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Sustainability Commission Meeting

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

Thursday, September 25 2025, at 6:30 P.M.

Minutes

1. Call to Order at 6:30 P.M.

2. Roll Call by Staff Liaison

Members Present: Chair Ben Ruoti, Vice Chair Diana Estrada and Commissioners Paul Lemmon, Al Nunez, Daniel Schuh (arrived at 6:32 pm) and Alternate Commissioner Amanda Duncan-Billiman

Members Absent: Commissioners Ramon Sanchez, and Daniel Smith-Castillo

Staff Present: Kimberly Anderson, Sustainability Officer / Staff Liaison, Katrece Bird, Senior Management Analyst, Amber Hughes, Water Conservation Coordinator

3. Unscheduled Public Appearances

No public present.

4. Approval of July 23, 2025, Meeting Minutes

COMMISSIONER LEMMON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JULY 23, 2025, AS PRESENTED. COMMISSIONER NUNEZ SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED 4-0 WITH CHAIR RUOTI, VICE CHAIR ESTRADA, AND COMMISSIONERS LEMMON, AND NUNEZ VOTING IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES. (Commissioner Schuh was not present during the vote)

Newly appointed Alternate Commissioner Duncan-Billiman provided a brief introduction of herself and why she wanted to join the Sustainability Commission. Ms. Anderson, along with the Chair, Vice Chair and Commissioners, briefly introduced themselves.

5. Water Conservation

Amber Hughes, Water Conservation Coordinator, presented and discussed the water conservation program which was updated for 2025/2026. There are water wise strategies provided to residents to increase water conservation efforts. Many water conservation resources are free and not only save water but money too.

AquaSmart was a program funded by a grant from Water Infrastructure Finance Authority (WIFA) that sought to change residents' behaviors and conduct water audits on municipal facilities. The program had 146 active participants that were required to complete the one-year course to be eligible for up to \$150 in rebates. To date approximately 40 rebates have been processed for shower heads and toilet kits, in addition to three \$150 irrigation rebates offered to participants who completed the optional irrigation course. The goal was to have participants reduce their water usage between 10 and 20 percent and on average there was a 42 percent success rate per group.

In response to questions from Commissioners, Ms. Hughes stated the only requirement for the irrigation monitor was it had to connect to WiFi with and be controlled by an app on the phone. It is hard to pinpoint why one group would have more success than another; however, among many variables it could be some who want to save water more than another, some already use very little water, and it is hard to save another 20 percent. Participants who used all the water saving devices provided to them saved more water than those who chose not to. Age was not a variable tracked during this program.

Changes have been made to the rebates, such as the Xeriscape Rebate doubled from \$400 to \$800 for landscaping utilizing natural living native or native adapted plants. Shower head rebate increased to \$25, a smart irrigation controller rebate for \$100 replaced the regular irrigation control time \$50 rebate, the HE washing machine rebate remains at \$100, low flush toilets remains at \$75, and a \$200 rain barrel (x2) or cistern rebate has been added. Water conservation kits are available upon request among other free items that can assist in decreasing water usage.

Avondale waterwise classes are popular courses offered in partnership with Goodyear and Buckeye with 279 current registrants and 43 more for the next four classes. A variety of offerings include hydroponics, composting, raised beds, and caring for citrus among others. Participants in classes offered in Avondale and Goodyear usually receive a gift or gift certificate.

The metropolitan area has been preparing for the Colorado River cuts since the 1980s because the contract drawn up back then was during an unusually "wet" time, which was not realized until after the contract was signed. A drought preparedness

plan was developed and continues to be monitored and adjusted as needed. According to the contract Arizona will take the biggest cut of water from the Central Arizona Project (CAP). Avondale does not receive all their water from CAP and maintains a diverse portfolio. As everyone is aware, the valley is in stage one of drought, and these cuts will begin in 2026. Should Avondale move to stage two or three the plan will continue to be encouraging and enforcing water conservation. Ms. Hughes provided an overview of the Drought Preparedness Plan including the declaration of authorization.

Ms. Anderson clarified the cuts are for the Colorado River Allocations and the original contract is due for revision. This region has been in a drought for 20+ years and unfortunately Arizona will get decent cuts compared to other states based on the treaty.

In response to questions, Ms. Hughes advised Avondale will move stages on the Drought Preparedness Plan, it is unclear if it will stop at two or go to three. Meeting with the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association (AMWUA) and consistent review of the preparedness plan is preparing the City the inevitable cut. Ms. Anderson added regional efforts are underway including messaging.

Ms. Hughes continued the presentation explaining Avondale does not utilize the entirety of the CAP allocation and store excess underground, which makes the city unique.

An overview of the audit results of municipal buildings and steps taken to correct situations, such as leaks. Waterfluence is a free platform developed using grant funding from SRP to be utilized by HOAs, commercial properties, schools, and parks that saves money and creates a scientifically created water budget. The platform tracks water use and money savings, with a goal to reduce water use in commercial facilities, residential developments, and educate the public on water conservation and available programs. Presently 47 sites are connected to Waterfluence. An overview of how to utilize the information was provided.

Ms. Hughes reviewed new programs being offered to bring more awareness to water conservation. These include Commercial and HOA Water Conservation, Commercial Kitchen Programs, Green Business Program, and Personalized Services. Go to bookings on the website to book an appointment with her.

Commissioner Lemmon spoke about the Green Event that will be held at Garden Lakes HOA on October 4, 2025, in which Ms. Huges will conduct a presentation to educate the residents on green spaces and water conservation.

Ms. Hughes reiterated booking time option on the website is a new initiative that

was sent to all HOA property managers and will be sending it next to commercial businesses.

6. Sustainability Updates

Ms. Anderson presented and discussed upcoming volunteer opportunities for members of the Sustainability Commission.

1. Billy Moore Days October 16 – 18, 2025 from 6:00 to 11:00 PM
Amber Hughes will attend a booth promoting composting and sustainability initiatives. This is an opportunity for members to volunteer their time and help spread the message.
2. Citizens Leadership Academy, October 25, 2025
If any members have not taken the course now is the time to sign up for it.

In November, JD from Recycled City aka R.City will host a composting class to teach residents how to compost at their residence using the Mill Food Recycler and provide free composting kits to Avondale residents.

The sustainability team will be welcoming an intern to the team through the paid AviPro Pilot Program. The interns focus during their 12 weeks will be to develop a draft a comprehensive community sustainability grant program to include criteria, rubric, and application. Ms. Anderson asked three commissioners to volunteer to review the draft and provide feedback during the development process. Chair Ruoti, Commissioner Lemmon, and Commissioner Nunez volunteered to fill those roles. Ms. Bird shared her excitement for the intern and noted she would be in touch with the three commissioners to schedule a time to review the program.


7. Adjournment

The next Sustainability Commission Regular Meeting is scheduled for January 28, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.

COMMISSIONER SCHUH MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:29 P.M. COMMISSIONER LEMMON SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED 5-0 CHAIR RUOTI, VICE CHAIR ESTRADA, AND COMMISSIONERS LEMMON, NUNEZ, AND SCHUH VOTING IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.



Benjamin Ruoti, Chair



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 25th day of September 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