MINUTES OF THE AVONDALE CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF AVONDALE, ARIZONA
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER
March 25, 2024

A **Regular Meeting** of the City Council of the City of Avondale, Arizona was convened at 11465 West Civic Center Drive in open and public session at 5:32 p.m.

Mayor Kenn Weise led the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a moment of silent reflection.

Members Present: Mayor Kenn Weise; Vice Mayor Mike Pineda; Council Members Tina Conde, Veronica Malone, Curtis Nielson, Gloria Solorio, and Max White.

Members Absent: None.

Other Municipal Officials Present: Ron Corbin, City Manager; Tracy Stevens, Assistant City Manager; Dale Nannenga, Deputy City Manager; Nicholle Harris, City Attorney; Marcella Sarmiento, City Clerk; Edith Baltierrez, Neighborhood and Family Services Deputy Director; Liz Barker Alvarez, Intergovernmental Affairs Administrator; Kirk Beaty, Public Works Director; Ken Chapa, Economic Development Services Director; Barbara Coppage, City Auditor; Memo Espinoza, Police Chief; Joel Evans, Facilities Director; Bryan Hughes, Parks and Recreation Director; Julie Knoll; Deputy City Clerk; Craig Jennings, Judge; Andy Mesquita, Human Resources Director; Kimberly Moon, Engineering Director; Jodie Novak, Development Services Director; Abril Ruiz-Ortega, Court Administrator; Larry Rooney, Fire Chief; Jeffrey Scheetz, Chief Information Officer; Pier Simeri, Marketing and Public Relations Director; and Renee Weatherless, Finance and Budget Director.

Audience: Two members of the public were present.

1. ROLL CALL BY THE CITY CLERK

2. PRESENTATION ITEMS (DISCUSSION ONLY)

a. WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH PROCLAMATION
City Council presented a Proclamation recognizing March 2024 as Women's History Month, which was read by Council Member Conde. This item was for discussion only.

3. UNSCHEDULED PUBLIC APPEARANCES

Miguel Levario and John Eaton submitted Requests to Speak; however, they were not present for the meeting.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Weise asked if any Council Member wished to have an item removed from the Consent Agenda. Having no requests from the Council, a motion was made by Vice Mayor Pineda, seconded by Council Member Conde, to approve the Consent Agenda.

Upon vote, the motion was carried unanimously 7 to 0.

Council Member Conde	Aye
Council Member Malone	Aye
Council Member Nielson	Aye
Council Member Solorio	Aye
Council Member White	Aye
Vice Mayor Pineda	Aye
Mayor Weise	Aye

a. APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS
City Council approved appointments to the City's Boards and Commissions as recommended by the City Council Subcommittee on Boards and Commissions and authorized the Mayor or City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk to execute the necessary documents.

b. SERIES 12 (RESTAURANT) LIQUOR LICENSE — CAROLINA'S MEXICAN FOOD AVONDALE
City Council recommended approval to the Arizona Department of Liquor License and Control of an application for a Series 12 (Restaurant) Liquor License submitted by Juanita Alicia Esparza for the sale of alcohol at Carolina's Mexican Food Avondale located at 27 N. Dysart Road in Avondale and authorized the City Clerk to execute the necessary documents.

c. LAND PURCHASE BUDGET AND AWARD AUTHORITY FOR NORTHSIDE BOOSTER WELL SITE (U0090)
City Council (a) approved a budget amendment in the amount of $100,000 from the Water Contingency line item to the Northside Booster Well Site (U0090) project for the purpose of purchasing land in FY2024 for a future water well site and beginning well site design; (b) authorized administrative award authority for the land purchase and related design expenditures; and (c) authorized the Mayor or City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk to execute the necessary documents.

