

Attachment A

Phoenix City Council Public Safety and Justice (PSJ) Subcommittee Summary Minutes November 5, 2025

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

Subcommittee Members Present
Councilman Kevin Robinson, Chair
Vice Mayor Ann O'Brien
Councilwoman Betty Guardado
Councilman Jim Waring

Subcommittee Members Absent

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Robinson called the Public Safety and Justice Subcommittee (PSJ) to order at 9:33 a.m..

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

None.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

1. Minutes of the Public Safety and Justice Subcommittee Meeting

Vice Mayor Ann O'Brien made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 3, 2025, Public Safety and Justice Subcommittee meeting. Councilman Jim Waring seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 4-0.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION (ITEM 2)

2. Consideration of Judicial Appointments

Chairman Kevin Robinson introduced the item and stated there are currently three vacant seats on the Phoenix Municipal Court. Chairman Robinson stated the subcommittee will be interviewing seven candidates recommended by the Judicial Selection Advisory Board and candidates will be required to limit their responses to two minutes. Chairman Robinson added once the interviews are complete, the meeting will be opened for public comment, then members of the subcommittee will convene in an executive session for deliberations and after the executive session, members of the subcommittee will reconvene in open session to recommend up to three individuals to the full City Council for appointment.

Chairman Robinson introduced the first candidate, Neha Bhatia.

Vice Mayor Ann O'Brien asked how would you approach sentencing in cases involving repeat low-level offenses, balancing public safety, neighborhood impact and rehabilitation.

Neha Bhatia stated the person's background has to be taken into consideration. Ms. Bhatia stated it has to be a whole holistic view of everything. She stated you have to look at the person's criminal history, the effect they're having on the community, the effect they're having on community safety, the cost that they're costing their community and question why.

Councilman Jim Waring asked what cases will be the most difficult to rule on and why.

Neha Bhatia stated having worked with domestic violence cases, those are the most difficult to rule on because she often worked with victims that didn't want to go forward with prosecution. She stated as a judge it would be difficult to know a victim is recanting or doesn't want to go forward and presiding over that situation. Ms. Bhatia also stated cases involving mental illness are difficult. She stated it is difficult to weigh the community safety, the community needs, the victim's needs and how to counteract that to make sure that the person is being treated fairly and that their issues are being addressed.

Councilwoman Betty Guardado asked what role do you believe a municipal court judge plays in addressing systemic inequities in the justice system.

Neha Bhatia stated the judge is that role model and that is why diversity and representation is important on the bench. Ms. Bhatia stated when a person is before you and sees that you are either a woman or minority, then it would help them feel like they're being heard. She stated that a judicial officer's role is to make sure that everyone is heard and that everyone feels comfortable. She added seeing someone that looks like you goes a step further to help them understand that they are being heard, that they're being respected, and that their voice does matter whether they're the victim or the defendant.

Councilman Robinson asked Ms. Bhatia to describe a time when she faced an ethical dilemma in her legal career and how did she resolve it.

Neha Bhatia stated as a prosecutor a case that stuck out to her involved very serious child abuse and she had to argue for dismissal without prejudice. Ms. Bhatia stated she couldn't go forward prosecuting this woman knowing that it was there was at least some chance she didn't do it. She added this included having to talk to the victims to explain to them why she, ethically, could not go forward with the case anymore.

Chairman Robinson thanked the candidate.

Chairman Robinson introduced Pamela Dunne.

Vice Mayor O'Brien asked how would you approach sentencing in cases involving repeat low-level offenses, balancing public safety, neighborhood impact and rehabilitation.

Ms. Dunne stated she is guided by what the plea agreement contains and if it is after trial, there is no plea agreement, so she always considers mitigation, victim input, what the defense attorney is requesting, what the state is requesting, what probation is requesting and she balances all of it to hopefully come up with a just sentence.

Councilman Waring asked what cases will be the most difficult to rule on and why.

Pamela Dunne stated she has been on the bench so long she does not know if there is a particular case that is difficult for her to rule on. She stated it is always challenging when there has been great harm to the victim and she just weighs and balances everything before her, follows the law and considers mitigation and aggravation. Ms. Dunne stated to date the hardest case she has had was in juvenile where she was asked to remove life support from a 14-year-old. Ms. Dunne stated she followed the law and rendered the decision.

Chairman Robinson asked the candidate to describe a time in which she faced an ethical dilemma in her legal career and how did she resolve it.

