

**Phoenix City Council
Transportation, Infrastructure, and Planning Subcommittee
Summary Minutes
Wednesday, Apr. 17, 2023**

City Council Chambers
200 W. Jefferson St.
Phoenix, Ariz.

Subcommittee Members Present

Vice Mayor Debra Stark, Chair
Councilwoman Kesha Hodge Washington
Councilwoman Ann O'Brien
Councilwoman Laura Pastor

Subcommittee Members Absent

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Mayor Stark called the Transportation, Infrastructure, and Planning Subcommittee to order at 10:00 a.m. with Councilwoman Kesha Hodge Washington, Councilwoman Ann O'Brien and Councilwoman Laura Pastor present.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

None.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

1. Minutes of the Transportation, Infrastructure and Planning Subcommittee Meeting

Vice Mayor Stark made a motion to approve the minutes of the Feb. 21, 2024, Transportation, Infrastructure, and Planning meeting. Councilwoman O'Brien seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 4-0.

CONSENT ACTION (ITEMS 2-9)

Items 2-9 were for consent action. No presentations were planned, but staff was available to answer questions.

2. Intergovernmental Agreement with Valley Metro – Ride Choice Program

Councilwoman Pastor requested additional information.

Public Transit Department Director Jesus Sapien responded that about a year ago, staff issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) to renew a contract for subsidized transportation for seniors and individuals with disabilities but received no proposals. In May 2023, staff obtained Council approval for a one-year extension of the existing contract and planned to transition users to a similar Valley Metro Ride Choice program.

Councilwoman Pastor asked whether the Valley Metro Ride Choice program is like Dial-a-Ride or a separate service.

Mr. Sapien clarified that Valley Metro Ride Choice is separate from Dial-a-Ride. The program is exclusively for individuals who choose to schedule their own taxi-based trips and operates independently from Dial-a-Ride.

Councilwoman Pastor asked about the complaint process under the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA), questioning whether concerns should be directed to Valley Metro or handled directly by the City before informing Valley Metro Ride Choice.

Mr. Sapien stated that residents can report issues to City staff or Valley Metro, the contract holder. He noted that the City participates in Valley Metro's Transportation program meetings, including Ride Choice, ensuring some contract oversight.

Councilwoman Pastor raised concerns about constituent confusion between Valley Metro and the City of Phoenix's roles. She emphasized the need for clear contractual authority and oversight to enable the city to address and resolve service issues effectively.

Mr. Sapien agreed.

Councilwoman O'Brien made a motion to approve items 2-9 Councilwoman Pastor seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 4-0.

3. Phoenix Bus Rapid Transit Planning Support Services Contract Amendment

No councilmember requested additional information.

4. Fiscal Year 2024- 25 Assessment for Water Industry Research and Partnerships

No councilmember requested additional information.

5. Fiscal Year 2024 Assessments for the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association

No councilmember requested additional information.

6. Approval to Issue Terminal 4 Lobby Retail Revenue Contract Solicitation and Extend Current Retail Contract

No councilmember requested additional information.

7. Approval of Phil Gordon Threatened Building Grant – First Baptist Church

No councilmember requested additional information.

8. Approval of Phil Gordon Threatened Building Grant – Yaun Ah Gim Groceries

No councilmember requested additional information.

9. 2024 Membership with the National Association of City Transportation Officials

No councilmember requested additional information.

INFORMATION ONLY (ITEMS 10-11)

10. Water Services Department Annual Financial Plan Update

Information only. Vice Mayor Stark stated that at Councilwoman O'Brien's request, the matter will be included as a future agenda item in the coming months.

11. Street Transportation Department Capital Improvement Program for FY 2023-29

Information only. No councilmember requested additional information.

Vice Mayor Stark noted that Dan Penton was registered for item 11 but chose not to speak.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION (ITEMS 12-13)

12. Text Amendment Work Program Update

Deputy City Manager Alan Stephenson introduced Tricia Gomes, Deputy Director of Planning and Development, who updated the Subcommittee on the Text Amendment Work Program.

Vice Mayor Stark commended staff for their past work on text amendments related to affordable housing, noting significant progress. She acknowledged staff's flexibility and expressed understanding that some items needed priority advancement.

Councilwoman Pastor asked how the choices on the list were determined.

Ms. Gomes responded that staff consulted with all council offices to gather feedback on their priorities. Given the wide range of interests, their approach was to address multiple initiatives simultaneously by grouping them into overarching themes.

Councilwoman Pastor noted the list's fluid nature. She understood that priorities might shift based on urgent needs like parking reductions and drought concerns. She expected the team to continue addressing ongoing projects while starting necessary new ones, referring to them as "low-hanging fruit."

Ms. Gomes responded that priorities are in motion, but adjustments will be made as new issues arise or priorities shift.