d. RESOLUTION 1025-0324 — REPEALING RESOLUTION 1001-0124 AND ADOPTING THE 2024 PRIMARY ELECTION DATE FOR THE ADOPTION OF THE STATE OF ARIZONA NOMINATION FILING DATES, BALLOT PREPARATION DATES, AND STATE ELECTION PROCEDURES MANUAL FOR THE JULY 30, 2024 MUNICIPAL ELECTION
City Council adopted Resolution 1025-0324, repealing Resolution 1001-0124 and adopting the 2024 Primary Election date, the State of Arizona nomination petition filing dates and ballot preparation date for the July 30, 2024, election, and the Arizona Secretary of State Election Procedures Manual and declaring an emergency, and authorized the Mayor or City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk to execute the necessary documents.

e. RESOLUTION 1026-0324 — INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH THE CITY OF GLENDALE FOR PUBLIC SAFETY TRAINING
City Council adopted Resolution 1026-0324, authorizing an Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Glendale for the Glendale Regional Public Safety Training Center and authorized the Mayor or City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk to execute the necessary documents.

f. RESOLUTION 1027-0324 — INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN MARICOPA COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND NEWTOWN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION AND THE CITY OF AVONDALE FOR U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT FUNDS
City Council adopted Resolution 1027-0324, associated with a grant application submitted by Newtown Community Development Corporation to the Maricopa County HOME Consortium for HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) funds, and authorized the Mayor or City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk to execute the necessary documents.

g. RESOLUTION 1028-0324 — AUTHORIZING THE ACCEPTANCE OF A GRANT FROM THE ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE MANAGEMENT
City Council adopted Resolution 1028-0324 to approve acceptance of a Healthy Forest Initiative Grant through the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management for an amount of up to $140,000 and authorized the Mayor or City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk to execute the necessary documents.

h. RESOLUTION 1029-0324 AND 1030-0324 ENTRADA PHASE 1 — MAINTENANCE IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT NO. 42 — APPLICATION PL-23-0152
City Council (a) approved a Petition for Formation; (b) adopted Resolution 1029-0324, declaring its intention to form the City of Avondale Maintenance Improvement District No. 42, Entrada Phase 1, providing for the assessment; (c) adopted Resolution 1030-0324, declaring its intention to order the improvements within the newly established maintenance improvement district, providing for the assessment and declaring an emergency; and (d) authorized the Mayor or City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk to execute the necessary documents. Entrada Phase 1 is located at the northwest corner of 107th Avenue and Broadway Road.

i. FINAL PLAT — ENTRADA PHASE 1 — APPLICATION PL-23-0152
City Council approved a request by Daniel Auxier, EPS Group Inc., on behalf of the property owner, Meritage Homes of Arizona Inc., for approval of the Entrada Phase 1 Final Plat and authorized the Mayor or City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk to execute the necessary documents. The proposed Final Plat subdivides approximately 30.7 acres into 136 single-family residential lots (18.7 acres), with 5.2 acres of open space tracts and approximately 6.8 acres of dedicated right-of-way and associated public utility easements throughout the subdivision. The subject property is located at the northwest corner of 107th Avenue and Broadway Road.

j. FINAL PLAT — VILLAS AT ASCEND RE-PLAT OF LOT 5 — APPLICATION PL-22-0361

City Council approved a request by Andie Hemmah, on behalf of property owner Nico Howard, Crescent Acquisitions LLC, for approval of the Re-Plat for Villas at Ascend Lot 5 and authorized the Mayor or City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk to execute the necessary documents. The proposed Re-Plat intends to subdivide the approximately 12.5-acre site into 125 residential townhome lots with private streets, a community pool, and common areas to service the development.

RECESS INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Council Member White moved to hold an Executive Session pursuant to Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 38-431.03 (A)(7) for discussion or consultation with City representatives in order to consider its position and instruct its representatives regarding negotiations for the purchase of real property located at 190 N. Litchfield Road, Goodyear, Arizona 85338; Council Member Solorio seconded the motion.

Upon vote, the motion was carried unanimously 7 to 0.