Pamela Dunne stated when she was assistant attorney general, she ran a Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and had to uphold federal grant requirements for the unit which required her to deny a request of the attorney general. She stated she felt what she did was right and followed the ethical guidelines of the grant.

Councilwoman Guardado asked what role do you believe a municipal court judge plays in addressing systemic inequities in the justice system.

Pamela Dunne stated she believes every case is not just a case it is a person, and we must treat them with fairness, impartiality, dignity, and respect. She stated if there are inequities present, they need to be addressed. She added, for example if someone is unhoused, she is not going to assess the normal \$65 per month probation services fee because they won't be able to afford it. Ms. Dunne stated another way to address inequities is to ensure there is a transparent system, one in which everyone is treated fairly and has due process, and judges can also provide reasonable accommodations.

Chairman Robinson thanked the candidate.

Chairman Robinson introduced candidate Brett Hutchison.

Councilwoman O'Brien asked how would you approach sentencing in cases involving repeat low-level offenses, balancing public safety, neighborhood impact and rehabilitation.

Brett Hutchison stated he listened to the subcommittee's September meeting, and I understand what they're expecting of their judges in the future. Mr. Hutchison stated that repeat offenders need to be held accountable for their actions. He added from what was discussed during the September subcommittee meeting is that the community is concerned with people being arrested and then being released in a very short time. Mr. Hutchison stated it is not appropriate and should not continue to go on.

Councilman Waring asked what cases will be the most difficult to rule on and why.

Brett Hutchison stated he has a significant amount of experience in Phoenix Municipal Court, so there aren't a lot of cases difficult for him to rule on. Mr. Hutchison stated he has been in his current role as a civil judge for almost eight years and was with the prosecutor's office for approximately eleven years before then. He stated cases that were difficult in the past included on that had a large apartment complex being cited by the City of Phoenix where he encouraged lawyers from both sides to work closely together and come with a community resolution that would solve the problem.

Councilwoman Guardado asked what role do you believe a municipal court judge plays in addressing systemic inequities in the justice system.

Brett Hutchison stated it is very important that everyone is treated with fairness and respect. Mr. Hutchison stated he has a great deal of experience with this and is familiar with tactics that have been employed by various prosecutorial agencies in the past that were essentially referred to as a trial tax. He added that he worked specifically on one case where the gentleman's offer pre-trial was seven years and after a two-day jury trial, he was convicted and sentenced to twenty years. Mr. Hutchison stated that it seemed unfair to him and sentencing a person to more than about three times what the pre-trial offer was is not something that should be done and is not justice in his opinion. He stated he fought hard against that in his career.

Chairman Robinson asked Mr. Hutchison to describe a time when he faced an ethical dilemma in his legal career and how did he resolve it.

Brett Hutchison stated when he was a young prosecutor there was a juror that said something to the effect of "Don't worry, we'll get him, or I'll make sure we get him". Mr. Hutchison stated he then told the bailiff he needed to speak with the judge and defense attorney and when the defense attorney arrived, he advised the judge on what had happened. He stated the defense attorney then moved for a mistrial which was granted. Mr. Hutchison added he shared that story not because it was an ethical dilemma for me, but because what you get with him is somebody who is very ethical.

Chairman Robinson thanked the candidate.

Chairman Robinson introduced candidate William Marby III.

Vice Mayor O'Brien asked the candidate how would you approach sentencing in cases involving repeat low-level offenses, balancing public safety neighborhood impact and rehabilitation.

William Mabry stated it depends on the offenses, the recency of the offenses and any potential for rehabilitation. Mr. Mabry stated he takes all of those into consideration when determining sentencing and we need to be more cognizant of those factors and evaluate them properly for each defendant.

Councilman Waring asked what cases will be the most difficult to rule on and why.

Mr. Mabry stated oftentimes the most difficult cases are those involving children because there are varied offenses that affect children even in the future. He stated there are also other factors that come into play including family background, mental illness and past trauma which can play into the difficulty of dealing with different cases.

Councilwoman Guardado asked what role do you believe a municipal court judge plays in addressing systemic inequities in the justice system.

Mr. Mabry stated in this society, there are some inequities that are not spoken on. He stated there may be lack of awareness in dealing with certain inequities and he believes in his experience being born and raised in the south Phoenix projects, he has a different viewpoint. He stated there has to be awareness of how individuals have come to be in these disputes. He will address those types of inequities, view, and balance them.

