

Neighborhood and Family Services Commission

March 26, 2025

Meeting Date

September 24, 2025

Date Minutes Were Approved


Natosha Edmonds (Sep 26, 2025 10:36:40 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.


Mayra Garibo-Davila (Sep 26, 2025 10:13:40 PDT)

Staff Liaison





Neighborhood and Family Services Commission Meeting

Wednesday, March 26, 2025, 6:00 p.m.

AZ Complete Health Avondale Resource Center, 995 E. Riley Drive
Aravaipa Conference Room
Avondale, AZ 85323

Physical Access to the Aravaipa Conference Room will be available 30 minutes prior to the meeting.

MEETING MINUTES

Commission Members in Attendance: Louis Matamoros, Pearlette Ramos, Natosha Edmonds, Eddie James, Michelle McMullen, Fabian Prado, Dawn Gerundo,

Commission Members Absent: Jerome Brownlee Jr.

City Staff and Guests in Attendance: Neighborhood & Family Services Director Christopher Lopez, Administrative Assistant Alisa Chavez, Avondale Assistant Police Chief Albert Bates

1. Call to Order

The Neighborhood and Family Services Commission meeting was called to order by Fabian Prado at 6:00 PM.

2. Review and Approval of November 13, 2024, Meeting Minutes

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

3. Avondale Police Department Update:

Assistant Chief Albert Bates provided an update on Avondale Police Department operations, noting a steady decline in crime over the past 2.5 years. Assistant Chief Bates stated the department used weekly CompStat reports to monitor crime patterns. He also shared the department was short, seven officers, but expected ten new recruits within the next week and leadership was planning for future staffing needs. Assistant Chief Bates indicated a new K-9 facility was under construction behind the Resource Center building that would support specialized training.

Mr. Matamoros asked about the duration of the academy and field training. Assistant Chief Bates explained that new officers completed a six-month police academy, followed by 16 weeks of field training, before being assigned to a patrol beat. He also indicated the department was allotted 73 officers for patrol duties, with additional personnel assigned to various specialized teams.

Mr. Prado asked about the most common crime, and Assistant Chief Bates responded that vehicle burglaries were the most prevalent, often crimes of opportunity. He also indicated the department promoted the "Lock It How You Keep It" campaign and has distributed steering wheel locks to residents in high-risk areas through a recent grant.

Mr. Lopez asked for further information regarding the Citizens Academy. Assistant Chief Bates explained that the program ran from September 15 to 20, during which approximately 20 residents met once a week, and participants learned about different areas of the police department, gained insight into departmental operations, engaged in hands-on activities, and had the opportunity to ask questions.

Mr. Lewis shared that completing the course gave him a strong sense of pride in living in Avondale. Assistant Chief Bates noted that the department's staff allowed for shaping a forward-thinking culture where all applicants were personally interviewed by the Chief to ensure shared values. He also added the Police Chief had a discussion that emphasized the importance of accountability and the department's commitment to transparency.

Ms. Edmonds asked how Avondale's Police Department compared to other cities. Assistant Chief Bates responded that the department performed well, offering competitive pay, strong benefits, and high morale. He also added employee departures had been tracked since 2000 to understand reasons such as relocation, agency transfers, or concerns with compensation or morale.

Ms. Edmonds said that she found the Citizens Academy to be a fantastic experience and thoroughly enjoyed it. She also inquired about the recent departure of several officers from the department over the past few months. Assistant Chief Bates responded that, in some cases, when officers are held accountable for their actions or performance, they may choose to leave and continue their careers at another agency.

Ms. Edmonds also inquired about the "Copy 10/10" podcast. Assistant Chief Bates explained that the "Copy 10/10" podcast was produced by local Avondale officers where each week, the podcast featured a new guest from either within the Police Department or another City department, offering insights into their roles and responsibilities.

Mr. Lopez asked about new technologies to improve police effectiveness. Assistant Chief Bates shared that ATVs and side-by-side vehicles were used to patrol the river bottom, a common area for large gatherings. He also added that ShotSpotter, a system that detected and pinpointed gunfire, was being considered, with a free trial underway, and the department was also seeking grants to cover the \$50,000–\$60,000 annual cost. Assistant Chief Bates stated that two side-by-side vehicles cost \$100,000 and physical barriers were also being considered to prevent ATV trespassing in the area. Assistant Chief Bates stated the RTCC monitors traffic, city, and business cameras to provide real-time updates to responding officers, with one staff member stationed in Glendale to oversee Avondale's camera network and officers are also certified in drone operations.

Mr. Lopez asked about collaboration with Neighborhood and Family Services (NFS). Assistant Chief Bates said resource officers work with the SONAR (Street Outreach Navigation and Resources) team to support homeless outreach.

Assistant Chief Bates also reported a new fire and booking station were under construction at the site of the old jail and Tolleson has an agreement to use the new booking station.

Mr. Gerundo asked about the department's relationship with Litchfield Park. Assistant Chief Bates stated Litchfield Park fully funds its own staff and has requested an additional traffic officer, which may be considered in January. He also indicated Avondale has eight school resource officers, and elementary schools are now requesting their presence.

4. Election of 2025 Officers:

Mr. James nominated Mr. Prado for the position of Vice Chair and Ms. Edmonds for the position of Chair. The motion was seconded by Ms. Gerundo. Both Mr. Prado and Ms. Edmonds accepted their respective nominations. The vote was approved unanimously with an Aye by Members present.

5. Avondale Leading Edge Non-Profit Community Impact Award:

Mr. Lopez shared that Mercy House in Cashion, which serves underserved residents, has been selected for this year's award and it will be announced at the State of the City event on April 10. Mr. Lopez added this is the initiative's second year and is expected to continue next year.

6. Future Agenda Items

- Presentation from the Neighborhood and Family Services Divisions
- Overview of Economic Development and/or Parks & Recreation
- Update from the Fire Department

7. Announcements

Mr. Lopez provided information on the following projects and events:

- Health & Resource Fair: The upcoming Health & Resource Fair will highlight various city departments as well as the nonprofit partners the City works with. Approximately 43 nonprofit organizations are expected to participate. The event will feature entertainment, food, and access to community resources. It will take place on Saturday, April 5 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the resource center.
- VTIA Tax Preparations: Free tax preparation is being offered through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. Services are available on Tuesdays from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. and on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- The AviTemp program is designed to help students develop essential workplace skills and connect with mentors. The positions offered through this program pay slightly above minimum wage and are primarily office-based and located throughout the city. The goal is to enroll 20 student participants in the program.

- Contributions Assistance Program: The City of Avondale has committed \$200,000 in small grants to support local nonprofit organizations that serve the Avondale community. Priority will be given to nonprofits focused on health, food access, and medical services. Grant applications will open on April 22nd and close on May 15th. Funds will be distributed in July. In an effort to support grassroots organizations and promote equity, the City has also offered two free grant-writing workshops for local nonprofits.
- Kids Fest, organized by the Parks and Recreation Department, will take place on April 12. The event will include various family-friendly activities and feature a Superhero 5K run.

8. Call to the Public

None

9. Adjournment

Mr. James made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Ms. McMullen. The motion passed unanimously with an Aye by Members present. The meeting adjourned at 7:12 PM.

Next meeting, 6:00 p.m. – AZ Complete Health Avondale Resource Center – June 25, 2025.