Council Member Conde	Aye
Council Member Malone	Aye
Council Member Nielson	Aye
Council Member Solorio	Aye
Council Member White	Aye
Vice Mayor Pineda	Aye
Mayor Weise	Aye

City Council recessed into Executive Session at 5:40 p.m.
City Council reconvened into the Regular Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

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5. REGULAR AGENDA

a. COUNCIL BUDGET DISCUSSION

City Staff presented an update on the City's finances and sought Council's feedback on the FY 2025 Budget. This item was for discussion only.

Rene Weatherless, Director of Finance and Budget presented the 2025 Draft City Manager’s Budget. An overview shows the status of the FY 2024 Revenues. The Sales Tax Revenues were projected to decrease by 1.4%, and through February, they are up 1% over last year and 8% over budget. Property Tax and State Sales Tax are at budget, Charges for Service Licensing and Fines are down 24% compared to last year and 4% to budget, and Property Sales and Investment had significant increases both compared to last year and in budget because properties were sold that had not been budgeted for.

Ms. Weatherless provided detailed information related to Sales Tax Revenue and the categories within it, such as retail sales and auto dealers. Contracting Revenue is cyclical and something that is not always budgeted to the level of growth because we anticipate it to start slowing down, but it is doing so at a slower pace than expected. For example, we are conservative when we do the budget and only budgeted for $5.6 million, but the actuals came in at $7.6 million through February. Overall, Total Revenues are up a total of 2% compared to last year and 5% to the budget, and we are in a good place.

State Shared Revenues include a portion of State Income and Sales Tax as well as Vehicle License Tax and the HURF (Highway User Revenue Fund). The budgeting for this Urban Share Revenue is based on the forecast produced by the Joint Legislative Budget Committee. Their revenue includes income tax reduction, or the flat tax, and it is affected by legislation.

Development-Related Revenues are based on the projected number of single-family homes and the average revenue raised per single-family home. For FY 2024, the assumption was based on 750 single-family homes, but the actuals came in slightly under that. For FY 2025 through 2029, the assumption has been reduced to 300 to 500 single-family homes. Commercial and multi-family homes are more difficult to project.

General Fund Expenses are up overall compared to last year but down to budget. However, not all negatives mean a savings; some of them are timing variances. Utilities Enterprise Funds year-to-date incorporate Capital Projects that are not yet completed, which accounts for the negative $17.9 million budgeted for water. Overall, revenues are up due to increased customer accounts, and we have some unspent Capital Projects.

Moving on to the FY 2025 Budget and the priorities taken into consideration when building the budget, personnel was a high priority, with a focus on maintaining qualified and good employees, as well as maintaining current programs, looking at expanding or adding new programs, continuing or finishing current projects, and reviewing any new requests.

The assumptions related to revenues and expenses were reviewed, noting this is the first year they are budgeting to ensure vacancy savings. The overview of the FY 2025 Budget continued with additional changes incorporated into the process. Noting this will be the beginning of revenue loss due to the residential rental sales tax, they conducted a detailed look at the budget for potential savings. Overall, approximately $40 million was found within operating line-item budget adjustments, CIPs moved to FY 2030, vacancy savings assumptions, identified project savings, and General Funds that could be reallocated. The second year of the utility rate increase will be implemented this year, with the water and sewer rate increase to follow in January 2025. New recommendations will be brought before the Council in Spring 2025. The development impact fees, the land-use assumptions, and the infrastructure improvement plan were established in 2022, with the fees being approved by the Council and becoming effective in June 2023. The Wastewater Treatment Plant expansion was $79 million; today, the cost is estimated to be $130 million. The fee development process will begin again and be brought back before the Council with proposed adjustments to the development impact fee. It is anticipated some of the CIP will need to be financed, and the Council was made aware of the option of going out for a General Obligation Bond in 2025, but it will be brought back later for further discussion.