Chairman Robinson asked Mr. Mabry to describe a time when he faced an ethical dilemma in his legal career and how did he resolve it.

Mr. Mabry stated one issue that he thinks comes up frequently is dealing with respondents that are represented by council. He stated the respondents he has dealt with have limited financial resources. He stated it is very important that attorneys properly represent their clients, and he faced an ethical dilemma when counsel failed to take required action. He stated the attorney had not met with the defendant or prepared them for trial, and he had to sanction the attorney and continue the matter so the defendant could get new counsel.

Chairman Robinson thanked the candidate.

Chairman Robinson introduced candidate Christine Mulleneaux.

Vice Mayor O'Brien asked how would you approach sentencing in cases involving repeat low-level offenses, balancing public safety, neighborhood impact and rehabilitation.

Christine Mulleneaux stated this issue recently came up. Ms. Mulleneaux stated she is currently a prosecutor and frequently deal with repeat offenders for low-level offenses and after speaking with police officers on the force she learned they have a different view. She stated she asked the officers if they were the sentencing judge how they would handle those cases and they stated one week in jail for the first offense and the second offense perhaps thirty days. She added that she recently went to community court to learn what they do and mentioned the Office of Homeless Solutions meet people on the street. She stated if the court could have access to how many contacts they make with particular individuals, perhaps they can make different sentencing recommendations to the court based on the number of contacts they have been offered in the community.

Councilman Waring asked what cases will be the most difficult to rule on and why.

Ms. Mulleneaux stated the most difficult cases in her experience to rule on are vulnerable populations such as people with mental health issues, people with addiction, and quality of life crimes where people are committing crimes due to poverty. She stated those are most difficult because you are trying to balance fairness with accountability and public safety. She stated the way you reach that balance is more communication, try to find the history of the individual, what resources have previously been offered, and perhaps offer additional resources to correct those situations.

Councilwoman Guardado asked what role do you believe a municipal court judge plays in addressing systemic inequities in the justice system.

Ms. Mulleneaux stated the City's court is the face of justice to our community. She stated many times in the community the judge is the only contact people have had with the justice system. She stated they need to be calm, communicate clearly in plain language, apply the law equally to all people, and allow people to be heard so they feel they've been treated fairly in the court system. Ms. Mulleneaux stated that it is done by temperament with experience ruling from the bench, commitment to public service, meeting the community where they're at, community outreach to understand situations of different individuals, and being familiar with cultural diversity, socioeconomic diversity and linguistic differences in the community.

Chairman Robinson asked Ms. Mulleneaux to describe a time when she faced an ethical dilemma in her legal career and how did she resolve it.

Ms. Mulleneaux stated an example of an ethical dilemma in her legal career is when a case that has been charged that she finds is not legally sufficient. She stated it is her job to ethically determine whether it is legally sufficient to move forward or if it is ethically sufficient. She provided the example, of where a victim was charged with assault by throwing eggs at a group of protesters who responded which resulted in a physical altercation. She stated it would not be ethically correct to proceed with the case, and it could be argued who the victim was. She stated the case was dismissed.

Chairman Robinson thanked the candidate.

Chairman Robinson introduced candidate Dane Paulsen.

Vice Mayor O'Brien asked how would you approach sentencing in cases involving repeat low-level offenses, balancing public safety, neighborhood impact and rehabilitation.

Dane Paulsen stated this is something he feels strongly about. Mr. Paulson stated he has a lot of experience in criminal prosecution and that means he has dealt with a lot of repeat offenses. He stated the city court is in unique position in the community to seek to balance the efforts of rehabilitation in a court and treat offenders with compassion and humanely but also needs to always remember that there is an interested party that's not in the room and that's the community. He added public safety is extremely personal to him and he has spent ten of fourteen years as an attorney in criminal practice. He stated he is aware of the challenges the city is under and as a citizen of Phoenix he has an invested interest in seeing the city be what it can be. Mr. Paulsen added when you deal with repeat offenders, it is important to treat people firmly and apply the law carefully to those cases and keep in mind their humanity but always remember that the responsibility of the court is to protect the community.

Councilman Waring asked what cases will be the most difficult to rule on and why.

