

Neighborhood and Family Services Commission

August 31, 2022

Meeting Date

November 9, 2022

Date Minutes Were Approved

Fabian Prado

Fabian Prado (Mar 28, 2023 09:48 PDT)

Chair

CERTIFICATION AND ATTESTATION

I hereby certify that the accompanying document is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the aforementioned meeting. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held, and that the quorum was present.

Alisa M Chavez

Alisa M Chavez (Feb 21, 2023 11:30 MST)

Staff Liaison





Neighborhood and Family Services Commission Meeting
Wednesday, August 31, 2022, 6:00 p.m.
AZ Complete Health Avondale Resource Center, Avondale, AZ 85323
Aravaipa Conference Room
MEETING MINUTES

Commission Members in Attendance: Jerome Brownlee, Jr., Hilary McKillip, Alternate Maxine White, Michelle McMullen, Nellie Goetz, Dawn Gerundo

Commission Members Absent: Oliver Morrison, Fabian Prado

City Staff and Guests in Attendance: Neighborhood & Family Services Director Chris Lopez, Assistant NFS Director Edith Baltierrez, Code Compliance Manager Stephanie Small, Senior Code Compliance Officer Joshua Perez, Administrative Assistant Paula Swenson, Resource Assistant Alisa Chavez

1. Call to Order

The Neighborhood and Family Services Commission meeting was called to order by Chairperson Brownlee at 6:03 p.m.

2. Review and Approval of the June 29, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Ms. McKillip made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Ms. McMullen seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously with an Aye by Members present.

3. Code Compliance Update

Ms. Small presented proposed code revisions to Chapter 14 of the City's Property Maintenance Code (PMC) and zoning ordinances. Ms. Small stated that Code Compliance is looking for the Commission's input to take to Council for the proposed changes to benefit residents and the city. Code Compliance strives to maintain healthy and safe neighborhoods through education and voluntary compliance to the PMC and zoning ordinances. Our goal is to achieve compliance voluntarily, not to send anyone to court. Last fiscal year, we conducted 67,978 inspections/re-inspections, of which 4,397 resulted in notices of violations being issued. Of those, only .61 percent required court action. The vast majority are resolved by working closely with the community. To-date, we have conducted 7,266 inspections/re-inspections, of which 658 notices of violations were issued (through the end of August). Ms. Small explained that the purpose of the PMC is to define minimum property maintenance standards for residential and commercial properties within the city's boundaries. The current PMC was last adopted in 2015 and has not been revised since that time.

The purpose of revising the codes is to update and clearly define the following:

- Ground Cover is required. Dirt yards is not allowable. Ground cover height should not exceed 18".
- Hearing Officer is mentioned but not defined. We look to clearly define the role and responsibility of the officer.
- Responsible Party is mentioned but not clearly defined as owner or tenant.

- Weeds are mentioned but not defined. This needs to be defined for the inspector in the ordinance; regardless of an owner or occupant accepting the plant or growth.

These revisions will do the following:

- Ensure that enforcement processes conform with changes in the State law. We aim to make violation timeframes for abatement to be consistent.
- Provide additional enforcement mechanisms short of criminal enforcement. Define abatement clearly for residents that choose not to abide by the code for liens to be applied for the violation.
- Allow provisions for certified mail. Violations are required to be sent through the US Postal Services (USPS) via certified mail. We send courtesy notices first and use door hangers requesting residents to give us a call and/or take care of the violation.
- Afford residents additional time to pay fines. Due to the COVID pandemic, times for deliveries with the USPS are not as quick as it used to be. This will allow 15 days to pay violations versus the current 10 days.
- Authorize to abate violations. This gives us the ability to go to court for compliance for those that refuse to comply.
- Apply an appeals process/hearing officer to the process. Clearly define that residents have the right to appeal. Residents will have the ability to go to a third party for assessment and appeal. This will also give residents leeway and clarity about the Code Enforcement process.

Ms. Small stated that Code Enforcement is now in the Office of Public Safety. We will give staff and residents time to adjust to the new codes. We will educate residents on various code violations. If Commission Members approve, the proposed revisions will go before Council in September for their approval with an effective date of January 2023. We are working with the Marketing team to produce educational materials and update current notices for the implementation of the code schedule tentatively scheduled to take effect in January.

Ms. White commended the Code team for their efforts to make changes and inquired of a gap in the code with the city and HOAs regarding utility boxes. Ms. Small stated that that would be something that we would have to check on with the appropriate department. The City Attorney's Office is looking at all ordinances. Mr. Brownlee inquired how the public would find this information now and in the future. Ms. Small stated that over the past six months, major changes have been made to the Code Compliance website. You can view Chapter 14 and educational videos on the website to help understand neighborhoods. There is also information on HOAs and forms to use. We will continue to update the website once we have the new education materials. The information will be in English and Spanish and that will include notices of violations. Our strategy is to help our residents. Ms. White inquired if there an incentive for residents to permit before and after photos. Ms. Small stated that there are forms that are used when we work with residents that have a caveat at the bottom to allow us to publish the photos. It is important to show a tremendous change and encourage other residents to do the same. Ms. McMullen inquired how the bylaws for HOAs interact with Avondale ordinances. Ms. Small explained that many CCRs do not align with what the city code says. For example, parking an RV in your front yard is a violation of city code. Some HOAs say that you can park in the front yard versus the side or front of a house. City Code takes precedent for the city to enforce. We cannot enforce HOA CCRs. We try to educate HOAs and property managers. Ms. White inquired is we have audited HOAs for CCR compliance. Ms. Small stated that the city has not but most of the time, HOAs are more stringent. Ms. White inquired if a repository could be created for HOA CCR's to be viewed at-will. Mr. Lopez and Ms. Small agreed that it may not be related to Code or NFS specifically, but it can be brought to Council's attention.

Chairperson Brownlee inquired if there was a motion to support the recommendations proposed for changes to Chapter 14 for presentation to Council in September. Ms. McMullen made a motion to support the recommendations as presented. Ms. McKillip seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with an Aye by Members present.

4. Future Agenda Items

Ms. Baltierrez stated that Youth Services & Community Engagement and Homeless Services will present updates on November 9.

5. Announcements

Ms. Baltierrez announced that September is Library card sign-up month. For the month of September, the Library will grant amnesty for any overdue fines on any item. The intent of amnesty is to invite patrons back into the library who may have stayed away because they owe fines. Our goal is to help remove barriers from past fines. This effort is being promoted through social media, the web site and press releases. Ms. White suggested that maybe we could also share information on how to use the Library Cloud. Ms. McMullen stated that maybe we could share the information on our water billing statements. Ms. Baltierrez announced the Family Fun Fair to will be held on Friday September 30, at the Resource Center, located at 995 E. Riley Drive. There will be several activities at this free event; and Project Connect will be held on Thursday, September 29 at the Avondale Baptist Church, located at 1001 N. Central Avenue. This free event offers many services for unsheltered individuals. Mr. Lopez stated that this initiative was prompted many years ago by United Way. We felt like it was important to bring back to Avondale.

6. Call to the Public

None

7. Adjournment

Ms. Mullen made a motion to adjourn; the motion was seconded by Ms. McKillip. The motion passed unanimously with an Aye by Members present. The meeting adjourned at 6:43 p.m.

Next meeting, 6:00 p.m. – AZ Complete Health Avondale Resource Center – November 9, 2022