Continuing to the General Fund Ongoing Revenue and Expenses, the goal is to establish a structurally balanced budget where expenses do not exceed revenues. This is why some of the previously mentioned decisions were made and funds were moved to one-time expenditures, which will be conducted on a yearly basis. The revenue growth from FY 2024 to FY 2027 was explained based on the loss of the residential rental sales tax affecting part of FY 2025 and FY 2026. Ron Corbin, City Manager, noted that in FY 2027, there is an addition of fifteen firefighters in the budget. The one-time revenue and expenses show peaks and valleys, and we are trying to level it off, but it is based on what can be completed and when to better manage the cash flow for these projects. In the end, the balances that have been built up are being spent over time.

The General Fund forecasted fund balance after stabilization and the capital reserves are set aside was reviewed. Stabilization consists of an emergency reserve that is 25% of the prior year's budget and an additional rainy-day fund that is 10% of the prior year's adopted budget. The capital reserve is a flat $5 million. Projected out to FY 2029, the forecasted fund balance is $6.6 million, and based on many discussions, we believe the City is in a good place.

A revision of our financial policies will be brought before the Council in June along with the adopted budget. Proposed revisions to reserves and other funding sources to pay for operation expenses such as the Public Safety Sales Tax, Dedicated Sales Tax, and HURF. Any adjustments to water, sewer, and solid waste will depend on future rate increases.

It was noted that the Council was provided with handouts that included FTE, supplementals, and all the projects; therefore, a brief overview of departments was provided.

- The Personnel Department includes the NFS Homeless Services Coordinator, an existing position that is only changing funding sources. The position reclassifications involve existing employees who are receiving wage adjustments. The Parks Summer Camp Program is noted at 3.9 FTE, but it is really 1 FTE and many part-time employees. Mr. Corbin noted two detention officer positions have been authorized but will be paid from the salary savings and are not part of the reoccurring expenses.
- General Government Department highlights include election costs, consulting for payroll, a compensation study planned next year for Human Resources, Cyber Security, and Contracted Services for IT.
- Public Safety Department highlights include vehicles and additional overtime for Fire, increased training and software in public safety, and the take-home program for

Police, with some capital for the program budgeted in FY 2025. Mr. Corbin noted they plan to purchase four new apparatuses for the Fire Department.

- The Community Services Department has education support, homeless services, the homebuyer program, and temporary positions under NFS. Parks have added costs with the addition of summer camp and special events and sports programming. There is a $1.2 million expense with the expansion of WeRide.
- Community and Economic Development has additional costs related to expanded modules in the permitting system for Engineering and $400,000 in the opportunities fund for economic development, which does not include a suite at the Phoenix Raceway, but this can be added for $41,000 at Council's request.
- Public Works shows increased costs for the recycling program and regulatory studies as well as the increased cost of water purchases. Mr. Corbin added these costs are built into the fees, and should they begin to cost more, they would come before the Council to discuss priorities.

In response to the Mayor and Council Member's questions, Ms. Weatherless explained the spikes in January are related to lack of additional revenue that comes in December, which is why there is a smoothing out for FY 2024. The General Fund One-Time Revenue Forecast is not showing an increase for FY 27–28 because we are not planning to fund $130 million from the General Fund. Mr. Corbin added the Alamar Fire Station is also not in there because that will be bonded as well as use Development Impact Fees. Mr. Corbin discussed the steps he and Ms. Weatherless are taking to ensure the right amount of funds are available in the ending fund balance for FY 2029 as part of the five-year plan. Ms. Weatherless noted major projects that are not getting done are actually costing the City more down the road. The plan is to spend all the money now, and any kind of underspending will be reallocated and invested later.

Mr. Corbin explained the two positions for Development Services puts them in the right direction and will continue to be evaluated. He continued to discuss plans for staffing and reorganizing the department. Larry Rooney, Fire Chief, noted the four new apparatuses will come fully equipped and turnkey, with an estimated delivery of 24 months, and the replaced vehicles will go into a reserve fleet for two years before being surplused. Kirk Beaty, Public Works Director, explained the supply chain for vehicles is still fluid, and they order what they can; however, they do expect the take-home program to take up to three years to fill all requests. Mr. Corbin explained the scholarship fund previously used ARPA funds and has not been replenished this year, but they have not spent all the money they currently have either.

