

MINUTES
SPECIAL WORKSESSION/LEGISLATIVE DAY
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF YUMA, ARIZONA
ARIZONA STATE CAPITOL BUILDING
1700 W. WASHINGTON, PHOENIX, ARIZONA
March 5, 2024
8:00 a.m.

Councilmembers Present: Knight, Morales, Morris, Smith and Mayor Nicholls
Councilmembers Absent: Shoop and Shelton
Staffmembers Present: Acting City Administrator, Jay Simonton
Deputy City Administrator, Jenn Reichelt
Deputy City Attorney, Rodney Short

I. MEETINGS

- State Minority Leader Mitzi Epstein, Senate Minority Whip Lela Alston and Senator Brian Fernandez
 - Discussed agenda items
- Lunch with Yuma Delegation at the League of Arizona Cities and Towns that included Representative Tim Dunn, Representative Mariana Sandoval, and Senator Brian Fernandez discussing Agenda items and HCR2023/SCR1006 Public Nuisance bill as it applies to Yuma
- Introduction of City Council and staff were made on Senate Floor by Senator Sine Kerr and Senator Brian Fernandez with Senator T.J. Shope presiding over the Senate
- House Minority Leader Lupe Contreras, House Minority Whip Melody Hernandez, and House Minority Chief of Staff Lizzette Flores
 - Agenda items discussed
- Arizona Department of Transportation: Director Jennifer Toth and ADOT staff
 - Discussed agenda items related to roads and transportation
- Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs: Brig General John A. Conley, Col. Denise K. Sweeney, Lt. Col. Judd Douglas, Director of Emergency Services Gabriel Lavine, and Government Affairs Israel Kiyogera
 - Discussed agenda items related to border, infrastructure, military, and public safety

Discussion summary:

Housing

The City of Yuma has been successful in developing and implementing innovative policies, programs, and processes which encourage development and address the critical issue of housing in our community.

The City not only provides applicants with outstanding customer service, expedited timelines, and free predevelopment meetings, it offers a one-stop-shop intended to streamline the development process from beginning to end. In addition, the City has implemented at-risk permitting and a self-inspection program.

The Council has adopted several policies, which encourage housing development such as allowing for accessory dwelling units, increased densities, company housing (specifically for agricultural H2-A

workers), modified standards (i.e., parking requirements, setbacks, lot coverage, etc.), and an Infill Overlay District.

The housing successes above happen because the City can implement the City Council's policy direction as well as listen to ideas and feedback from the community. This does not happen when local councils are preempted into a one-size-fits-every-community regulation by the legislature. We urge our elected officials to allow cities and towns to retain the tools necessary to meet their community's needs and provide quality services without preemption.

Innovation District

The City is developing an Innovation District to provide opportunities for research, higher education, and unique quality of life prospects. An early action item is a public/private partnership to build an Innovation Hub in Historic Downtown Yuma for STEM related activities. Yuma's only multinational headquartered company is interested in being the primary tenant of the 30,000-40,000 square foot Innovation Hub. We encourage our legislators to support policies, funding, and programs that promote STEM research and development, which will help prepare communities like Yuma for cutting-edge industries and careers of the future.

Water Insecurity

The City of Yuma is dependent on the Colorado River for almost all its domestic water needs. Yuma's agricultural industry is a \$4 billion-plus industry that provides more than 90% of the leafy vegetables consumed in the United States and Canada during the winter months. It also represents 70% of the total Yuma economy. Longstanding water entitlements are being marketed that could have a drastic impact on existing communities along the river and food insecurity for the state and nation. We urge our elected officials to support existing Colorado River water entitlements and honor the state priority system that recognizes communities whose only water source is Colorado River water. We also encourage augmenting Arizona's water supply with new technologies to bolster an already over-allocated Colorado River system.

Economic Development

Economic development plays a critical role in driving prosperity, improving quality of life, and ensuring Yuma's long-term sustainability. In 2022, the City completed a Target Industry Analysis and Market Study to elevate its business recruitment and attraction efforts. The plan identified several key industries and subsectors that play to the City's assets and strengths, including Advanced Manufacturing; Logistics and Processing; Science, Engineering, and Technology; Entertainment; and Life Sciences.

Right now, Arizona is the only state in the union not offering tax increment financing as a tool for economic prosperity. Currently, the Legislature is attacking the only available tool communities have, the Government Property Lease Excise Tax. Elimination of this program greatly reduces the ability for Yuma to compete for industry, especially those relocating from California.

We urge our elected officials to support funding and programs which encourages economic development in our community and assists in closing the economic divide between rural and affluent communities.

Public Safety

The City of Yuma supports full and expanded funding dedicated to supporting state and local law enforcement and public safety, such as Community Oriented Policing Services, Byrne Justice Assistance

grant programs, Assistance to Firefighters grants, and Staffing and Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grants. Recruitment and retention of public safety is difficult, but even more so in smaller communities like Yuma. The City is seeking funding and support to ensure fully staffed public safety departments, the installation of alert systems in all fire stations, as well as de-escalation education/training for public safety officers.

Local Solutions for Local Issues and Statewide Solutions for Statewide Issues

The federal government as well as the federal courts are passing laws and making decisions which limit the powers of local governments. This federal one-size-fits-all approach has made its way to the state legislature with preemption policies affecting the ability for local governments to resolve or mitigate local issues.

A prime example of this is the current series of housing bills being considered by the Arizona Legislature that intend to preempt local control. These bills essentially eliminate our ability to govern our own land use policies and nullify our community's voter approved General Plan, which is used to guide future development.

Yuma is a unique city with its own distinct character, challenges, and opportunities. Our local government is best positioned to understand the needs and aspirations of our community members, as well as the nuances of our geographic, economic, and social landscape. By empowering local decision-makers to shape planning and zoning regulations, we can ensure that development aligns with our City's vision for sustainable growth, economic prosperity, and quality of life.

Yuma Space Port Facility

The City of Yuma is in the process of developing a commercial spaceport for industry and research. The unique location north of the Gulf of California and surrounded by the Marine Corps Air Station Yuma (MCAS) allows for 1.9 million acres of protected airspace and provides the best opportunity for vertical launch in Arizona. The City, in partnership with regional leaders, seeks the support of an Federal Aviation Administration application for the approval of a Yuma spaceport.

Public Infrastructure

The City's economy and quality of life largely depends on ensuring our community has adequate and well-maintained public infrastructure such as bridges, roads, bicycle paths, sidewalks, parks, and high-speed internet. We urge our elected officials to continue to support programs and funding that assist with public infrastructure improvements.

Quality of Life

The Quality of Life of any community is dependent not just on the municipal services it provides but on amenities like parks, schools, and healthcare facilities. The City supports funding to improve its parks and recreational opportunities while creating and sustaining a healthy and livable community. We encourage our elected officials to continue to support the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area and Yuma East Wetlands Conservation Area.

II. RECEPTION

A dinner reception was held by HighGround, Inc. at 830 North 4th Avenue in Phoenix. This was a social event and no specific City business was entertained.

APPROVED:

Lynda L. Bushong, City Clerk

Douglas J. Nicholls, Mayor

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