Councilwoman Pastor asked the difference was between a use permit and a special permit.

Ms. Gomes responded that a special permit undergoes rezoning process and requires approval from mayor and council. A use permit is a quasi-judicial process handled by the hearing officer, Board of Adjustment, and potentially proceeds to Superior Court.

Councilwoman Pastor asked the reasoning behind changing it.

Ms. Gomes clarified that while assessing the impact of land use, a special permit typically has a broader range of impact. In contrast, the uses addressed by a use permit are smaller and more localized, focusing on the impact on adjacent properties.

Councilwoman Pastor addressed a dispute in her neighborhood where a residential home could be converted into a nursing home, leading to significant community debate and involvement from the Neighborhood Services Department (NSD). She noted the need for more notification in quasi-judicial processes compared to special permits informing residents. She emphasized her commitment to community input despite legislative resistance.

Ms. Gomes explained that special and use permits allow public input, with the special permit providing broader notification. She emphasized that both processes consider the impact on surrounding areas.

Mr. Stephenson added that use permits allow for residential uses in commercial zones, such as multifamily apartments, while special permits are needed for nursing homes. This arrangement ensures that nursing homes, similar in function to apartment complexes in terms of serving a population, comply with zoning regulations.

Councilwoman Pastor thanked staff for their clarification and intended to inform community members of these distinctions. She raised concerns about sign standards and lighting in her district, which have previously led to legal challenges, and stressed the need for clear regulations to prevent future disputes.

Ms. Gomes acknowledged the ongoing issues with sign standards and lighting, noting that they consulted a lighting expert and managed interim measures through application stipulations. She confirmed efforts to codify these into zoning regulations.

Councilwoman Pastor inquired if these changes would finalize the regulations to end the case-by-case approach and ensure clarity in the zoning ordinance. She expressed gratitude for the progress and requested confirmation that these standards would be integrated into formal regulations.

Councilwoman O'Brien revisited Councilwoman Pastor's earlier point to clarify the notification range differences between a special use permit and a use permit.

Ms. Gomes specified that for a special permit, property owners within 600 feet and neighborhood associations within one mile are notified, while a use permit notifies property owners within 150 feet and neighborhood associations within 600 feet.

Councilwoman O'Brien expressed enthusiasm for the expansion of townhomes citywide, which supports diverse and starter home opportunities in the North Valley. She commended the initiatives on sustainable transportation and suggested adding micromobility parking to enhance city walkability. She proposed exploring an expedited service option, like third-party DMV services, for city processes.

Planning and Development Director Josh Bednarek responded that the department is scheduled to discuss process improvements at the upcoming May 21st policy meeting. Although expedited services are not currently proposed, he welcomed a discussion on innovative strategies during that meeting.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington favorably discussed how housing initiatives will be prioritized sooner than previously anticipated, specifically by March 2025. She inquired about the distinction between the housing text amendments scheduled from July 2024 to March 2025 and other outstanding amendments.

Ms. Gomes explained that the initial housing amendments focus on expanding single-family townhomes and adjusting permits for specific residential care facilities. She mentioned upcoming community discussions about appropriate areas for increased density, which will inform future housing amendments.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington suggested considering text amendments for alternative living arrangements like co-living spaces to ensure a variety of housing options are supported by current zoning codes. She also asked about consolidating or separating lighting and sign standards, referencing earlier discussions.

Mr. Bednarek acknowledged the complexity of the text amendment for lighting and signage, citing previous unsuccessful attempts to secure a consultant with the necessary legal and technical expertise. He hoped that the next RFP would attract suitable assistance.

Vice Mayor Stark closed the discussion, commending the staff for their hard work and progress on essential text amendments despite being understaffed, and she thanked everyone for their contributions to the meeting.

13. Parks and Recreation Aquatic Update

Deputy City Manager Mario Paniagua introduced Parks and Recreation staff, including Director Cynthia Aguilar, Assistant Director Tracee Hall, Deputy Director Scott Coughlin, and Aquatic Supervisor Becky Kirk.

Ms. Kirk presented an update on the Parks and Recreation Department 2024 Aquatic Season.

Councilwoman Pastor suggested extending park hours, particularly during swim season, to better accommodate residents' schedules. She noted the challenge of attending swim lessons that typically start at 6:00 p.m. after work and sought clarification on lesson timings.

Ms. Kirk explained that swimming lessons start at 6:00 p.m. and can run until 8:00 p.m., depending on the location. Additionally, morning lessons begin as early as 9:45 a.m., with open swim hours sandwiched between them. Aquafit and swim team programs may start as early as 7:30 a.m.

Councilwoman Pastor emphasized the maximization of pool usage during specific times. She inquired whether all pools were being utilized during those peak hours.