James Milanese, City Projects Administrator, presented the Capital Improvement Plan Update. The Distribution Pressure Improvements and Old Town Phase II projects have been completed. The Sam Garcia Library & Sernas Plaza Park Improvements, along with the City Hall Furniture projects, will be completed in April. The Aquatic Center is getting ready for the ribbon-cutting and State of the City. The Volleyball Courts, the Water Reclamation Facility Odor Control, and Well # 25B are on track to be completed by June 30th.

An overview of projects starting before June 30th include Civic Center Park, the Western Avenue Reconstruction, the BLVD Well and Transmission Line, DeConcini Park, which started a couple weeks ago, and five HAWK projects, with two of them guaranteed to start before June 30th and the other three still pending.

Projects with anticipated budget transfers were reviewed and will be presented at the April 8, 2024, City Council meeting.

- Western Avenue Reconstruction — The street was not built correctly; it requires more excavation and work than originally planned.
- DeConcini Park/Bridge Housing ARPA Swap — This will take the ARPA funds from the Bridge Housing and swap them over to the DeConcini Park to finish that project in exchange for the General Fund dollars. This will not affect the budget since it is just accounting transferring money from one line to another.
- Four Fire Apparatus Expedite — They are part of the five-year budget and just being moved forward.
- Friendship Park — The amenities design concept has been completed, and the ask is to move forward with constructing a dog park and pickleball court next year. This does not increase the budget because it is only accelerating the program.
- Aquatic Center — Bonds that were sold need to be closed out. They have also been earning interest that can be used for the Aquatic Center with Council's permission.

The next projects reviewed were the ones that are programmed but not in construction, many of them within Public Safety.

- Fire Station #171 Replacement — This project is presently in the design phase and will be coming forward with a rezone request.
- K-9 Facility — The projects design is underway and will be added once the detention center is done.
- Police Communications Bureau Remodel — They need more space and workspaces than initially anticipated as well as the replacement of a generator and some HVAC work. Additional funding will be requested through the budget cycle. Mr. Corbin noted the increased cost is estimated to be around $4 million.
- Donatela Park — It is on schedule to start the following year.
- Pavement Management Program — $33 million has been appropriated over the next five years for pavement management. Note, the City now has a Pavement Manager.
- Old Town Phases III, IV, and V — Phase III is next in the entire Cashion neighborhood, with all new streets, water lines, etc. Public relations will begin next month, and bidding will begin after a final review of the drawings.
- Water Reclamation Facility Phase II Expansion — This will need to be revisited.

James Milanese, City Projects Administrator, continued the presentation with an overview of Park projects, noting they are studying them and doing it right.

- Aqua Fria Trail — They are ready to move forward with construction at the Buckeye Road/MC85 Underpass and the Lower Buckeye Road Underpass
- Base and Meridian Wildlife Area Restoration and Master Plan — Parks and Recreation are working on an agreement with Game and Fish on the area

restoration and an IGA with various parties for a long-term Master Plan. The $300,000 is Avondale's proposed share.
- Dysart and Western Avenue Pocket Park — This is a small parcel that is not appropriate for development and is being proposed as an entryway park into Western Avenue.
- Trail Improvement at BLVD area — This includes the trails around the Aquatic Center, and an agreement was reached to start the design around the Aquatic Center and across Van Buren.

