



City of Avondale

Neighborhood and Family Services Commission Meeting

Commission Members

Jerome Brownlee Jr., Commissioner

Natosha Edmonds, Commissioner

Dawn Gerundo, Commissioner

Eddie James, Commissioner

Louis Matamoros, Commissioner

Michelle McMullen, Commissioner

Pearlette Ramos, Commissioner

Amber Light, Alternate Commissioner

Neighborhood and Family Services Department

Christopher Lopez, Director

Edith Baltierrez, Assistant Director

Mayra Garibo-Davila, Administrative Assistant



Neighborhood & Family Services Commission Meeting Notice & Agenda

Wednesday, September 23, 2026

**AZ COMPLETE HEALTH AVONDALE RESOURCE CENTER | ARAVAIPA CONFERENCE ROOM
995 E. RILEY DRIVE AVONDALE, AZ 85323**

Request to Speak: Anyone wishing to speak regarding items listed on the agenda or under unscheduled public appearance should submit a Request to Speak online at <http://www.avondaleaz.gov/requesttospeak> prior to consideration of that agenda item.

REGULAR MEETING | 6:00 PM

Physical access to the conference room will be available 30 minutes prior to the meeting.

1. CALL TO ORDER BY CHAIR

2. ROLL CALL BY THE STAFF LIAISON

3. UNSCHEDULED PUBLIC APPEARANCES (Time is limited per person. Please state your name.)

4. MINUTES

The Commission will consider the approval of the June 24, 2026, meeting minutes. The Commission will take appropriate action.

5. PARKS & RECREATION PRESENTATION

The Commission will receive a presentation from the Parks, Recreation & Libraries Assistant Director, Stacy Swainston. This item is for discussion only.

6. MEETING RESCHEDULE

The Neighborhood and Family Services Commission will consider a request to reschedule the December 23, 2026, meeting to November 4, 2026. The Commission will take appropriate action.

7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Staff and Commissioners will discuss future agenda items. This item is for discussion only.

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Staff and Commissioners will share updates and announcements. This item is for discussion only.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Individuals with special accessibility needs, including sight or hearing impaired, large print, or interpreter, should contact the City Clerk at 623-333-1000 or TDD 623-333-0010 at least two business days prior to the meeting. Personas con necesidades especiales de accesibilidad, incluyendo personas con impedimentos de vista o oído, o con necesidad de impresión grande o intérprete, deben comunicarse con la Secretaría de la Ciudad al 623-333-1000 o TDD 623-333-0010 al mínimo dos días hábiles antes de la junta.



**Neighborhood & Family Services Commission
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 24, 2026**

AZ COMPLETE HEALTH AVONDALE RESOURCE CENTER | ARAVAIPA CONFERENCE
ROOM
995 E. RILEY DRIVE AVONDALE, AZ 85323

MEETING MINUTES

Commission Members in Attendance: Dawn Gerundo, Natosha Edmonds, Louis Matamoros, Eddie James, Jerome Brownlee Jr., Michelle McMullen, Amber Bailey Light

Commission Members Absent: Pearlette Ramos

City Staff and Guests in Attendance: Neighborhood & Family Services Assistant Director Edith Baltierrez, Senior Services Division Manager Brian Planty, Administrative Assistant Yvonne Bravo

1. Call to Order

The Neighborhood and Family Services Commission meeting was called to order by Natosha Edmonds at 6:02 PM.

2. Roll call by Staff Liaison

3. Call to the Public
None

4. Review and Approval of March 25, 2026, Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the March 25, 2025, meeting minutes was made by Mr. Louis Matamoros and seconded by Mr. Eddie James. The minutes were approved unanimously with an Aye by Members present.

5. Homeless Services Presentation

Mr. Brian Planty presented an update on Avondale's homelessness response efforts, highlighting the expansion of the City's coordinated outreach model, current service trends, housing outcomes, and recent client success stories. He reported that the City has strengthened its response through the SONAR (Street Outreach Navigation And Resources) team with continued emphasis on trust-based engagement, permanent housing placements, treatment referrals, and wraparound support.

Mr. Jerome Brownlee Jr. asked for clarification on wraparound care. Mr. Planty explained that wraparound care refers to the supportive services provided alongside housing to help individuals maintain stability and avoid returning to homelessness. Mr. Planty stated that these services can range from periodic case management check-ins to daily personal assistance, depending on the client's needs.

Mr. James asked why the 2026 figures appeared close to the full-year 2025 totals and requested clarification on the correlation between staff activity and outreach.

Mr. Planty explained that several factors affect the comparison, including economic conditions, referrals from other cities, and seasonal patterns in homelessness services. Mr. Planty noted that outreach activity remains strong because staff spend significant time in the field building trust and engaging individuals over multiple contacts, which does not always immediately translate into lower case numbers or exits. Mr. Planty further advised that summer heat often leads more individuals to seek indoor shelter, while the holiday season can temporarily reduce unsheltered homelessness as some individuals reconnect with family. Mr. Planty added that, although the early-year figures appear similar, the city has continued to see year-over-year declines and expects additional seasonal decreases later in the year.

