

MINUTES
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF YUMA, ARIZONA
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS - YUMA CITY HALL
ONE CITY PLAZA, YUMA, ARIZONA
November 4, 2025
5:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Nicholls called the Regular City Council Worksession to order at 5:31 p.m.

Councilmembers Present: Martinez, Morris, McClendon, Smith, Morales, Watts, and Mayor Nicholls
Councilmembers Absent: None
Staffmembers Present: Acting City Administrator, John D. Simonton
Human Resources Manager, Adrian Aranda
Assistant Information Technology Director, Jason Smith
Director of Finance, Douglas Allen
Director of Engineering, David Wostenberg
Director of Parks and Recreation, Eric Urfer
Director of Community Development, Alyssa Linville
Various department heads or their representatives
City Attorney, Richard W. Files
Deputy City Clerk, Janet L. Pierson

I. HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Aranda presented the Human Resources Department (HR) Updated as follows:

- Citywide Turnover
 - HR achieved its Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 turnover goal, ending at 8.9%, which is below the target of 10%.
 - This improvement reflects ongoing efforts to become an employer of choice, including better pay and retention strategies.
 - Of the full-time employees who left, nearly 25% retired, contributing over 480 years of combined service, with an average tenure of 23 years.
 - Exit interviews are offered to all departing employees to understand their reasons for leaving.
 - Among those who participated, key reasons included dissatisfaction with supervisors, work conditions, and organizational culture, while others cited family or relocation.
 - HR reviews this feedback and escalates concerns to department heads, sometimes leading to investigations when warranted.
- Recruitment Statistics
 - HR initiated 153 recruitments in FY25, receiving over 7,200 applications and processing 354 hires and promotions.
 - The average time to hire was 56 days, staying below the 60-day goal, though timelines varied by position type.

- Seasonal roles were quicker, while Police and Fire Department recruitments took longer due to additional testing and background checks.
- Workers' Compensation Statistics
 - 125 work-related injuries were reported – 10 fewer than the previous year.

Department	Total Injuries
Building Safety/Facilities	9
Finance	1
Fire	26
ITS	1
P&R	18
PW	6
Police	52
Utilities	12
Fiscal Year 2025	125

- Injuries often involved multiple body parts, especially in departments like Fire and Police due to the physical nature of their duties.
- FY25 saw just over \$740,000 in expenditures, 327 days of no-work status, and 2,548 light-duty days.
- HR mitigates risks through monthly injury reports to department heads and quarterly reviews with high-injury departments like YPD and YFD to address trends and reduce future incidents.
- Mentoring Program
 - The City launched a new nine-month mentoring program on July 1, which is set to conclude in March of 2026.
 - The program is designed to run annually on an ongoing basis.
 - The program includes 13 mentors and 16 mentees, with some mentors supporting more than one mentee.
 - Participants receive formal training and meet regularly.
 - Feedback from mentees has been positive, with participants expressing enthusiasm about their involvement.
- Lifestyle Spending Account
 - HR is proposing a Lifestyle Spending Account (LSA) to replace the current leave buy-back program.
 - LSA programs have been adopted by other cities, and locally Onvida Health has a similar program in place.
 - This post-tax benefit would allow full-time employees up to \$750 and part-time employees up to \$375 annually for eligible reimbursable expenses.
 - Covered categories include:
 - Health and Wellness – gym memberships, personal trainers, fitness classes, fitness equipment and accessories, entry fees –
 - Mental Wellbeing – therapy, meditation apps, stress management classes

- Professional Development – conferences, courses, certifications, books
- Lifestyle Support – childcare, pet care, home office equipment, national park passes, camping essentials
- Financial Wellbeing – financial planning, estate planning, tax preparation, identity theft protection
- Reimbursements are taxable, and the program follows a use-it-or-lose-it model, resetting each fiscal year.
- A draft policy has been prepared and will be disseminated to employees upon implementation.