Transportation Projects explained include:
- Avondale Boulevard from I-10 to Whyman will be micro-surfaced.
- The intersection of Western and Central Avenue will need to be touched up with patterned asphalt upon the completion of Central Avenue to 4th Street.
- Lower Buckeye Road Corridor Study — They are planning now for a possible bridge and rod expansion with SR-30 and Southern Avenue growth.
- Intersection Improvements at Dysart Road and McDowell Road — Capacity improvements will rebuild the medians to allow more cars to turn left without impacting the through drivers.
- Cellular Comm and CCTV Intersection Cameras — This is a grant-funded project for continued improvements and safety on our streets.
- Van Buren Bridge Lighting Project — This is a granted-funded project that is being reviewed to determine if solar lights can be utilized.

New Facility Projects reviewed include:
- Operational Warehouse Study and Space Plan — There is a vacant lot across from the Municipal Operations Center that is used by all departments, and they need a place to store stuff. This will require a meeting with all departments to determine what space they need and perhaps consider constructing something in that location, which would be brought before the Council.
- Resource Center Expansion Study — They are trending to be out of room in several years, and this study will look at what they will need should this event happen.
- Performing Arts Center Study — There is a gap for performing arts in the southwest valley, and we have asked for questions about performing arts to be included in the Master Plan for Parks and Recreation.
- The Court Expansion Phase II — This phase will expand the Jury Room and add a new restroom.
- Lower Buckeye Yard Fence (Screen) — This involves installing a screen around the property and fixing the fence in the back to make sure it is safe and there is no illegal dumping.

New Public Safety Projects include:
- Regional Wireless Cooperative Tower — This would be located by the Raceway and be a partnership between Avondale, the Raceway, neighboring jurisdictions, the Sheriff's office, and other cities. The Deputy City Manager is negotiating this contract.

- Fire Training Tower — The current tower has been condemned, and new expenses have been identified, such as using concrete instead of asphalt to better withstand the weight of the trucks and other structures that can help them train. The actual ask is closer to $4.1 million.

New Utilities Project reviewed include:
- Rancho Santa Fe Reservoir and Booster Electrical and Control Upgrades — The next phase is to make sure the electrical controls are up to date and meet current standards.
- Harrison Drive Sewer Reversal — It currently goes under the apartment complex and limits the opportunities to get to it. It will be reversed from East-West to West-East.
- 7Th Street Sewer Replacement — The line will be upsized. This, like Harrison Drive, is related to the Dysart Sewer Project.
- Northside Booster Station Tank Rehab — It is going to be cleaned up just like the Rancho tanks.
- 10th Street Lift Station Electric Upgrades — This is part of investing in our water and sewer facilities.

Over the five years, a large part of the $375 million budget is for the Water Treatment Facility, and we are working on ensuring the projects are done in the year they are asked for.

In response to the Mayor and Council Member's questions, Mr. Milanese stated there was a basic look into the Thomas Bridge, which is part of the MAG plan for 2040. Mr. Corbin stated there are no plans to do anything more until we can complete a study of Lower Buckeye Road. Regarding the pedestrian bridges in Tolleson, those were grant-funded to get students across the street to their schools, and we are not actively pursuing bridges until there is a need and state funding. The pathway under Fairway Drive Bridge connecting the southern part of I-10 to the northern area is budgeted for but unfunded while the designs are being finished and federal funding is sought. It was confirmed that the Avondale Bureau of Land Management, Game and Fish, the City of Phoenix, Gila River, Flood Control, and the Speedway make up the IGA partnership. The ARPA fund swap is an internal process, and no additional paperwork must be filed with ARPA. Mr. Milanese explained the team completing the Parks Master Plan will be including questions related to the performing arts in their survey, and based on the results, they will recommend a size and location for it. A discussion ensued. The three HAWK projects were not guaranteed to begin by June 30th, as they are reliant on the utility companies and obtaining land rights. Bryan Hughes, Parks and Recreation Director, stated the consultant was asked to look at extending the softball field at Friendship Park, but it might be cost prohibitive.

Mayor Weise recommended the City Council consider constructing a two- to three-story City Commercial Class A Office Building and leasing it out, particularly to the Phoenix Raceway, with the lower levels being restaurants and retail.