Ms. Michelle McMullen asked how eligibility for homeless services is determined and whether there is a time limit on assistance. Mr. Planty explained that services are available to individuals experiencing homelessness in Avondale and that the City's approach is based on crisis response and connection to appropriate services rather than formal program enrollment. Mr. Planty stated that staff continue working with individuals until their homelessness is resolved, they leave the city, or they choose to disengage from services.

Ms. Dawn Gerundo shared that, through Project Connect and related outreach events, she has encountered individuals who are hesitant to enter shelter because they fear temporary placement will leave them back on the street after losing what little stability they had. She noted that mistrust of the system is a significant barrier and agreed that, in her experience, individuals do not want to remain homeless.

Ms. Edmonds asked how individuals access homeless services and whether the city tracks referrals from the public. Mr. Planty responded that most individuals are engaged through direct field outreach and that staff spend significant time in the community building trust and connecting individuals to services. Mr. Planty noted that an individual entering the Resource Center is often an important step toward developing a housing plan. Mr. Planty also stated that barriers such as pets or other personal circumstances may affect a person's willingness to accept certain service options and emphasized that the city works to address those barriers in a supportive and nonjudgmental manner.

Mr. Brownlee Jr. asked whether living in a vehicle is considered homelessness and where individuals or families should be referred if observed in that situation. Mr. Planty explained that homelessness generally includes staying overnight in a place not meant for human

habitation and noted that the city is seeing an increase in individuals and families living in cars. Mr. Planty stated that families may be hesitant to seek help due to fear of losing their children, but clarified that homelessness alone is not illegal and does not, by itself, result in child removal. Mr. Planty advised that individuals may be referred to the Resource Center or the SONAR team for outreach and assistance and added that family homelessness has increased significantly in recent years while family shelter options remain limited.

Ms. McMullen asked whether the city works closely with the City of Phoenix.

Mr. Planty stated that Avondale participates in biweekly countywide coordination calls with homeless services leaders to discuss resources, align outcomes, and coordinate service delivery across municipalities. Mr. Planty noted that Avondale has invested approximately \$4 million in homeless services, which he described as a significant commitment for a city of its size. Mr. Planty added that, although regional collaboration has improved, further work is needed to ensure all municipalities contribute an equitable level of resources and support based on community need.

Mr. James asked about the main reasons for limited coordination and execution among some municipalities. Mr. Planty responded that contributing factors include differing perceptions of homelessness across jurisdictions and, in some communities, a cultural reluctance to invest in human services. Mr. Planty also noted that responding to homelessness often requires sustained, long-term investment, which can make the return on investment less immediately apparent. Mr. Planty added that when nearby municipalities do not dedicate adequate resources to these efforts, the effects are felt directly by communities such as Avondale that have made stronger investments in services.

Mr. Matamoros asked how immigration status affects access to services and what federal funding supports the City's work. Mr. Planty stated that the City follows federal requirements and that services are provided based on need, with staff focused on assistance, outreach, and service connection. Ms. Gerundo also commended Avondale for their efforts.

Mr. Matamoros asked about the time frame for bridge housing. Mr. Planty explained that it is generally anticipated to take about six months for families to transition out of bridge housing. Mr. Planty noted that if a family is not yet stable and still needs additional support or life skills development, they may be able to remain longer. Mr. Planty added that each unit can accommodate up to five people.

Mr. James asked whether pets would count toward occupancy limits. Mr. Planty stated that the City and nonprofit partner would work on procedures related to pets. Mr. Planty also noted that eligibility requirements would include Avondale residency or children attending school in Avondale.

Ms. Gerundo asked how many units would be available, and Mr. Planty responded that there would be six units.

Ms. McMullen asked about the waitlist, and Mr. Planty stated that there were currently several households on the waitlist in Avondale alone.

Ms. Edmonds asked when the project was expected to be completed. Mr. Planty responded that completion was currently anticipated in mid-September. Mr. Planty added that a significant portion of the funding was coming from Maricopa County and noted that this will be the first bridge housing project of its kind in the County.

6. Future Agenda Items

The Commission expressed interest in receiving a presentation from Parks, Recreation, and Libraries.

7. Announcements

Ms. Baltierrez provided updates on the following projects and events:

- The Summer Lunch and Learn Program was available to children and youth ages 18 and under. Meals were served Monday through Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The program operated from June 1 through August 14.
- The Avondale Resource Center served as a hydration and cooling station as part of the Heat Relief Program. Services were available from May 1 through September 30 during regular business hours, including holidays.
- The City's annual Light Up the Sky celebration was held at Phoenix Raceway. Gates opened at 6:00 p.m., and the fireworks display began at 8:25 p.m. This free community event featured food trucks, a kids' zone, and live entertainment.
- A total of 59 applications were received for the FY2027 Contributions Assistance Program. The review committee met and finalized their funding recommendations. An award ceremony has been scheduled for August 27 at 5:30 p.m.

Chair Natosha Edmonds left the meeting at 6:52 p.m.

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Matamoros and seconded by Ms. McMullen. The motion passed unanimously with an Aye by Members present. The meeting adjourned at 6:59 PM.

Chair Natosha Edmonds - Not Present

Next meeting, 6:00 p.m. – AZ Complete Health Avondale Resource Center – September 23, 2026.