

MINUTES
SPECIAL WORKSESSION\CITY COUNCIL RETREAT
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF YUMA, ARIZONA
QUECHAN CASINO RESORT
525 ALGODONES ROAD, WINTERHAVEN CA 92283
CONFERENCE ROOM PIPA B
March 27, 2024
8:30 a.m.

Breakfast was provided at 8:30 a.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Nicholls called the Special Worksession/Council Retreat to order at 9:01 a.m.

Councilmembers Present: Knight, Smith, Morris, Shoop, Shelton, and Mayor Nicholls
Councilmembers Absent: Morales
Staffmembers Present: Acting City Administrator, Jay Simonton
Various Department Heads or their representative
City Attorney, Richard W. Files
City Clerk, Lynda L. Bushong

The retreat was facilitated by the Raftelis team, and lead by Julia Novak.

I. SETTING THE STAGE

Novak reviewed the March 27th agenda and provided a debriefing of the activities and discussions that took place at yesterday's retreat. With all the Directors present, she had everyone give a brief introduction, years of service and what expectations they had with regards to the retreat. A common expectation shared by the group was to better understand the goals set by City Council.

II. CELEBRATING SUCCESSES

Novak broke City Council and staff attendees into groups of 3-4 people to discuss and share successes that the City has accomplished in the past year that has made them proud. Below are some of the successes that were shared:

- Communication and relationships between City Council and staff
- Compassionate immigration solution to take care of migrants
- Building on the City of Yuma being the Employer of Choice – adjusting pay and benefits for the employees
- Implementing the Labor Market Study within a 14-month period
- Improving the culture within the City of Yuma
- Staff efforts to achieve grant funding for City projects
- Meeting the needs of our community
- Stability at the Administration level to take care of City business
- Improved the public's relationship with the City
- Advancement in private investment
- Financials are on track with audits and a new Investment Policy was implemented

- Increased public outreach
- Multitude of efforts that have encouraged housing development
- Team efforts to work together to improve the community, such as parks, roadways, etc...
- Interactions with county, state and federal agencies on the water issues
- Mayor and City Council's outreach with our state and federal representatives, specifically on legislature that impacts Yuma
 - Yuma is on the national map due to these efforts



III. TRENDS

Moving towards identifying what is priority for the Strategic Plan, **Novak** again broke City Council and staff attendees into smaller groups to discuss trends taking place globally, nationally, and locally. She provided six categories to discuss and asked that the groups share the trends and how they are impacting the City of Yuma. The following was shared after discussions within the groups:

Political

- Aggressive international relations – war
- Contentious Presidential race
- Congress seems to be frozen which is preventing movement
- Immigration
- Seeing the pendulum swing towards a more accepting role of public safety

- Internal political operations have become more public
- Although the GSC lawsuit is currently in the City's favor, the water issue is still on the table
- State Legislation has made it challenging to retain local control
- Arizona has moved from conservative to purplish, bringing additional challenges
- Global issues showing up in the Yuma area, such as at Call to the Public
- Media's focus on City decisions
- Focus on school board decisions

Environmental

- Water being a limited resource and how the Yuma community evolves around this resource
- Growth within the City, and the capacity that is necessary to accommodate the growth
- Limited infrastructure for the increased energy consumption for items such as electric vehicles
- Urban heat zones and what the effects may look like in the future
- Xeroscape and other water reducing landscapes
- Environmental issues that affect growth due to the protection of their habitat
- Removal of gas utilities in other states, which puts a larger impact on the electric grid

Social

- Social Media presence - use is not always advantageous
 - Viral encouragement of protests/street take overs
 - Unreasonable expectations and distractions to what is trying to be accomplished
- Interaction decreased due to working remote and shopping online
- People leaving their areas that are no longer meeting their needs, but go into a new area with the same expectations and ideas as they had in previous area
- Expectation for instant gratification
- Unhoused population impacts on community
- Legalization of drugs
- Lack of Mental Health services, locally and statewide
- Gender identity issues with regards to public facilities