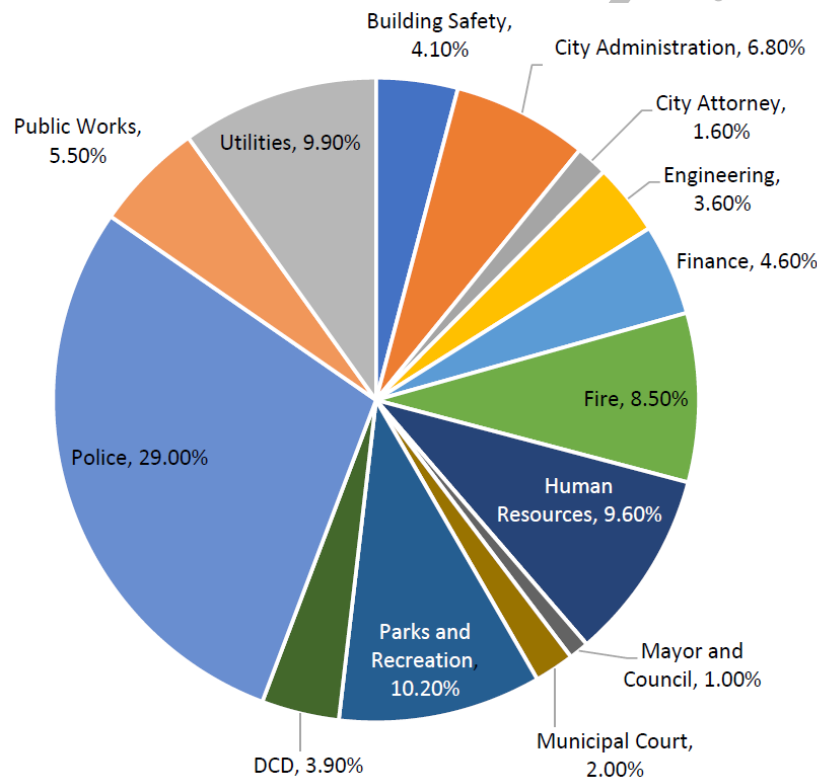
Discussion

- While the buy-back program had less than one-third employee participation due to eligibility restrictions (e.g., required leave balances and usage), the LSA is expected to reach a broader group of employees. The projected cost of the LSA is comparable to the buy-back program – around \$750,000 – but actual expenses may be lower since not all employees are likely to submit for reimbursement. The LSA offers more flexibility and accessibility, allowing employees to use funds for a wide range of wellness, professional, and personal expenses. **(Mayor Nicholls/Aranda/Simonton)**
- When employees leave the City, exit interviews indicate many move to other government sectors – federal, state, or local – with better pay often being a factor. While not all departing employees participate, those who do generally feel comfortable sharing honest feedback **(Martinez/Aranda)**
- The second phase of the most recent Labor Market Study pay adjustment will be implemented in January 2026, with a mid-term review planned for 2027. The City aims to conduct full-scale studies, which include reviewing job descriptions, every four to five years and smaller reviews every two years. Regular cost-of-living and merit adjustments help maintain competitiveness, and while some roles may still lag behind, overall compensation is more aligned with the market than in previous years. **(Mayor Nicholls/Martinez/Aranda/Simonton)**
- The leave buy-back program had eligibility restrictions that excluded many employees, such as newer hires or those who had used their leave for family needs. The LSA will allow all employees to participate, helping them feel valued and supported. While the financial benefit may not fully cover expenses like child care, it still provides meaningful support. The program is seen as a strategic step toward broader employee well-being, and feedback from similar programs, like Onvida Health's, has been very positive. **(Smith/Aranda/Simonton)**
- The LSA reimbursement process is expected to be simple and user-friendly. The City plans to work with WEX, the current COBRA administrator, to implement the system. If it mirrors the existing Flexible Spending Account or Health Savings Account processes, employees will typically just need to submit a valid receipt for eligible expenses – keeping paperwork to a minimum. **(Watts/Aranda)**
- The City's commitment to following up with employees who leave for negative reasons is appreciated. While it is impossible to satisfy everyone in a large organization, it takes courage for employees to be honest, and it is commendable that the City fosters an environment where that honesty is welcomed. The City's proactive approach to addressing concerns aligns with its mission to be a preferred employer and demonstrates a genuine commitment to continuous improvement. **(Morales/Aranda)**

II. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Smith presented the following Information Technology Department (IT) Update:

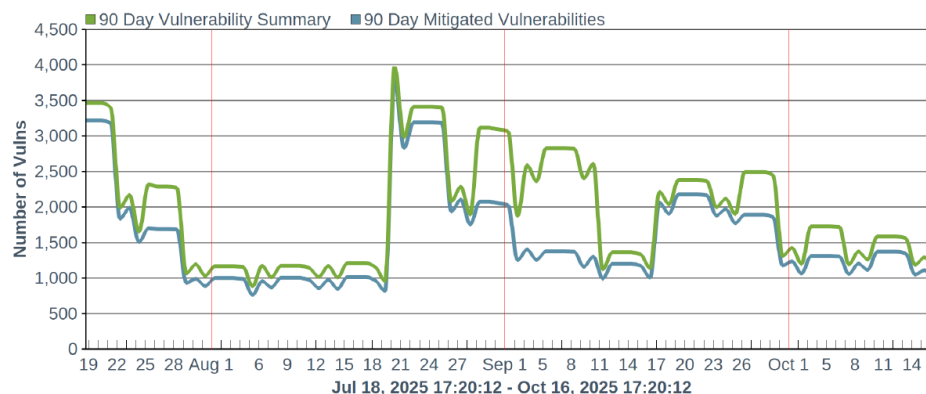
- Organizational Structure
 - IT consists of three divisions:
 - End User Support
 - IT Operations
 - Yuma Regional Communications System (YRCS)
- Tickets by Department and Satisfaction
 - Larger departments like Police, Fire, and Parks & Recreation account for the highest volumes – consistent with their size.
 - The satisfaction score was outstanding, with a 99%+ satisfaction rate based on nearly 600 responses, highlighting the excellent performance of the internal support team.



- Tickets Created and Devices
 - Between FY24 and FY25, the City's device count increased by about 1,000, while the support ticket volume decreased by nearly 1,000.
 - This improvement illustrates the successful implementation of efficient workflows and stable systems, allowing IT to support more users and devices with fewer issues.
 - It reflects positively on the team's proactive approach to system reliability and user experience.
- Service Uptime/Availability Overview
 - The City's network maintained over 99% uptime throughout the year, despite challenges like severe storms in September.

- While some components of the network experienced occasional issues, the overall service to end users remained uninterrupted thanks to redundant systems, dual data centers, and backup power solutions.
- Notably, even with nearly 60 hours of potential downtime, these infrastructure investments helped prevent noticeable service disruptions, effectively preserving productivity across departments.
- Deployment of New Services
 - Over the past year, IT deployed several new services, most notably OpenGov, an asset management solution.
 - Phase One was completed in late spring in collaboration with departments like Public Works and Parks and Recreation, and Phase Two is now underway with Facilities and Utilities.
 - Additionally, IT partnered with HR and Facilities Maintenance to streamline the employee onboarding process, ensuring new hires are equipped and ready to work from day one.
 - IT also successfully completed a Windows 11 deployment across the organization.
- Microsoft 365 Copilot
 - IT recently rolled out Microsoft 365 Copilot, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) agent integrated into the Microsoft ecosystem.
 - Since its release, usage has steadily grown, peaking at 223 users in a single day last month.
 - The City is actively exploring ways to support safe and secure AI adoption, recognizing its potential to improve staff efficiency.
 - The IT team is working to ensure that employees can benefit from AI tools like Copilot without compromising data security or operational integrity.
- Vulnerability Management
 - The City uses automated patching solutions to manage cybersecurity vulnerabilities.
 - Published vulnerabilities represent known issues identified by vendors, while discovered vulnerabilities are those that specifically affect the City's systems.
 - The City has maintained strong performance in this area, remediating most vulnerabilities almost immediately after they are published, as shown by the close alignment between the number of discovered and resolved issues.
 - Occasional dips, such as during September's power outages, were quickly corrected once systems came back online, demonstrating the effectiveness of the City's automated processes and patching infrastructure.

