

MINUTES
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF YUMA, ARIZONA
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS - YUMA CITY HALL
ONE CITY PLAZA, YUMA, ARIZONA
April 14, 2026
5:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Nicholls called the Regular City Council Worksession to order at 5:32 p.m.

Councilmembers Present: Martinez, Morris, McClendon, Smith, Morales, Watts, and Mayor Nicholls
Councilmembers Absent: None
Staffmembers Present: Acting City Administrator, John D. Simonton
Deputy City Attorney, Rodney Short
Director of Engineering, David Wostenberg
Various department heads or their representatives
City Attorney, Richard W. Files
Acting City Clerk, Janet L. Pierson

I. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Short presented information regarding State and Federal legislative guiding principles, priorities, and strategies as well as the status of proposed actions affecting the City as follows:

- City Council’s Guiding Legislative Principles
 - Support legislation that protects and enhances the City Council’s ability to efficiently serve Yuma residents and visitors in a cost-effective manner
 - Protect local decision-making
 - Protect local revenues and mandates that are unfunded
 - Protect the City’s water rights and support water remaining in the region
- State Legislature Important Items/Dates
 - Seven bill limit for each elected State Legislator
 - February 20 – Last day for bills in committee
 - February 23 – Cross-Over Week
 - Record number of bills and “strike everything” amendments
 - April 17 – Last Day for Conference Committees
 - April 21 – 100th Day of Session
 - June 30 at 11:59 p.m. – Budget deadline
- City Council’s State Legislative Priorities
 - Maintain shared, voter-approved local revenues
 - Maintain the directed revenue sources
 - Preserve local authority over local taxation
 - Preserve and expand local economic development and job-creation
 - Preserve and expand support for public safety
 - Preserve and expand local growth and housing
 - Preserve and expand investments in infrastructure, quality of life, and community investment

- Protect local water rights for City of Yuma and region
- Local Preemptions
 - Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 2016
 - Formerly House Bill (HB) 4030 and House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 2052, both of which previously failed to receive enough votes but are revived through this “strike everything” amendment and are now moving forward again in essentially identical form.
 - Measures labeled as HCR or SCR bypass the governor and go directly to voters, meaning these proposals could ultimately be decided by the public rather than through executive approval.
 - The revived legislation is intended to address issues in certain areas of the valley where cities have not raised water or utility rates in years and aims to stop subsidization by requiring all users to pay their fair share, particularly in light of anticipated cuts to Colorado River water allocations.
 - There is concern that this legislation represents state-level overreach, as decisions affecting local communities like Yuma could be made by lawmakers in Phoenix rather than by local officials.
 - Senate Bill (SB) 1431
 - Another bill, SB1431, was scheduled for consideration but was pulled from the agenda and is still under review.
 - SB1431 focuses on preempting local control over residential standards in planned communities, though it stems from a small number of specific issues involving a particular builder in the valley.
 - A major concern with SB1431 is that it may incorrectly classify certain life-safety requirements – such as canal fencing – as optional design standards, potentially weakening important safety regulations.
 - Legislators are now taking a closer look at SB1431, with a deadline approaching Friday to determine whether it will move forward.
- State Budget
 - The state budget is the next major issue, with multiple competing proposals under consideration and general dissatisfaction with the figures produced by the Joint Legislative Budget Committee.
 - Lawmakers are currently waiting to determine the final budget numbers, which will dictate how much funding the state ultimately has available.

