a suicide squad to help identify *at-risk* people.
- These local resources prove that Yuma has a great need for services but not all communities are as lucky and not everyone is able to find these resources.
- State-level action for our communities and adequate training is still needed.
- In February the students traveled to Phoenix to meet with the State Legislature and Representative Charlene Fernandez to express their concerns.

- The students got to tour the Capitol Museum and the House Floor and learned how policy is made in the State of Arizona.
- One of the measures the students were urging legislators to consider was requiring school staff to have training and education about recognizing the signs of potential suicide and how to respond to individuals that may be showing these signs.
- The students stated it was very empowering to learn how to advocate for policies that affect the good health and wellbeing of all individuals in our state and community through research and discussing the ideas with others.
- This month Governor Ducey signed the Mitch Warnock Act which will require school employees grade 6-12 to receive training on suicide prevention once every three years.
- Seeing how their voices can make a difference was powerful and the policy creating educational training opportunities is going to help save lives.
- The power of collaboration and working together as a team to solve a real problem in our state was amazing.

Mayor Nicholls commended the students for getting involved in something that is extremely difficult even for adults to want to talk about and thanked them for the good work.

Discussion:

- Some signs of suicide include depression and using the words “the world would be better without me”. (**Thomas/Student**)
- It was a great subject and a very serious subject. They are an amazing group of boys and they represent an amazing group of fifth graders. (**Shelton/Watts/Teacher**)
- An all-girls group advocating for the increase in the smoking age from 18 to 21 also presented to Representative Fernandez as well as a group speaking about bullying. (**Watts/Teacher**)
- Thanks to Gowan and the Crane School District for allowing the students to venture out and go to the State Capitol. (**Miller**)
- Congratulations to the parents for the outstanding job they are doing with these young students. (**Thomas**)
- Talking about this subject brings life to the discussion and is the biggest contribution given to the community through this effort. (**Mayor Nicholls**)

II. ADJOURNMENT/EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion (Knight/Thomas): To adjourn the meeting into Executive Session. Voice vote: **approved** 7-0. The meeting adjourned at 5:43 p.m.

APPROVED:

Lynda L. Bushong, City Clerk

Douglas J. Nicholls, Mayor