



Sustainability Commission Meeting

**Municipal Operations Service Center
399 E Lower Buckeye Road Avondale,
AZ 85323**

Wednesday, May 28, 2025, at 6:30 P.M.

Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order at 6:31 P.M.

2. Roll Call by Staff Liaison

Members Present: Chair Daniel Schuh and Commissioners Paul Lemmon, Diana Estrada, Ben Ruoti, and Ramon Sanchez (arrived at 6:54 P.M.)

Members Absent: Vice Chair Daniel Smith-Castillo and Commissioner Al Nunez

Staff Present: Kimberly Anderson, Sustainability Officer / Staff Liaison; Pier Simeri, Marketing and Public Relations Director.

3. Unscheduled Public Appearances

No public present.

4. Bond Election Information

a. City Staff will present information regarding the 2025 Bond Election.

Ms. Anderson introduced Pier Simeri, Marketing and Public Relations Director, who will provide an overview of Proposition 404 and 405, the Citizen Bond Committee recommendations, and the November 4, 2025, election.

Ms. Simeri began the presentation by defining bonds as being a secure and fiscally responsible way for cities to finance large capital projects. However, according to the Charter and the Law, voter approval is required. A Citizen Bond Committee of nine members was formed and charged with understanding the priorities in the city, the capital improvement projects, benefits of a General Obligation Bond (GOB), and obtaining feedback from residents. The City Council also directed the committee to not recommend a financing plan that would increase the property tax rate.

The Citizen Bond Committee were unanimous in preparing a recommendation to be presented to the City Council. In April 2025, the City Council approved the

recommendation to forward two questions, known as Proposition 404 and 405, to voters for consideration at the November 4, 2025, election. This will be the first GOB election since 2007.

Ms. Simeri provided an overview of the Propositions highlighting the key components. Proposition 404 asks for \$68 million to fund improvements for Parks, Trails, and Libraries. The improvements will include new and expanded shade in the park, improvements to existing parks including parking, building trailheads in key locations and building six miles of continuous trail along the Aqua Fria River working towards a full regional trail connection, and significantly enhancing the Civic Center Library.

Proposition 405 asks for \$55 million to fund enhancements to the emergency response times and ensures first responders have necessary facilities for training and operations. These enhancements include building a Southern Avondale Fire / Police Substation within the Alamar Subdivision, building a new Public Safety Headquarters, building a Police Firearms Training Facility, expanding the main Police Station, and expanding the City Court Office.

Ms. Simeri reviewed the current City tax rate that will be maintained with the previously reviewed recommendations with bonds being issued as old debt is paid off. The City of Avondale has low debt per capita, strong financial policies, and strong fiscal health that result in high bond ratings and credit worthiness. Fitch provides AAA ratings and Moody's provides AA1 ratings, both very impressive.

The election is only by mail, with a voter registration deadline of October 6, 2025. Ballots will be mailed to all registered voters on October 8, 2025, the last day to mail the ballots back is October 28, 2025, and election day is November 4, 2025, with all ballots in by 7:00 PM. Visit www.avondaleaz.gov/bond for more information.

Chair Schuh commented on the 2007 GOBs and City's fiscally responsible practices.

Commissioner Ruoti commented on his annual HOA meeting that was attended by the Mayor but there was no mention of the election. Ms. Simeri explained staff may tell people about the election and provide information on what the bonds will fund, but they are unable to lobby for the election. Public education material is currently being developed. Commissioner Lemmon added clarification regarding the HOA meeting, noting Citizen Bond Committee members will be attending a meeting in July to discuss the bonds and election process.

5. Approval of March 26, 2025, Minutes

COMMISSIONER LEMMON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MARCH 26, 2025, AS PRESENTED. COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED 5-0 WITH CHAIR SCHUH, AND COMMISSIONERS LEMMON, ESTRADA, RUOTI, AND SANCHEZ VOTING IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

6. Update Chair and Vice Chair positions

Chair Schuh explained a new Chairperson and Vice Chairperson is elected every year. Chair Schuh stated he is unable to accept a nomination as he has already served the maximum of two consecutive years. Commissioner Lemon stated he is unable to accept a nomination as his term is up on the Commission after the next meeting.

COMMISSIONER LEMMON MOVED TO NOMINATE COMMISSIONER RUOTI AS CHAIRMAN. COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ SECONDED THE NOMINATION, WHICH CARRIED 5-0 WITH CHAIR SCHUH, AND COMMISSIONERS LEMMON, ESTRADA, RUOTI, AND SANCHEZ VOTING IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

CHAIRMAN SCHUH NOMINATED COMMISSIONER ESTRADA AS VICE CHAIRPERSON. COMMISSIONER RUOTI SECONDED THE NOMINATION, WHICH CARRIED 5-0 WITH CHAIR SCHUH, AND COMMISSIONERS LEMMON, ESTRADA, RUOTI, AND SANCHEZ VOTING IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

Chair Ruoti and Vice Chair Estrada will assume their roles at the next meeting.

