

Meeting Minutes

City Council Work Session

August 14, 2025 | 5:00 p.m.
Council Chambers Conference Room
88 E. Chicago St., Chandler, AZ



Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Kevin Hartke at 5:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Council Attendance

Mayor Kevin Hartke
*Vice Mayor Christine Ellis
Councilmember Angel Encinas
Councilmember Jane Poston
Councilmember Matt Orlando
**Councilmember OD Harris
Councilmember Jennifer Hawkins

Appointee Attendance

John Pombier, Acting City Manager
Kelly Schwab, City Attorney
Dana DeLong, City Clerk

*Vice Mayor Ellis attended virtually.
**Councilmember Harris arrived at 5:18 p.m.

Staff in Attendance

Tadd Wille, Assistant City Manager
Andy Bass, Deputy City Manager
Alexis Apodaca, Mayor & Council Public Affairs Senior Manager
Matt Burdick, Communications & Public Affairs Director
Niki Tapia, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer

Discussion

1. Presentation, Overview, and Chandler's Participation in the International Sister Cities Program

MAYOR HARTKE called for a staff presentation.

JOHN POMBIER, Acting City Manager, introduced the discussion item.

NIKI TAPIA, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer, presented the following presentation.

- Chandler Sister Cities
- History of Chandler Sister Cities
 - Partnered with Tullamore, Ireland in 2009
 - Added Tainan, Taiwan, as a Friendship City in 2016
 - Limited activity from 2020-2023
 - Revived by local leader Mahfam in 2023
 - City resumed support with funding and staff

MAHFAM MOEENI-ALARCON, President of Chandler Sister Cities, continued the presentation.

- Board of Directors
- Chandler Sister Cities
 - Mission
 - To create lasting relationships between the people of Chandler and our International Sister Cities
 - Vision
 - To create Global Awareness: promote economic opportunities
 - To Cultivate People: who will champion humanity, uniqueness, and dignity
 - Operate with Integrity: Embracing professional, ethical behavior and transparent standards
 - Art and Culture: Celebrate the diversity of arts, culture, and stories
- Chandler Sister Cities
 - Importance
 - Foster international goodwill and peace
 - Expand global awareness and cultural understanding
 - Provide Chandler residents-especially youth-with opportunities to engage globally
 - Promote economic development and tourism
- Benefits to Chandler
 - Exposure
 - New ideas in education, technology and business
 - Culture
 - Cultural enrichment through events, performances and festivals
 - International
 - Collaboration in STEM, sustainability and leadership
 - Youth
 - Engagement through leadership opportunities and scholarships
- Chandler Sister Cities Highlights
 - Annual Tullamore SW Tea
 - Youth art contest: YAAS (Young Artists & Authors Showcase)

- YAAS Awards received awards from Tullamore Sister Cities
- (SCI) Tainan hosted Giant Cup Little League with AZ team participation
- Hosted visiting delegates in Chandler
- Booth at 30th Multicultural Festival with cultural games
- Artist exchange with Tullamore
- Initiated Relationship with Global Ties
- Taiwanese community exchange with Mayors Gallego & Hartke
- Joined 2025 Korean War Memorial event
- 2025 Innovation in Arts & Culture Award
- Chandler Sister Cities Wins Award
 - Sister Cities International Annual Conference July 2025
 - Awards Chandler – Tullamore Sister Cities
 - Recipient of the Innovation in Arts and Culture Award
- International Development Efforts
 - Sister City
 - Tullamore, Ireland
 - (since 2009)
 - Chandler's first Sister City
 - Ongoing artist exchange program
 - 2025 Sister Cities International *Innovation in Arts & Culture* Award recipient
 - Friendship
 - Tainan, Taiwan
 - (since 2016)
 - 6th Giant Cup International Little League Champion
 - A sword Lion, the guardian of Tainan City, was presented by Mayor Lai Ching of Tainan as a mark of respect and friendship
 - Establishing New Relationship
 - Cheongju, Korea
 - Maringa', Brazil
 - Launching Outreach
 - Guanajuato, Mexico
 - Vadodara, India
 - Singapore
 - Maracaibo, Venezuela
- Cheongju, South Korea
 - Population: 853,938
 - Education Hub: Home to multiple universities, one of the most educated populations globally
 - Technology-forward city with a growing R&D sector
 - Average age: 41.5
 - Low unemployment: 2.8%
 - Cultural richness: deep historical roots and a vibrant modern arts scene