Dane Paulson stated the most difficult is domestic violence due to the evidentiary challenges and emotional toll they can take. Mr. Paulsen stated assessing the credibility of the parties is a very difficult challenge for a judge. He added it is important for a judge to act impartially, keep in mind the duties of the court to protect the rights of individuals and recognize the gravity of those offenses and make sure to apply the law evenly while also assessing the credibility of the parties. He stated this comes with experience and that is the kind of experience he will bring to the bench if he were appointed.

Councilwoman Guardado asked what role do you believe a municipal court judge plays in addressing systemic inequities in the justice system.

Dane Paulsen stated Phoenix has a very diverse community and it is extremely important that judges are aware of the inequities that certain communities have faced. Mr. Paulsen stated it is extremely important for a person in his position to understand they haven't experienced the kinds of inequities that others may have and won't possibly understand on a personal level what some people have gone through. He stated a judge needs to start by understanding that every single person that comes into the courtroom brings their entire history and temper as far as they can their preconceived notions. He stated it is important to make sure the law cuts through all those biases and is evenly applied to every single person who comes into that courtroom. He added that he has seen judges that are great at treating people with kindness, respect, and dignity and he will strive to emulate that on the bench.

Chairman Robinson asked the candidate to describe a time when he faced an ethical dilemma in his legal career and how did he resolve it.

Dane Paulsen stated there was a case where the standard plea agreement he did not agree with and he did not feel the sentence that would apply was appropriate and as a young attorney he did not have the confidence to speak up. He stated the ethical dilemma was whether to continue to prosecute the case and how to do so ethically. Mr. Paulsen stated he worked hard to get an exception to what the normal policy would have been and the individual still served a fairly lengthy prison sentence, but he feels strongly that being a judge requires using all your ethics and morals to bear on every case.

Chairman Robinson thanked the candidate.

Chairman Robinson introduced candidate Shannon Peters.

Vice Mayor O'Brien asked how would you approach sentencing in cases involving repeat low-level offenses, balancing public safety, neighborhood impact and rehabilitation.

Shannon Peters stated approaching sentencing required a holistic approach to examining what is better for the community, the safety of the community and the aspects of the crime and defendant. She stated she would balance the mitigating and aggravating factors and consider the safety of the public in cases where defendants are repeat offenders and have had opportunities to engage in our programming at the Phoenix Municipal Court. She added she would examine their previous cases, their history and if jail is appropriate then that would be her response and if they have taken seriously the opportunity to rehabilitate, that is something to consider. Ms. Peters stated you have to take all those factors into consideration and sentence each defendant individually.

Councilman Waring asked what cases will be the most difficult to rule on and why.

Ms. Peters stated it would be difficult to rule on cases involving child abuse and she is a foster parent to two little boys. She stated that experience has given her the opportunity to see from the other side of the bar and gives her a perspective that would be difficult to set aside. Ms. Peters stated as a judge she would be able to take those personal feelings and set them aside to adjudicate each case fairly.

Councilwoman Guardado asked what role do you believe a municipal court judge plays in addressing systemic inequities in the justice system.

Ms. Peters stated it is the judge's job to be conscious of all factors that affect the community, and they have to look at all the circumstances of the person as a whole. She stated they have to consider what opportunities the individual had to undergo rehabilitation, what kinds of circumstances did they grow up under, their access to

education and the choices their parents made. Ms. Peters added Phoenix is a melting pot of diversity and all experiences will come before you as a judge. She mentioned as a judge you have to know what tools are at your disposal and be able to use them.

Chairman Robinson asked the candidate to describe a time when she faced an ethical dilemma in her legal career and how did she resolve it.

Ms. Peters stated when she was a young attorney, there was an individual that came in that had their driver's license revoked due to multiple DUIs and during the consultation, the attorneys had promised the individual of a particular outcome. She stated when she opened the file, there was nothing she could do, and she approached the superiors and told them they needed to return this individual's money they could not help him. Ms. Peters stated they told her to just earn the fee to which she responded she won't and quit the job. She stated at the moment, her ethical obligations to the client and herself overrode and she had the courage and bravery to say no, which has really governed and set the tone for her career.

Chairman Robison stated that concludes all interviews of candidates.

Chairman Robinson thanked the candidates and opened the item for public comment.

John Martinez spoke in favor of appointing Ms. Bhatia as a Municipal Court Judge.

Ed Leiter spoke in favor of appointing Neha Bhatia as a Municipal Court Judge.