Andy Mesquita, Human Resources Director, presented an overview of the FY 2025 compensation and benefits recommendations, noting they were developed in a collaborative effort between City Management and employees. Through these discussions, priorities were identified, and potential options were evaluated within the context of the City's proposed budget. These recommendations will continue to build upon the City's efforts to support retention of a qualified workforce, ensure competitiveness with competitor cities, support the continuous effort to be an employer of choice, and ensure fiscal responsibility of taxpayer funds to enhance services for our community.

The recommendation for Avondale Police Officers and Sergeants is an up to 8% pay increase, which is comprised of the 3% COLA and an up to 5% step increase. The Cadet and Step1 pay have been combined to support entry-level competitiveness, which also accelerates the step movement in the early part of their career. The City will match an employee's $50-per-pay-period contribution to their 457 account, which is an increase from $25. In addition, there are new retention, sick leave sell back, and compensation programs.

The current retention program for new police officers is a $7,500 bonus that is paid over a five-year period. Whereas this is not designed for long-term retention, the recommended retention program is intended to incentivize eligible employees to stay for a 20-year career in Public Safety and sets Avondale apart from the competitors. The proposed program allows for up to $36,000 in payments over a 20-year career, with maximum payouts of $9,000 per every five-year cycle. Eligible employees in the five-year retention program can switch into this program with proper adjustments being made to ensure no double payments are made. Payout must be declared by January 1st, with the payment being made after July 1st. Continued employment is a prerequisite, and if termination occurs prior to the election of payout, it will be forfeited. The AFFA MOU will come before the Council for an amendment to allow for firefighters to participate in this program.

The Sick Leave Sell-Back Program is a pilot program with Avondale police officers and sergeants. They must have completed 20 years of continuous service with a minimum of 80 hours of accrued sick leave. They would submit a request to sell back a minimum of 8 hours and a maximum of 40 hours of sick leave, with payouts occurring in July of the new fiscal year. This is to incentivize tenured employees to sell back unused sick leave, like the vacation sell-back program. Once the program is evaluated, it might be considered for a citywide compensation recommendation for FY 2026.

The Sick Leave Compensation Program is exclusive to Avondale police officers and sergeants who retire with at least 20 years of continuous service with the City of Avondale. They would be eligible to receive 100% of accrued sick leave up to 500 hours at the employees' current hourly rate or 50% of the total balance of sick leave, whichever is greater. Each subsequent year of continuous service adds another 50 accrued hours not to exceed 1,000 hours.

Compensation for the remaining workforce includes an up to 8% increase with the 3% COLA and up to 5% merit increase, and a supplemental budget request was submitted for an FY 2025 compensation study specific to salary. The medical plan is currently at a two-tier option and is recommended to be moved to a four-tier option. With this move, some employees will see a slight decrease in premiums, while others may see a slight increase. There are no changes to the dental and vision premiums. The minimum out-of-pocket deductible limits for the high deductible health plan increased. The City will contribute to HSA accounts: $28.85 per pay period for employee-only and $57.69 for all other tiers. Benefit eligibility dates for new hires are currently the first of the month following 31 days of employment. The proposal is for new employees to be eligible for benefits on the first of the month following their hire date.

Paid parental leave is a significant recommendation and a high priority for employees. The recommendation is to provide up to 240 hours or 6 weeks of paid parental leave for the purpose of care for or bonding following the live birth of an employee's child, including the placement of a child under the age of 18 for adoption or foster care. The employee must be continuously employed with the City for at least 12 months, and leave must be taken within 12 months of the eligible event. Leave can only be used once during a 12-month period, and if both parents work for the City, each of them are entitled to their 6 weeks of leave, which can be taken continuously or intermittently.

The flexible hours bank was developed in response to most of the workforce that work four ten-hour shifts but only receive eight hours of holiday pay and must use two hours of their vacation leave to be made whole. There are also employees who work the traditional five days per week in eight-hour shifts. To be fair and consistent for everybody, they are providing 24 hours of flexible time that can be used to offset the holiday pay or be used as the employee wishes. The hours must be used by June 30th, and they will not carry over to next year.