7. Sustainability Updates

Ms. Anderson provided an overview of the Sustainability Updates.

- **Water**
The Water Story will be featured in the upcoming Water Quality Report, which will be sent to residents in June. Also included, there will be a breakdown and update on the water portfolio, the drought, highlights of the water system process, and a map of the city.
- **Application Submittal for Tohono O'odham Grant**
An application will be submitted for the Tohono O'odham Grant in the amount of \$39,995. If awarded the funds, they will be used to purchase dredging equipment for in-house dredging projects at Crystal Garden Wetlands. The city entered a

dredging contract to remove sediment from the lake that will take approximately three years. A discussion ensued and Commissioner Lemon sought information to share with his HOA.

- SRP Biomass Power Partnership Program Agreement
The City Council at the May 19, 2025, meeting approved the City of Avondale to sign onto the SRP Biomass Power Partnership Program. This is a cooperative cost share agreement with other cities throughout the valley including Tempe, Scottsdale, Gilbert, Phoenix, and Mesa. Avondale is the first in the West Valley to sign this partnership that supports the overall health of the Arizona forest through city projects, supports Biomass Power production from the bioproduct of thinning projects occurring in Northern parts of Arizona, supports renewable energy production, and diversion of carbon emissions. Additionally, renewable energy credits (RECs) will be received and used to demonstrate renewable energy use, which meets the 80% renewable energy use at City operations goal within the Sustainability Plan.

Ms. Anderson provided an overview of the complex process of how the catastrophic wildfires in northern Arizona along with drought, heat, and a choked forest affect the Ponderosa Pine Forest. Prior to the catastrophic fires, the forest would be treated with a thinning process, which the City of Flagstaff and other northern parts of Arizona are starting to do to reduce catastrophic wildfire and return the Ponderosa Pine Forest to its historic health.

An opportunity was created for Novo Biomass Power Production. They utilize the smaller timber (the biomass) that was being left behind after the thinning process and burning it to create steam to create power generation. This facility is in Snowflake AZ. SRP came in and funded these projects which created renewable energy.

Catastrophic wildfires also affect the water resources, and the water shed because the ground becomes impenetrable, preventing the water from going into the forest floor and percolating into the ground and feeding the aquifers. The water becomes part of mudslides into the waterways eventually ending up in the SRP water and creating sediment that must be dredged.

There is a \$5,000 cost per year which is funded through Ms. Anderson's budget and supports the efforts being made to ensure the health of Arizona that directly impacts water supplies in the valley.

Chair Schuh stated he intends to visit the biomass facility in Snowflake.

- **Community Sustainability Grants**

Ms. Anderson noted she is currently working with the Neighborhood and Family Services Department on developing a Sustainability Internship through the new Avi-Pro Internship Program. The intern would conduct community outreach and develop the sustainability grant program for future implementation. This opportunity will be posted in July and offered to currently enrolled college students

In response to Commissioner Ruoti's questions, Ms. Anderson stated both four-year and community college students are eligible, and priority would be given to Avondale residents.

8. Commissioner's Comments

Chair Schuh suggested Commissioner Estrada contract Ms. Anderson, Commissioner Lemmon, or himself with any questions pertaining to her role as Vice Chairperson

Chair Schuh spoke about the Avondale Mill program and his participation. Commissioner Lemmon also commented on his participation noting the website was easy to use and informative.

9. Adjournment

The next Sustainability Commission Regular Meeting is scheduled for July 23, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

COMMISSIONER RUOTI MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:25 P.M.
COMMISSIONER ESTRADA SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED 5-0 WITH
CHAIR SCHUH AND COMMISSIONERS LEMMON, ESTRADA, RUOTI, AND
SANCHEZ VOTING IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

Ben Ruoti
Ben Ruoti (Jul 30, 2025 07:58:08 PDT)

Ben Ruoti, Chair

Kimberly Anderson

Kimberly Anderson
Sustainability Officer as Staff Liaison

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the meeting held on the 28th day of May 2025. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held, and that the quorum was present.

Kimberly Anderson

Kimberly Anderson
Sustainability Officer as Staff Liaison

May 2025 Sustainability Commission Meeting Minutes

Final Audit Report


2025-07-30

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