Discussion

- There is currently no set timeline for adjournment because a state budget agreement has not been reached. Budget negotiations remain stalled, with recent meetings ending quickly and little progress made. Lawmakers are significantly divided, not only along ideological lines but also within the same party, largely due to disagreements over budget numbers. (**Mayor Nicholls/Short**)
- Several proposed preemptive measures related to data centers have not progressed and appear to be stalled. These measures are mainly focused on limiting the authority of state agencies and counties rather than cities. There has been minimal attention on municipalities, as data centers are not currently seen as a significant concern at the city level. (**Smith/Short**)

- Legislation related to a veterans property tax benefit may have already been signed, but follow-up provisions are still being addressed, including an income eligibility limitation. The measure has not been closely monitored at the local level because it is a state issue, even though it may have local impacts. Additional information on its current status may be gathered if needed. (Martinez/Short)

II. RECAP AND OVERVIEW OF THE 2026 CITY COUNCIL RETREAT

Simonton presented the following overview of key takeaways, major themes, and identified priorities for future City Council consideration:

- Retreat Overview
 - A two-day retreat was held, including a tour of a new port facility in San Luis, which is expected to be a significant asset for the region.
 - The event also provided an opportunity to connect with local officials, including members of the San Luis City Council.
 - Key topics discussed during the retreat included economic development, annexation, and public safety, with updates provided on public safety planning and initiatives.
 - Progress on the Parks Master Plan and its multi-year implementation was reviewed in detail.
 - Discussions included the annual expenditure limitation and plans to place the measure on the November ballot to address future budget constraints.
 - Heat preparedness was also highlighted as a priority, along with ongoing and future efforts to address it.
- Building on progress
 - As part of the retreat, participants reviewed accomplishments from the past year and identified several key areas of progress.
 - Notable achievements included improvements in infrastructure and parks, as well as advancements in public safety staffing and long-term planning.
 - Continued progress was highlighted in downtown revitalization and broader economic development efforts.
 - Significant strides were made in technology and asset management, including upgrades to traffic management systems and new software implementation.
 - Workforce development and retention also improved, with particularly strong gains in retaining employees within departments such as the Police Department.
- Organizational Strength and Community Impact
 - The City's bond rating was strengthened, reflecting a strong financial position and effective financial management.
 - Revenue bonds are being strategically used to support capital improvement projects, particularly in parks and recreation, while also addressing expenditure limitations and cash flow constraints.
 - Progress has been made in asset management implementation, supervisory training, and workforce development, including the successful launch of a mentoring program.
 - Staffing and employee retention have continued to improve across departments.
 - Advancements have been made in Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility and downtown improvements.
 - Ongoing efforts in housing and affordable housing initiatives.
 - Additional programs and initiatives are moving forward, including a youth government program and planning for the America 250 celebration event.

- Strategic Plan Updates
 - Several initiatives have transitioned from planning or implementation phases into ongoing and established efforts.
 - The Parks Master Plan is now in the implementation stage and considered an ongoing initiative.
 - The youth government program and downtown visibility improvements, including new lighting in the 200 block of Main Street, are actively moving forward, with installation expected soon.
 - Key completed items include planning for the America 250 celebration and the finalization of a land deal for the Innovation District.
- New and Emerging Priorities
 - Key priority areas identified for the coming year include public safety staffing, facilities, and continued implementation of the Master Plan.
 - The implementation of an Intelligent Transportation System is a major focus, including integrating traffic signals throughout the city.
 - Ongoing efforts will continue in downtown improvements and development of the Innovation District, alongside a planned parking feasibility study to address future demand and costs.
 - There is an emphasis on improving volunteer coordination and centralizing public engagement to better support community involvement in City projects.
 - Enhancing communication and outreach is also a priority, with a goal of being more proactive in sharing information and highlighting positive developments within the community.
- Council Direction: Priority Topics
 - Economic Development / Emerging Industries
 - Staff presentations highlighted progress and opportunities in economic development, particularly in emerging industries and target industry attraction.
 - There is a continued focus on creating high-wage jobs and advancing efforts to finalize Opportunity Zones, with additional discussion expected.
 - A balanced approach to commercial and retail recruitment was emphasized, supporting interested businesses without offering incentives that could disadvantage existing local businesses.
 - Annexation
 - Annexation strategies were discussed in detail, including the state process and potential areas for expansion.
 - An important consideration is to continue exploring annexation opportunities while ensuring that City resources, such as public safety and the Public Works Department, can adequately support growth over the long term.
 - Public Safety
 - Public safety remains a top priority, with a continued focus on funding and implementing recommendations from public safety plans.
 - The Police Department is currently developing its plan, expected to be completed by the end of the year, with implementation anticipated to begin in future budgets starting in Fiscal Year 2028.

