

### Citizen Bond Committee

May 13, 2025


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Meeting Date

Minutes not approved as board was dissolved

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Date Minutes Were Approved

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Natasha Edmonds (Jun 4, 2025 07:31 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.

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Marcella Sarmiento (Jun 3, 2025 09:43 PDT)

Staff Liaison



**MINUTES OF THE AVONDALE CITIZEN BOND COMMITTEE**  
CITY OF AVONDALE, ARIZONA  
MESQUITE CONFERENCE ROOM  
May 13, 2025

A **Regular Meeting** of the Citizen Bond Committee of the City of Avondale, Arizona was convened at 11465 West Civic Center Drive in open and public session at 6:18 p.m.

**Voting Members Present:** Chair Edmonds; Vice Chair Schuh; and Committee Members List, Arellano, Lopez-Davey, Ruoti, and De La Riva.

**Non-Voting Members Present:** Committee Member Duncan-Billiman.

**Members Absent:** Committee Member Sapata.

**Other Municipal Officials Present:** Katie Gregory, Assistant City Manager; Renee Weatherless, Finance and Budget Director; Robert Baer, Budget Manager; Stephen Kemp, Attorney; Nayeli Carranza, Finance Specialist; and Marcella Sarmiento, City Clerk.

**Audience:** Approximately ten staff members and four members of the public were present.

**1. ROLL CALL**

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Committee Member De La Riva moved to approve the March 11, 2025, Citizen Bond Committee meeting minutes; Vice Chair Schuch seconded the motion.

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

Chair Edmonds	Aye
Vice Chair Schuh	Aye
Committee Member Ruoti	Aye
Committee Member De La Riva	Aye
Committee Member Lopez-Davey	Aye
Committee Member Arellano	Aye
Committee Member List	Aye
Committee Member Duncan-Billiman	Non-Voting Member

City Manager Corbin addressed the Committee stating the feedback and direction provided was heard and incorporated into the process. Citizen education includes the fact that this originated from the Committee and residents setting priorities. Whether the budget passes or not, this Committee performed their role. Mr. Corbin thanked the Committee members on behalf of the City Council and City Staff for their participation in developing a better product for the citizens of Avondale.

### 3. BOND ELECTION PROHIBITED ACTIONS

Paul Bentz, Senior Vice President of Research and Strategy at HighGround Public Affairs, provided an overview of A.R.S. § 9-500.1, the prohibition for using City Resources to influence the outcome of an election according to.

Ms. Gregory stated with the Committee's work completed, the next step is to inform and educate the community. There are opportunities and restrictions for employees, and committee members, post committee members, and citizens of Avondale to tell the story.

Mr. Bentz stated in accordance with State Statute A.R.S. 9-500.14, the City shall not spend or use its resources to influence the outcome of elections. This is important to remember when the question comes up as to whether the City is doing their part in advocating for or against a ballot item. They simply are not allowed to influence, but they do have an obligation to educate the public about what is on the ballot.

City Ambassadors fall under example and non-exempt employee categories who are prohibited from advocating for the election while on duty. Any time they are at an event on behalf of the City or wearing a City Uniform or brand apparel that was given to them, they can inform the public but are prohibited from advocating for the election. The purpose is to not give the impression the City is advocating one way or the other.

City issued vehicles, phones, and emails are not permitted to be used to advocate for the election. In general, anything the City has paid for must remain neutral. City employees and anyone associated with the City can express their political opinions and participate in election discussions when off duty and City resources are not being used.

There is factual language that can be stated while using City resources.

- There is an issue on the ballot to provide additional Park and Public Safety Resources
- The Avondale City Council Submitted two Bond Proposals to the voters this November
- All voters are encouraged to learn more and vote
- Prop 404 invests in parks, trails, and libraries throughout the city.
- Prop 405 invests in fire, emergency, and police facilities.
- Tell them the day the ballots drop, when they arrive in the mailboxes, the last day to mail them, and when to vote.

Voter turnout is low, and a typical response is they never heard anything about the election. Encouraging people to vote is one of the most helpful things you can do. Any interaction is an opportunity to deliver the City's story. Any audience will have preconceived notions, but the goal is for the speaker to guide the conversation and communicate message points and repeatedly communicate the message points in the

community. Repetition emphasizes what people should remember, which needs to be done seven times before gaining their attention.

Recommended factual talking points that are allowed and can be spoken about quickly in the first instance and expounded on if time and attention permit.