Technological

- Technology is a part of everything these days
- Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI), automation and security
 - Policy and procedures are needed
- Vulnerability
- Cost issues, as technology becomes outdated about every 3 years
- Infrastructure and fiber options have presented more opportunity for remote jobs
- Need to use to the City's advantage
- Imbedding AI on the backend could be beneficial internally
- Need to think about the infrastructure to support technology in automated cars

Economic

- Increase in interest rates and national debt
- State cutting taxes and reducing state shared revenues
- Yuma has prepared for the income tax cuts and reduction of state shared revenues
 - City Council's approval to refinance the City's PSPRS debt at a low rate put the City in a better position
 - Changing the Investment Policy so the refinancing of bond sales are now actually making the City money
- Planning is necessary to move forward, which can be an obstacle as well
- Political side can be challenging
- Projects fall off the list due to priorities and changes in new City Councils
- With costs going up, partnerships and other approaches may need to be considered

Workforce

- AI and the impact of technology has been a game changer
- Consideration of a 4-day work week and/or working remote to stay in the competitive market
- Sedona allows residents to park/live within their vehicles in a specified area – is this going to be a state or national trend?
- College is no longer viewed as a way to achieve better employment – trade schools are the new trend
- New generation are not concerned with longevity and bounce from job to job – they are more concerned about 'what can this job do for me'
- Employees want to feel valued within the organization
- Local training is needed in Yuma – this will also help attract other businesses
- Focus on the opportunities to build and obtain our workforce
 - Can't move the median (\$40K) of the community up without having training facilities
- The trend of the younger crowd in Yuma leans more toward the entertainment field
 - Current older crowd doesn't understand the expectations of the GenZ crowds

12:30 p.m. Councilmember Knight left the meeting.

IV. STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

Reflecting on the prior activities and group break out discussions, **Novak** reviewed the current five Strategic Outcomes and asked how the trends and challenges align with them. Groups were formed again with one Councilmember and several staff members to review the current goal statements within each Strategic Outcome and to identify any changes that may need to be made. Councilmembers then rotated through the different tables hearing and providing input on each of the Strategic Outcomes. The following recommendations were made (changes noted in bold):

Safe and Prosperous: Yuma is a prosperous city that supports thriving businesses, access to education, and multi-generational opportunities, **with safety as its cornerstone.**

Active and Appealing: [no changes] Yuma plans and leverages its natural resources, public spaces and cultural amenities to support an active and appealing community.

Connected and Engaged: Yuma is connected and engaged through **cutting edge technology**, active communication, forward-looking partnerships, and ongoing public involvement.

Unique and Creative: [no changes] Yuma is a unique and creative community, built on our shared history, sense of place, and civic pride.

Respected and Responsible: Yuma is a trusted steward of City resources; relied upon to provide regional leadership, premier services, **and facilities**.

V. PRIORITIES AND POSSIBILITIES

Councilmembers rotated through each of the groups to share their individual priorities and hear input from staff. The following priorities and initiatives were identified:

Focus Area/Strategic Outcome	Priority Projects and Initiatives
Safe and Prosperous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install directional signage on 4th Avenue connecting to Downtown • Implement an Intelligent Transportation System • Expand public safety infrastructure out east • Expand efforts related to economic development • Focus on acquiring land for innovation and industrial • Seek voter approval for base adjustment to annual expenditure limitation • Update regulations and processes to increase housing opportunities for all • Encourage and attract new industry (zone ready, plan ready) • Identify adequate staffing for public safety • Enhance collaboration between City and County development departments
Active and Appealing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant native trees • Complete Parks Master Plan and determine priority implementation strategy • Care for existing infrastructure – improve road conditions, park revitalization program • Beautify the community overall curb appeal – landscape our Right of Ways • Integrated Multi-Modal Transportation Master Plan update • Bring drive-in movie theatre • Partnership for trail connections – establish a trail/bike path connection (irrigation districts); establish equitable maintenance partnerships BOR/ADOT/schools
Connected and Engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand online public document offerings/access • Joint K-20 education opportunities – Elevate Southwest • Establish a Youth Council or Youth Involvement Forums (Youth-Council-Youth in Government Day) • Recruit a trade school to Yuma (advocate) • Expand partnerships with Military • Establish joint City/County meetings twice per year • Explore resident notification tools (SMS, apps, etc.) • Establish Innovation Hub • Research and develop AI uses and city applications • Hold city meetings – geographic areas