90 Day Vulnerability vs Mitigated Vulnerability



- Looking Ahead
 - IT is focused on enhancing the end-user experience and driving process improvements.
 - A new document management and retention system – developed in collaboration with the City Clerk’s Office – is set to go live imminently.
 - The City is also expanding its AI adoption, including the rollout of Microsoft 365 Copilot and ongoing discussions with OpenAI and other vendors to explore secure AI tools tailored for government use.
 - Efforts are also underway to improve the multi-factor authentication experience, aiming to make logins more seamless.
 - Additionally, an IT Liaison Program was launched, assigning representatives from each department to ensure IT solutions align with unique departmental needs.
 - These liaisons also play a key role in cyber resilience planning, helping to identify critical systems and shape effective incident response strategies to maintain service continuity during cyber events.

Discussion

- Cities vary in their adoption of AI – some are cautious, while others are fully embracing tools like ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot. The City is exploring AI solutions tailored for government use and is engaging with vendors to ensure secure deployment. Key safeguards include staff education, approved usage policies, and technical controls like data loss prevention systems that flag sensitive information. These measures aim to balance the benefits of AI with strong security and responsible use. **(Morris/Smith)**

III. REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA OF NOVEMBER 5, 2025

Motion Consent Agenda Item C.7 – Cooperative Purchase Agreement: Fire Service Apparatus (purchase one Pierce Velocity PUC Pumper at a cost of \$1,431,037.83 from Hughes Fire Equipment, Inc. / Pierce Manufacturing, Inc.) (CPA-26-126) (YFD)

Discussion

- The funds for the purchase are not being paid upfront. Instead, a purchase order is issued, and the funds are set aside and invested until the product is delivered. This approach ensures the money is available when needed, without impacting the expenditure limitation until the item arrives. The budget will include this item each year until delivery, and the final purchase may return to City Council for approval when the equipment is ready for use. **(Morris/Allen)**

Motion Consent Agenda Item C.8 – Contract Increase: Construction Management Services for Desert Dunes Water Reclamation Facility Capacity Increase (execute Change Order No. 1 with Consultant Engineering Inc. in the amount of \$1,727,603.20, for a total cost not to exceed \$4,346,471.20) (RFQ-22-201) (Eng)

Jeff Kramer of Consultant Engineering Inc. was present to provide additional explanation and clarification.

Discussion

- The construction management contract for the Desert Dunes expansion project is increasing due to a significant extension in the project timeline. Originally planned for 35 months, the project now spans 63 months. This change stems from a longer-than-expected pre-construction phase, delays in contractor startup and submittals, and an extended construction period (from 18 to 27 months). As a result, the scope and duration of work expanded well beyond the initial estimate. **(Morris/Wostenberg/Kramer)**
 - Hourly rates were increased by 6%, down from an initially proposed 8%, based on Consumer Price Index data. This reduction was the result of negotiations with Engineering Department staff. While early project completion is a hopeful outcome, the current schedule shows key activities are behind, making that unlikely. **(Mayor Nicholls/Morales/Kramer)**
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Motion Consent Agenda Item C.9 – Contract Increase: East Mesa Community Park, Phase 1 – Bid Alternates (contract increase with Gutierrez Canales Engineering, PC, for additional bid alternatives from bond and donation funding in the amount of \$3,018,556.03, for a total expenditure of \$20,971,593.72) (RFQ-23-258) (Eng/Parks and Rec)

Discussion

- City staff will prepare a detailed breakdown of the project phases, including what was originally planned, what has been added through the current change order, and what remains. This will help clarify what has been funded and what is still pending, especially regarding features like splash pads, soccer fields, and pickleball courts. **(Mayor Nicholls/Morales/Simonton)**
 - The contractor honored original bid alternate pricing from two years ago, allowing several features to be added without increasing the overall budget. This was a major win, supported by over \$800,000 in community donations and sponsorships, including contributions from Onvida Health and the Jones Trust Fund. **(Mayor Nicholls/Morales/Simonton)**
 - The original project budget was \$17 million, with \$3 million in bid alternates not initially funded. These alternates were fully designed and bid in advance, allowing them to be added as funding became available. Updated cost estimates will be needed for Phase 2, as the original figures are now outdated. **(Martinez/Simonton/Urfer)**
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Resolution R2025-099 - Order Improvements: Municipal Improvement District No. 129 Desert Ridge Townhomes (to provide long-term maintenance for subdivision landscaping resulting in an appealing environment) (Comm Dev/Comm Plng)

Morris declared a conflict of interest on Resolution R2025-099 due to his firm being involved in the design of the project.