- The 2025 bond program addresses the City's needs.
- Proposition 404 invests in parks and quality of life.
- Proposition 405 invests in public safety.
- These bonds will not result in a City tax rate increase.
- Bonds are financially responsible.

Mr. Bentz provided some examples of how to use the talking points in a conversation.

The presentation continued with a review of a slide titled "BE's and Don'ts" – and other tips. When speaking to the public, be passionate, concise, and factual. Do not speculate, be negative, or advocate if on city time. It is okay to stay silent, pause and think about it, or to say you don't know the answer and you will try to get the answer for them. Never repeat negative language, be disciplined and turn the negative around to deliver positive messages, such as "let me tell you what the City is doing". Don't bridge questions with key messages. Avoid engaging in social media posts, most are built to pick fights and create doubt on a subject.

Always ask people to vote and do it repeatedly. Remind them of the important dates associated with the election beginning with the voter registration on October 6, 2025, ballots being mailed out on October 8, 2025, last day to mail back is October 28, 2025, and election day is November 4, 2025. If you did not mail your ballot by October 28, 2025, find a drop box to put it in before 7:00 p.m. on November 4, 2025.

There are many ways a citizen can become involved in the election process.

- Write a letter to be included in the Voter Information Pamphlet.
  - The form can be obtained at the Cit Clerk's Office. There is a \$50.00 entry fee.
- Write a letter to the Editor
- Share the proposed information on social media, but do not engage in arguments
- Conduct neighborhood walks or gatherings.
- Conduct Speaking Engagements
  - These must remain neutral and non-influential
- Form a Political Action Committee
  - Formed for the primary purpose of influencing the outcome of an election. Require the filing of a campaign financing form. Contact the City Clerk for more information.

There are many things you can do to get connected and remember the City is doing their part by educating the community and not influencing them. The two things to

remember when you leave here today is that the election is on November 4, 2025 and early voting starts October 8, 2025.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Bentz explained the propositions are separated because history shows that voters like to pick and choose, it creates transparency, allows for line-item budgeting, and allows the City to propose different issues at smaller amounts. Attorney Kemp noted that the flyer of what to say to residents is public information and can be posted on personal websites. Ms. Sarmiento stated presently there are no Political Action Committees in Avondale. Ms. Gregory explained the Bond Committee is the first to receive this information and the education process will begin soon. Should anyone be interested in starting or joining a Political Action Committee, they should contact Ms. Sarmiento. It was clarified this was the last official meeting of the Bond Committee because they have fulfilled their obligation. A discussion ensued related to the Ambassadors who are considered City staff and their limitations compared to Committee members who did not become Ambassadors.

#### **4. BOND ELECTION - NEXT STEPS**

Katie Gregory, Assistant City Manager, presented the upcoming Bond Election next steps and reviewed the election timeline. City staff are preparing a series of four to five videos in both English and Spanish, related to the facts surrounding the election. The short, factual, and to the point videos will be posted on the City's website and made available to the public between May and July. A draft of the first video was played for the Committee. Feedback from the Committee was to include the WWW and for the speaker to have more enthusiasm.

Between May and October City staff will attend events and public meetings to share information about the election. This will include HOA meetings, Boards and Commission meetings, Special Events, and an Open House. The Ambassadors are encouraged to participate or be present. The calendar of events will continue to be updated, and emails will be sent to the Ambassadors and Bond Committee members.

Additional dates to remember

- July 9, 2025, is the date the letter for the Pamphlet is due if anyone wishes to submit one.
- October 6, 2025, is the last day for voter registration.
- October 8, 2025, is when the ballots will be mailed.
- November 4, 2025, is election day.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Sarmiento, discussed election results, noting the preliminary results are posted online at 8:00 p.m. on election day. It takes an additional 10 to 20 days to count every ballot. The official results are announced after they are adopted by the City Council.

**5. CITIZEN BOND COMMITTEE FUTURE RECOGNITION**

The Citizen Bond Committee Members were invited to attend the June 16th City Council Meeting to be recognized for their service. This item was for discussion only.

**6. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the Committee Vice Chair Schuh, moved to adjourn the Regular Meeting; Committee Member Arellano seconded the motion.

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

Chair Edmonds	Aye
Vice Chair Schuh	Aye
Committee Member Ruoti	Aye
Committee Member De La Riva	Aye
Committee Member Lopez-Davey	Aye
Committee Member Arellano	Aye
Committee Member List	Aye
Committee Member Duncan-Billiman	Non-Voting Member

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.