Christopher Paige spoke in favor of appointing as a Municipal Court Judge.

Tyler Allen spoke in favor of appointing Shannon Peters as a Municipal Court Judge.

David Allen spoke in favor of appointing Shannon Peters as a Municipal Court Judge.

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to enter into executive session. Councilwoman Betty Guardado made a motion to enter in executive session. Vice Mayor Ann O'Brien seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 4-0. The Public Safety and Justice Subcommittee recessed at 10:44 a.m. for the subcommittee members to enter into executive session.

Public Safety and Justice Subcommittee reconvened at 11:26 a.m.

Chairman Robinson stated that after deliberation the panel has determined to recommend to the full city council appointments of two of the three vacant positions. Chairman Robinson then asked is there a motion to recommend appointment of Brett Hutchinson to a four-year term as municipal court judge expiring on November 19, 2029.

Vice Mayor O'Brien moved to recommend a four-year term for Brett Hutchison expiring November 19, 2029. Councilwoman Guardado seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 4-0.

Chairman Robinson asked is there a motion to recommend appointment of Christine Mulleneaux for a four-year term as a municipal court judge expiring on November 19, 2029.

Vice Mayor O'Brien moved to recommend a four-year term for Christine Mulleneaux. Councilman Waring seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 4-0.

Chairman Robinson asked is there a motion to complete another process to fill the remaining vacancy for municipal court judge within the next 12 months.

Vice Mayor O'Brien moved to complete another process to fill the remaining vacancy for municipal court judge within the next 12 months. Councilwoman Guardado seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 4-0.

Chairman Robinson thanked the candidates and speakers for their attention, presentation and involvement.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION (ITEM 3)

3. Fire Staffing and Response Time

Executive Assistant Chief Tim Kreis presented an overview of the transaction privilege tax (TPT), excise tax, enhancements to the department's budget and specific additions to the department such as Battalion 8, Rescue 12, Ladder 10, Rescue 1, and medical responses.

Executive Assistant Chief Tim Kreis presented on the administration of TPT and General Obligation (GO) Bond funds allocated to the Fire Department. He stated the department created an Executive Advisory Committee and placed into service Battalion eight and human resources staff in July 2025. Executive Assistant Chief Kreis stated in August of 2025 the department placed into service member services, logistics, technical service staff. He also shared upcoming additions to the department include opening Fire Station 74 and putting Ladder 10 into service at the end of 2025.

Assistant Chief Reda Riddle-Bigler presented updates on the Fire Department's hiring, retention and recruitment efforts. Assistant Chief Bigler stated the department is not experiencing significant challenges related to member retention. She also shared the department hosted its first online testing process using Public Safety Answers. She continued by stating the online testing resulted in an increase in applicants taking the firefighter entrance exam with five percent improvement.

Assistant Chief Bigler stated Phoenix Fire Department prioritizes outreach through schools, athletic programs, and wellness programs. She emphasized that wellness, safety, and professional development are vital in attracting and retaining personnel.

Executive Assistant Chief Kreis detailed staff response times by Council district, call volume, and department transport averages.

Executive Assistant Chief Kreis presented population and response times over ten years and stated the department has seen improvements. He also presented the impact of investment on response times and return on investment in the community.

Chairman Robinson asked Assistant Chief Bigler to walk the subcommittee through what someone has to do to pass the online test and the timeline.

Assistant Chief Bigler stated with online testing, it was an open application period of three weeks. She shared once that process concluded at the end of August, it took about a month for the department to compile their list, send notifications and have applicants go through first round interviews. She stated if an applicant passed, they will have a week break, then come back for the second round and be notified the following week, which would be right before Thanksgiving if they have been offered a job with the Phoenix Fire Department.

Chairman Robinson asked within the process is there any physical agility the individual will be responsible for.

Assistant Chief Bigler stated all candidates are required to achieve their candidate physical ability test and maintain that certification which needs to be current within six months of being hired.

Chairman Robinson thanked the presenters.

INFORMATION ONLY (ITEMS 4-5)

4. Community Assistance Program (CAP) Expansion Implementation Report

Information only. No Councilmember requested additional information.

5. Phoenix Police Department Recruitment, Hiring and Attrition Update

Information only. No Councilmember requested additional information.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

None.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Councilwoman Betty Guardado requested that the Phoenix Police Department do a presentation on the Heat Squad.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Robinson adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Taniya Williams
Management Fellow

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