Ordinance O2025-038 – Text Amendment: Industrial Zoning Districts (update development regulations and allowable uses within the Light Industrial (L-I) and Heavy Industrial (H-I) Zoning Districts) (Comm Dev/Comm Plng)

Discussion

- The proposed text amendment would add additional uses within the Light Industrial District. It would also remove certain public hearing requirements for other uses, making it easier to develop certain industrial developments. **(Martinez/Linville)**
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Ordinance O2025-044 – Lease: Elevate Southwest (two-year lease with an additional three-year option with Yuma Multiversity Campus Corporation, DBA Elevate Southwest, for City-owned property located at 2450 South Madison Avenue) (City Admin)

Discussion

- The building had previously been used as a radio shop and was later considered for sale, but due to potential future use by the Fire Department, the City decided to retain it. Elevate Southwest approached the City with an urgent need for temporary space, and the arrangement was made. The City will consider establishing a more transparent and public process for offering City-owned spaces to nonprofits in the future. **(Morales/Simonton)**
 - The decision was based on timing and availability. While the arrangement was not publicly advertised, it was briefed at a previous meeting and direction was given to move forward. **(Martinez/Simonton)**
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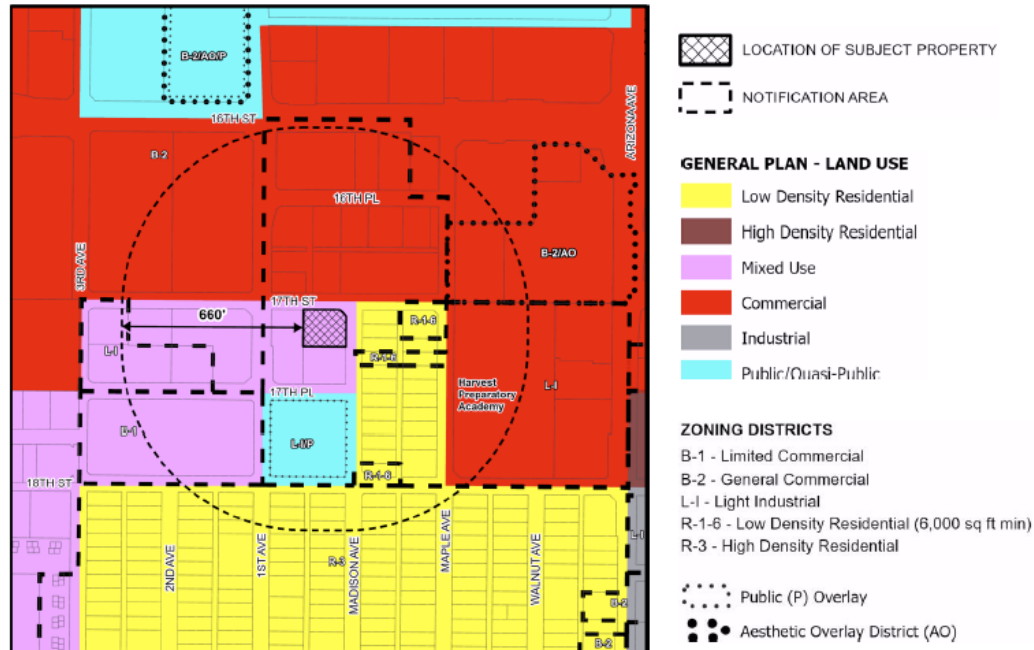
Resolution R2025-100 – Minor General Plan Amendment: Southwest Corner of 17th Street and Madison Avenue (change the land use designation of approximately 0.48 acres from Mixed Use to High Density Residential) (Comm Dev/Comm Plng)

Morris declared a conflict of interest on Resolution R2025-100 and left the dais.

