

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
December 19, 2017
5:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Nicholls called the City Council Citizen's Forum to order at 5:31 p.m.

Councilmembers Present: Shelton, Miller, Knight, Thomas, Craft, and Mayor Nicholls
Councilmembers Absent: Wright
Staffmembers Present: City Administrator, Gregory K. Wilkinson
Various department heads or their representatives
City Attorney, Richard W. Files
City Clerk, Lynda Bushong

I. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

Norma Nelson, President of the Yuma Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), discussed her concerns regarding the lack of diversity with regard to the use of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Neighborhood Center (MLK Center). She stated that the residents of the Carver Park neighborhood were led to believe that the MLK Center would serve as a community center where residents of the neighborhood could play basketball and access substance abuse counseling as well as other services and resources. If more activities were available to area residents it would promote a sense of belonging and a sense of responsibility in that area and would end criminal activity such as drive-by shootings and theft.

Shelton asked what Nelson would like to see done. **Nelson** stated that she would like to see the MLK Center utilized by the whole community rather than just one segment. There should be activities there that the building was designed to accommodate.

Mayor Nicholls asked how the building is currently being used. **Patricia Ray**, Interim Executive Director of the Yuma Private Industry Council (YPIC), explained that YPIC has a lease with the City to provide services at the MLK Center. Currently it is being utilized as a career center for youth ages 16-24 where they can attend workshops, receive assistance with resume preparation and job placement, and attend financial counseling. YPIC also rents out space to the Yuma Neighborhood Development Organization and Job Corps. **Mayor Nicholls** asked if counseling is provided or if the services are more job focused. **Ray** stated that the focus is mainly on job training, but they do refer people out to various services if needed. The MLK Center is also open during the summer where free breakfast and lunch is provided through the school district, and tax preparation is also offered. Additionally, the MLK Center is available to rent and is used by a variety of organizations.

Knight asked if the basketball court is still available for use. **Ray** stated that there was no basketball court when YPIC moved into the building. **Nelson** stated that originally there was a basketball court located there. Also, when the black community asked to use the facility for religious purposes they were told that it was not going to be utilized for that purpose, but now there is a church meeting there

every Sunday. **Mayor Nicholls** asked how long ago that request was made. **Nelson** stated that it was sometime between 2001 and 2003. She added that recently there have been residents of the Carver neighborhood who asked to utilize the services available at the center who were turned away. **Mayor Nicholls** asked if any of those people were present. **Nelson** stated that her brother, Morris, is present. **Morris** stated that an acquaintance wanted to use a computer to submit his resume for a job opportunity and was refused.

Shelton noted that it seems the use of the facility for its original purpose has slipped away and asked that YPIC work with the NAACP to come to a resolution that everyone can agree with. **Mayor Nicholls** asked if Nelson would be amenable to Neighborhood Services facilitating a meeting between the parties. **Nelson** stated that she would.

Thomas asked if YPIC leases the entire building. **Ray** confirmed that is correct, adding that YPIC is responsible for all maintenance and upkeep of the building. **Thomas** asked Ray if she had any knowledge of YPIC turning away anyone seeking to use their services. **Ray** stated she did not. **Mayor Nicholls** suggested that this issue would be better addressed at the future meeting. **Thomas** asked if resume services are offered at the MLK Center. **Ray** confirmed that they are, and computers are available for use by job seekers. While they primarily serve youth, if an adult aged 25 or older needs assistance they will be provided with services in addition to being made aware of Arizona at Work located on 16th Street which is more geared towards the employment of adults. **Thomas** stated that his concern is to ensure that all ethnicities within Yuma can utilize the services offered at the MLK Center. **Ray** stated that they actively recruit in all areas of Yuma County. **Thomas** asked if there is a cost to utilize the MLK Center. **Ray** stated that it depends on the organization and the event. If it is something that is being provided free to the whole community, the organization will be allowed to use the facility for free. There are different rates for government agencies or private nonprofit groups and other groups. She noted that they are utilizing the same rate structure that the City established for renting the multipurpose room.

II. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion (Knight/Thomas): To adjourn the meeting into Executive Session. Voice vote: **approved** 6-0. The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Lynda L. Bushong, City Clerk

APPROVED:

Douglas J. Nicholls, Mayor