The employee assistance program (EAP) visits per incident per family member will increase from six to twelve for confidential counseling. The increased cost to the city is $15,000 annually, but we believe it is well worth spending this from the employee benefits trust fund on this option for our employees. Additional resources include an AI Chatbot for emotional support, a 24-hour crisis helpline, peer support groups, and other services, such as financial assistance and legal services.

In response to Mayor and Council Member's questions, Mr. Mesquita explained the eligibility requirements for the Sick Leave Sell-Back Program. Mr. Corbin discussed the Sick Leave Compensation Program, noting there is no cost to the City because the 500 hours is already a benefit and included in the liabilities. He also noted the City will be evaluating their sick leave, short-term disability, and long-term disability programs. Mr. Mesquita confirmed the City contributing $28+ per pay period into the HSA offsets the high deductible health plan costs, and employees can contribute up to $3,400 per year spread out over the pay periods. Mr. Corbin stated he believes elected officials would be the same as other employees but would investigate it and get back to the Council. Mr. Corbin explained although it is possible for two events to happen within a 12-month period, there is also FMLA and other leave processes available for use. Mr. Mesquita noted working collaboratively with the employees and providing them with a space to share and be transparent about facts helps us to prioritize big-ticket items. The retention program required a lot of out-of-the-box thinking.

Ms. Weatherless noted next steps are to present the City Managers' recommended budget to City Council on April 8th. The tentative budget to adopt will be presented to City Council in May, with the Final Budget hearing and adoption of the Final Budget to occur in early June.

Mr. Corbin expressed his appreciation and gratitude for City Council's respect and acknowledgement of City staff and the collaboration, but it is only possible because of City Council's support.

Many Council Members expressed their gratitude for the hard work that went into the budget and the informative presentation.

A discussion ensued regarding revenue where Mr. Corbin clarified what the planning team, economic development, and related groups are doing to make a difference and bring revenue to the area. One important aspect is communicating with the residents about why decisions have been made and how they will benefit the City overall.

A discussion ensued regarding developing a relationship with NASCAR leadership and showing support while they are in Avondale. Mayor Weise suggested having a further conversation before committing to spending $40,000 for a suite at the Raceway.

6. SUMMARY OF CURRENT EVENTS FROM THE MAYOR, VICE MAYOR, AND COUNCIL MEMBERS

Vice Mayor Pineda mentioned an encounter with a representative from BACA (Bikers Against Child Abuse) who shared information about the 501c3 organization if anyone would like more information. Additionally, the Owl Closet at the Aqua Fria High School will officially open on Friday, March 29th from 8:30 to 10:00 a.m. Donations serve the student body.

Council Member Conde noted she and Mayor Weise met with Mirabelle, who is seeking clothing and food box donations to her organization to assist farm workers in the west valley. She was invited to speak at Interfaith Council to share her needs with the faith-based communities.

Council Member Malone noted over the weekend she, along with Council Members Nielson and Conde, joined the Avondale Fire Burn Unit to distribute 700 smoke detectors to residents in Old Town.

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Council, Council Member Solorio moved to adjourn the Regular Meeting; Council Member Nielson seconded the motion.

Upon vote, the motion was carried unanimously 7 to 0.

Council Member Conde	Aye
Council Member Malone	Aye
Council Member Nielson	Aye
Council Member Solorio	Aye
Council Member White	Aye
Vice Mayor Pineda	Aye
Mayor Weise	Aye

The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

K Weise
K Weise (Apr 23, 2024 09:37 PDT)
Kenn Weise, Mayor

CERTIFICATION AND ATTESTATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Council of the City of Avondale held on the 25th day of March 2024. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held, and that the quorum was present.

Marcella S.
Marcella Sarmiento, City Clerk

April 22, 2024
Date Approved by City Council