Discussion

- Concerns were raised at the Pre-Development Meeting about the proposed 12-unit development, particularly regarding landscaping, open space, parking, and the placement of trash enclosures. A site plan is not yet available, as it is not required at the General Plan Amendment stage. However, the developer will eventually need to meet all City requirements for parking, setbacks, landscaping, and trash facilities during the development phase. **(Morales/Linville)**
- It is unlikely that 12 units will fit on the site while meeting all requirements. A more realistic number might be between eight and 11 units, depending on the final design. The developer is considering a two-story layout, which could help with density. **(Morales/Linville)**
- Regarding nearby businesses, some industrial uses within 600 feet of residential areas would now require a Conditional Use Permit (CUP), though existing businesses like AMCO Transmission were established before this requirement. The gym located adjacent to the property, for example, did require a CUP. **(Morales/Linville)**

- Historically, the site has been mostly undeveloped, previously used for vehicle storage by AMCO. While the current zoning is Light Industrial – allowing uses like warehousing, equipment repair, and exercise facilities – such uses are trending toward larger parcels, making this site less attractive for new industrial development. The General Plan anticipates a shift away from industrial use in this area. **(Morales/Linville)**
- The existing businesses near the proposed development site would not be negatively impacted by the new construction. They would not need to obtain any new approvals to continue operating. However, if they wanted to expand, they might already be subject to certain requirements due to their proximity to residential areas – requirements that exist regardless of whether the zoning changes. The rezoning itself does not introduce new restrictions on their current operations. **(Mayor Nicholls/Linville)**
- Concerns were raised about potential noise complaints from future residents due to the nearby gym, which operates as early as 5 a.m. and is not fully enclosed. While noise disclosures could be included in lease agreements to inform tenants of existing conditions, such disclosures would not prevent residents from filing complaints. However, enforcing noise ordinances is difficult. The gym and other nearby operations are already established, and tenants would be made aware of these conditions before moving in. **(Watts/Linville/Files)**
- The City would require a noise disclosure to be signed by the property owner, who would then typically include that disclosure in lease agreements with tenants. This disclosure would be separate from the standard city-wide notice about general community noise (like jets or industrial activity). It would specifically address local noise concerns, such as those from nearby businesses like the gym. **(Mayor Nicholls/Linville)**
- Regarding potential legal challenges related to Proposition 312 – such as lawsuits or claims for property tax reimbursement – it appears that renters may not be eligible to file such claims, since the law seems to apply specifically to property owners who pay taxes, not tenants. However, the City Attorney is continuing to research the matter for further clarification. **(Mayor Nicholls/Smith/Files)**
- There are challenges and trade-offs with infill development. While it can be messy, it aligns with the City’s goals of promoting mixed-use areas. The site is convenient, located close to amenities like gyms, parks, and transit. Property owners’ rights to develop land for much-needed housing also need to be considered, especially given the City’s significant housing shortage and the potential to help meet urgent housing demand. **(Mayor Nicholls)**
- High-density development on the proposed site could result in a disjointed or “puzzle-like” appearance within the community. A lower-density option, such as duplexes like those seen at Third Street and Avenue A, might better balance the need for housing with neighborhood aesthetics. The zoning may need to be reconsidered to allow for a more cohesive outcome. **(McClendon)**
- The map below shows land use designations rather than current zoning. The pink areas represent Mixed Use, even though they may currently be zoned as Light Industrial – indicating the City’s intent to eventually phase out industrial uses in favor of mixed-use development. The yellow areas are designated for Low Density Residential use, while the zoning south of 18th Street is already High Density Residential. While the area appears mixed, there is a significant presence of high-density zoning nearby, supporting the idea that increased residential density in this location aligns with broader planning goals. **(Mayor Nicholls/Smith/Linville)**



Morris returned to the dais.

Public Hearing – Annexation Area No. ANEX-44331-2025 Cha Cha, LLC (approximately 65.86 acres located west of the southwest corner of 40th Street and Avenue 4½E) (Comm Dev/Comm Plng)

Discussion

- The owners are seeking annexation in order to access City services and proceed with development. The property is being actively marketed, but it is not yet designated for a specific buyer or project. This annexation is part of a broader effort to prepare the site for future development under City jurisdiction. **(Martinez/Linville)**

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION/ADJOURNMENT

Motion (Morales/Smith): To adjourn the meeting to Executive Session. Voice vote: **approved** 7-0. The meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

APPROVED:

Lynda L. Bushong, City Clerk

Douglas J. Nicholls, Mayor

Approved at the City Council Meeting of:

City Clerk: _____