- Cheongju, South Korea, Maringa', Brazil
- 24/25 Accomplishments
 - Chandler Sister Cities is proud to share an overview of its accomplishments over the past fiscal year. The organization has made significant progress in marketing, community engagement, board development, and goals with sister cities expansion. These accomplishments reflect Chandler Sister Cities' commitment to growth, community involvement, and expanding international relationships.
 - Marketing and Rebranding Efforts
 - Community Engagement
 - International Expansion Efforts
 - Conferences and Networking
 - Board Development
- Board Development
- Mayor & Council Support
 - Your support of Chandler Sister Cities connects Chandler to the world-building cultural exchange, educational opportunities, and global partnerships that enrich our community and elevate Chandler's international presence.
- Thank You

MAYOR HARTKE said it is important to have community support for any proposed sister cities. The current sister cities in Ireland and Taiwan have strong representatives that advocate for events and engagement within Chandler. It is important to have consensus with both cities participating, as establishing the relationship requires a vote of city government on each side.

JACK SELLERS, Chandler Sister Cities Board Member, added that the Friendship City relationship with Tainan, Taiwan was proposed by the former mayor of Tainan.

COUNCILMEMBER POSTON thanked the group for this presentation. The board composition is thoughtfully put together. She supported getting the community involved and building business relationships in the program.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO looks forward to continuing communication with the program. He suggested developing relationships with regions that Chandler has economic ties to.

MAYOR HARTKE said it is important to be realistic in exchanges with other countries of the expectations for economic support.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO said smaller actions can drive economic growth and development for smaller businesses.

VICE MAYOR ELLIS thanked the group for the presentation and the opportunity to interface with other regions interested in joining the Sister Cities Program. She supported the educational part

of this program, especially the student exchange program to show Chandler's opportunities for education.

COUNCILMEMBER HAWKINS thanked the board for the presentation.

COUNCILMEMBER ENCINAS thanked the board for the presentation and asked how new relationships are established with other municipalities.

MS. MOEENI-ALARCON explained that the group follows the tool kit shared by Sister Cities International to evaluate partnerships.

COUNCILMEMBER ENCINAS requested scheduling information for any upcoming meetings.

MAYOR HARTKE said the two existing relationships and four developing relationships under Launching Outreach have relationship aspects within the Chandler community.

MS. TAPIA said one suggestion from Sister Cities International is to have a Sister City on the same continent, which is why the group is looking to build a relationship in Mexico.

VICE MAYOR ELLIS asked if there is a prominent Brazilian community in Chandler to support the proposed new relationship with Brazil.

MS. MOEENI-ALARCON said there is a strong Brazilian community in the East Valley as well as in Chandler. There is not a formal association, but a community that would embrace this program.

VICE MAYOR ELLIS asked about the percentage of Brazilian residents in Chandler.

MS. MOEENI-ALARCON said she will follow up with that information.

VICE MAYOR ELLIS noted that it would be important to consider other variables when proposing new relationships.

MS. MOEENI-ALARCON agreed and said the board ensures all the boxes are checked before initiating a sister city agreement.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS suggested a location in Scotland as a potential sister city.

MS. MOEENI-ALARCON noted that Dr. A. J. Chandler, the founder of Chandler, traced ancestry to a town in Scotland.

Public Comment

BROOK BEALL, 85 W. Teakwood Pl., supported the idea of sister cities and he shared concerns about one of the suggested new sister cities.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

ATTEST: *Dana R. DeLong*
City Clerk

Kevin Harthe
Mayor

Approval Date of Minutes: September 15, 2025

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Work Session of the City Council of Chandler, Arizona, held on the 14th day of August 2025. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

DATED this 15th day of September, 2025.

Dana R. DeLong
City Clerk