Ms. Kirk clarified that not all pools have identical programming. Staff allocation and demand dictate programming variations, with adjustments made based on previous years' demand trends.

Councilwoman Pastor expressed concern about program availability at Encanto Pool due to high demand and waitlists. She inquired about strategic alternatives for residents if Encanto is fully booked, suggesting focusing on activating facilities in other areas. She sought insight into the scheduling process, drawing from her experience maximizing space at a community college.

Ms. Kirk confirmed that Encanto Pool is fully booked, offering programming from 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. She suggested alternative facilities such as Coronado, Madison, and Perry Pools, which offer similar programming and are easily accessible from Encanto.

Councilwoman O'Brien expressed gratitude for the increased pool openings this year, reminiscing about fond childhood memories at Cortez Park. She thanked the team for their hard work and acknowledged the challenges faced due to the impact of COVID-19.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington echoed Councilwoman Pastor's sentiments and expressed satisfaction that over half of the park pools would be opening despite challenges from the pandemic. However, she raised concerns about certain pools like East Lake and Grant in her district not opening. She inquired about plans to provide transportation for residents to access nearby pools during the summer.

Ms. Aguilar outlined the park system's goal of opening 23 out of 29 pools this year, with some pools undergoing renovations or repurposing into splash pads due to the General Obligation (GO) Bond initiative. She explained the challenges of staffing and transportation, noting previous efforts to transport youth participants to nearby pools and expressing a willingness to explore similar initiatives again.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington emphasized the importance of prioritizing access to pools for children, acknowledging potential barriers like lack of familiarity and transportation. She highlighted the need to ensure that despite renovations, parks remain accessible cool spaces for the community during the summer months.

Councilwoman Pastor asked about repurposing pools into splash pads. She sought clarification on the location and process of repurposing, aiming to understand where the splash pads would be installed and how the repurposing would occur.

Ms. Aguilar responded that the splash pads would be installed in the same location as the existing pools and confirmed that the splash pads would be implemented as part of the existing pool areas.

Councilwoman Pastor followed up by inquiring about the process of determining and executing the repurposing of the pools. She asked whether discussions had been held with council members regarding this matter, hinting at further discussion on related topics.

Ms. Aguilar explained that discussions regarding pool repurposing occurred during the bond process, involving the Mayor, Council, and the Executive Bond Committee. The concept addressed aging infrastructure, staffing challenges, and lack of amenities by transforming pools into splash pads and providing neighborhoods with options for year-round amenities beyond typical summer pool seasons.

Councilwoman Pastor emphasized the importance of transparency regarding pool repurposing, particularly in historically black and brown neighborhoods. She highlighted the need for community understanding, clarifying that the pools are being regionalized, with some transformed into regional pools. She sought clarity on the repurposing process, questioning whether the existing pool would be filled in before installing the splash pad.

Mr. Coughlin explained that in the repurposing process, the existing pool would be demolished, returning the area to native soil. He referenced recent splash pad installation at Mariposa, suggesting that existing equipment could be repurposed for splash pads. He noted that certain structures would remain, possibly serving as park bathrooms or other amenities.

Vice Mayor Stark opened the floor to public comment.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Lindsay Ruck raised concerns about unfair treatment by SSP America and urged the City to assess if SSP America is a suitable contractor.

Meschelle Hornstein pointed out the firing of union activists and urged the City to fulfill its responsibility and assess whether SSP America is the appropriate contractor.

David Bonilla, a cashier at SSP America at Sky Harbor, currently on leave to work as an organizer with Unite Here Local 11, emphasized the firing of union activists.

Jerry Van Gasse voiced concern over the delayed renovation of South Mountain Park, intended for completion by its centennial year in 2024. He demanded transparency and accountability, noting growing public and press scrutiny.

Isabella Renfro cited unfair treatment by SSP America, alleging racial disparities in hiring and pay. She noted unfair labor practices charges and the firing of nine union activists, including a whistleblower.

Tim Sierakowski expressed concerns about South Mountain Park, citing issues like dirt dumping and water system problems. He questioned the delays in renovations and stressed the need for better park maintenance.

Chaska Coggeshall raised concerns about unfair labor practices by SSP America, citing allegations of racial disparities. She urged the City of Phoenix to conduct a thorough investigation into these issues.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Vice Mayor Stark outlined future agenda items for discussion. In May, the subcommittee plans to discuss Bulk Trash and West Phoenix High-Capacity Transit. In June, the subcommittee aims to add the Water Annual Financial Plan as a discussion item.

Councilwoman Pastor suggested adding an item about South Mountain and Phoenix Parks and Preserve Initiative Program (3PI) to a future agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice Mayor Stark adjourned the meeting at 11:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kat Consador
Management Fellow