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance and improve City website (department ownership) • Provide tools for businesses to expand in foreign markets • Establish private-public partnership for Hotel del Sol • Parcel file access (online)
Unique and Creative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underground overhead utilities • Documentation/history of City of Yuma • Use drone technology to enhance City operations • Use of public-private partnership to restore/repair facilities • Honor and preserve the history of Pioneer Cemetery • Create a simplified process for murals and public art • Find unique way to fund historic City Hall restoration • Develop Innovation District • Create partnership with YCHS to sustain Molina Block and Sanguinetti House museum • Use of North End Redevelopment Fund to enhance or improve historic downtown
Respected and Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of the Police Academy • Advocate for local control by proposing our own bills – proactive, not reactive • Increased Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for recruitment and retention • Expansion of the Municipal Courts and Prosecutor’s Office • Participate in 2027 Colorado River Operations Plan

VI. SHARED PRIORITIES

Novak provided City Council with dots to identify their priorities from the previous activity, that should be focused on in the coming 12-24 months. A total of 18 items moved forward with the following priority designation:

Level of Priority	Priority Projects and Initiatives (number of dots item received)
Top	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand efforts related to economic development (6) • Establish joint City/County meetings twice per year (6) • Develop Innovation District (5) • Encourage and attract new industry (zone ready, plan ready) (5) • Identify adequate staffing for public safety (5)
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek voter approval for base adjustment to annual expenditure limitation (4) • Care for existing infrastructure – improve road conditions, park revitalization program (4) • Beautify the community overall curb appeal – landscape our Right of Ways (4) • Establish private-public partnership for Hotel del Sol (4)
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Parks Master Plan and determine priority implementation strategy (3) • Joint K–20 education opportunities - Elevate Southwest (3) • Establish Innovation Hub (3) • Partnership for trail connections – establish a trail/bike path connection (irrigation districts); establish equitable maintenance partnerships BOR/ADOT/schools (3) • Install directional signage on 4th Avenue connecting to Downtown (3) • Expand public safety infrastructure out east (3) • Update regulations and processes to increase housing opportunities for all (3) • Advocate for local control by proposing our own bills – proactive, not reactive (3) • Participate in 2027 Colorado River Operations Plan (3)

VII. NEXT STEPS

Discussions will ensue with City Administration to put the priorities in place.

VIII. CLOSING – SIX WORD SLAM

In closing, Novak initiated a request from the attendees on six words that sums up your experience of the retreat. The following Six Word Slams were provided by the attendees:

- Today's meeting was encouraging and informative
- Budget – But U Did Get Enough Today
- Productive communication through creatively facilitated exercises
- Teamwork makes the dream work
- Collaborative planning for a better Yuma
- Prior proper planning prevents poor performance
- Exciting time to prepare the way
- Creative ideas create productive results
- Honest discussion leads our community's future
- Prepare for future honoring our history
- Working together to get things done
- A clear path toward our future
- Plan to succeed, plan to succeed
- Vision provides a clear path forward
- Commitment collaboration and teamwork EQUALS community results
- Success favors only the bold
- Alignment responsiveness stewardship collaboration innovation service
- Yuma utilizing many amazing awesome Zonies
- Collaboration to produce priorities and possibilities
- Working towards a fabulous community
- Thank you for listening - productive retreat
- Collective discussions create an innovative direction
- Make Yuma streets safer for all
- Yuma crossing planning past present GenZ
- Why follow when you can lead

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Nicholls thanked everyone for their participation and commitment to the citizens of Yuma. The meeting adjourned at 3:46 p.m.

APPROVED:

Lynda L. Bushong, City Clerk

Douglas J. Nicholls, Mayor