- The future of the public safety tax, which is set to sunset in 2037, will require further discussion, including potential options to extend or modify it to support infrastructure needs.
- Parks Master Plan
 - Parks and recreation priorities include maintaining existing parks, improving lighting for extended use, and replacing aging playgrounds and ramadas.
 - An aquatics feasibility study is expected to move forward soon, beginning with an evaluation of the Kennedy Park pool.
 - Community input will play a key role in shaping future aquatic facilities, using a similar engagement approach as recent projects like the skate park.
- Annual Expenditure Limitation
 - Presentations outlined strategies to educate the community on expenditure limitations and the need for a proposed increase, while maintaining a neutral, informational approach.
 - A proposed \$30 million increase to the expenditure limit was discussed, which would help sustain City operations and financial stability over the long term.
- Heat Readiness and Preparedness
 - Heat preparedness was identified as a growing priority, with an emphasis on implementing strategies to address rising temperatures.
 - There is recognition of increasing heat trends, reinforcing the need for proactive planning and community readiness moving forward.
- Key Takeaways
 - There is strong alignment between staff and City Council priorities, supported by the use of a Strategic Plan that has improved focus and coordination across departments.
 - The City is transitioning from long-term planning into active implementation of projects identified several years ago.
 - Continued emphasis is being placed on core infrastructure and services, including roads and public safety.
 - Responsible growth and development remain a priority, with careful planning to support expansion.
 - Investment in quality of life, particularly in parks and recreation, continues to be a key focus to enhance the community.
- Next Steps
 - The senior leadership team will review and synthesize input from the recent discussions to guide next steps.
 - A revised Strategic Plan will be developed and presented for adoption in the coming months.
 - Work will continue to advance priorities and implement the updated plan moving forward.

Discussion

- There is a strong need to improve communication and provide more background information to the public, as many residents may not be fully aware of ongoing efforts and progress. Increased outreach could help highlight the significant work being done and ensure the community understands how major decisions, such as feasibility studies, are being carefully considered. **(Smith)**

III. REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA OF APRIL 15, 2016

Motion Consent Agenda Item C.5 – Contract Increase: Arizona Department of Transportation – Bus Pull-Outs (Authorize a contract increase to the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the State of Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) for the design and construction of the Bus Pull-Outs on Avenue A at 16th Street.) (Eng)

Discussion

- The Carbon Reduction Program funding requested through the Yuma Metropolitan Planning Organization did not include ADOT’s higher mobilization rates, higher temporary traffic-control rates, or the additional below-the-line construction administration costs of 15-20%. Those required costs have now been added, increasing the project estimate, and the City is being asked to amend the IGA and pay the additional amount so ADOT can advertise the project. (**Morris/Wostenberg**)

Motion Consent Agenda Item C.7 – Request for Qualifications Award: Residential Standard Plans Development (Authorize a professional services contract for the development of Residential Standard Plans, including accessory dwelling units, single-family homes, duplexes, and triplexes, for a total cost of \$150,260.00 to Thompson Design, Yuma, Arizona.) (RFQ-26-203) (DCD/Cmty Plng)

Morris declared a conflict of interest on Motion Consent Agenda Item C.7. There being no discussion or questions, **Morris** remained on the dais.

EXECUTIVE SESSION/ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, **Mayor Nicholls** adjourned the meeting at 5:57 p.m. No Executive Session was held

Janet L. Pierson, Acting City Clerk

APPROVED:

Douglas J. Nicholls, Mayor

Approved at the City Council Meeting of: _____ Acting City Clerk: _____
