

Meeting Minutes

City Council Special Meeting

September 3, 2025 | 5:00 p.m.
Chandler Center for the Arts
250 N. Arizona Ave., Chandler, AZ



Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Kevin Hartke at 5:12 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

*Councilmember Poston was absent.

CUSD Governing Board Attendance

Patti Serrano, President
Barb Mozdzen, Vice President
Ryan Heap, Board Member
Claudia Mendoza, Board Member
Kurt Rohrs, Board Member

City Staff in Attendance

John Pombier, Acting City Manager
Tadd Wille, Assistant City Manager
Dawn Lang, Deputy City Manager/CFO
Kelly Schwab, City Attorney
Dana DeLong, City Clerk
Ryan Peters, Deputy City Manager
Leah Powell, Deputy City Manager
Matt Burdick, CAPA Director
Kim Moyers, Cultural Development Director
Michelle Mac Lennan, Cultural Arts Manager

CUSD District Administration

Frank Narducci, Superintendent
Lana Berry, Chief Financial Officer
Tom Dunn, Assistant Superintendent
Operations

Presentation and Discussion

MAYOR HARTKE opened the meeting by expressing his appreciation for the discussion, noting that it's always beneficial when everyone comes together to share strengths and talk about common concerns and opportunities.

1. Overview of COC/CUSD Joint Facility Partnership - Chandler Center for the Arts

KIM MOYERS, Cultural Development Director, provided an update on the Chandler Center for the Arts (CCA). She noted past assessments showed a need for expanded space and programming, which were postponed after the 2008 recession. Recent updates confirmed ongoing demand, leading partners to fund a new study by MS Planning and Research. Ms. Moyers then introduced Michelle Mac Lennan to share the study results and plans for the Center's 2026 closure for renovations.

MICHELLE MAC LENNAN, Cultural Arts Manager, presented the findings from the recent needs assessment for expanded arts facilities and provided an overview of the upcoming Capital improvements at the CCA, scheduled for June 15 to October 15, 2026.

MS. MAC LENNAN presented the following presentation.

- Capital Improvements 2026 Closure
- June 15 – October 15, 2026
- Entry/Lobby
- Theater
- Option 1b
- Capital Improvements:
- FY 2026-2027 Shutdown Summary
 - June 15 - Start
 - Rigging
 - Rotating Pod Maintenance
 - Demo Chairs
 - June 22
 - Epoxy Prep/Gring Floors
 - Carpet Demo
 - Fire Sprinkler Maintenance/Scaffolding
 - Electric Floor Lighting – Wire Pull
 - August
 - Electrical shutdown approx. 45 days (will affect HVAC system and all electrical)
 - Electrical equipment yard will have cranes and rigging (coned off walkway)
 - September
 - Flooring – Epoxy
 - Carpet Install

- Chairs Installation
- Electric Floor/Chair Lighting
- Pain/Scaffolding
- Clean up
- Stakeholders Soft Opening
- October
 - October 15th – Last day closed
 - October 16 – Reopen for show commitment
- Questions

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS asked why the renovation isn't being phased, suggesting smaller areas be addressed first to keep parts of the facility open. He requested clarity on the overall strategy.

MS. MAC LENNAN said that because the seating areas use divisible turntable systems, both must be renovated simultaneously. The seating will be reconfigured from a continental layout to a standard row-numbering system. She noted that completing the project all at once is more cost-effective and minimizes disruption. A phased approach would lead to repeated closures and delays.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO asked if the project depends on bond approval and what the cost would be.

MS. MAC LENNAN said it does not rely on a bond. The \$2.3 million project is funded through the capital maintenance program and will be split 50/50 between the city and the school district.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO asked if additional seating is being replaced as part of the project.

MS. MAC LENNAN clarified that seating will be replaced, but no new seats will be added or removed.

COUNCILMEMBER HAWKINS asked if any renovation needs are being left out.

MS. MAC LENNAN said all primary needs identified in the assessment are included, and while future projects may happen, none will require additional closures.

FRANK NARDUCCI, Superintendent, asked if temporary air conditioning could be added to allow limited use of the space during renovations, noting the building often hosts up to 1,000 students during hot months.

MS. MAC LENNAN said that during the last closure, some events were held outdoors, but heat is a challenge. Programs will be moved elsewhere. Tents haven't been considered yet, and adding A/C would be difficult, but options to meet school needs are being explored.

MR. NARDUCCI said there are additional needs.

MS. MAC LENNAN said that the community at large is concerned and emphasized that there will be a significant community need.

MS. MAC LENNAN continued the presentation.

- Arts Facilities Needs Assessment Project Update + Draft Recommendation
- Our problem to solve
 - The conditions thought to exist when we started
 - CCA's utilization is maxed out
 - Increasing demand arts programming offered by CCF and CUSD
 - Unmet demand for more event space and spaces for local arts users
 - Need for a space solution(s) that fosters continued growth and positive community impact
- Context: Stakeholders share distinct, but overlapping facility needs
 - AMS interviewed 26 city, CUSD, and arts community leaders to understand the opportunities and Challenges for the Chandler Center for the Arts.
 - City of Chandler
 - Mid-sized event and/or conference space
 - Present more programs that will draw more people into Chandler
 - Downtown space to compliment current investments
 - Chandler Cultural Foundation
 - Address current space's accessibility and other upgrade issues
 - More space for community arts users
 - Space (and resources) to engage students and young people with professional teaching artists
 - Flexible new work development space
 - CUSD
 - A space for large (and small) non-arts events
 - More time in the CCA space for student performers
 - Dedicated PAC facilities for CHS students
 - Address current space's accessibility issues
 - More/better performing arts teaching space
 - Key Takeaways – Arts Users
 - 54 respondents, a mix of local organization representatives, individual artists, CUSD leaders, and city officials, responded to an AMS survey.
 - Users desire more access to the CCA calendar, and more favorable rental rates. Otherwise, current experiences in CCA facilities are largely favorable.
 - In considering new spaces, multi-purpose, flexible spaces are most desired by respondents. Administrative, classroom, and rehearsal spaces would have higher anticipated use by fewer users.

- CHS' most prominent reported needs are classroom and rehearsal space.
- Key Takeaways – Audience & Community
 - 657 community members responded to a survey about their experience at the Chandler Center for the Arts.
 - 92 % reported being “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their overall experience at the CCA; and satisfaction across specific variables (including location, audience services, ticket delivery and purchasing, venue amenities) is high.
 - Attendance by this group is driven by content (they prefer Broadway- style musicals, music, comedy, and theatre), followed by comfort and location of the performance facility location, and quality of performances.
 - Most respondents participate in pre- or post- show activities downtown; and 62 % strongly agree that the City should support the arts and culture.
- An analysis of facility utilization shows CUSD as majority user
 - The IGA creates a unique model that has served all parties well, but an imbalance in utilization has emerged.
- CCA spaces are oversized for most of CUSD's arts users
 - Most arts uses are rehearsals, many of which do not necessarily require fixed-seat theater spaces.
 - CUSD Performance & Rehearsal Utilization Summary
- CUSD's non-arts events occupy time/space that could be otherwise publicly utilized
 - Most CUSD events do not require the seating or technical capacities of the CCA venues.
 - CUSD Reception, Meeting, Assembly Utilization Summary

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS asked if the other rooms outside the mobile recital space are being used and whether any could be reconfigured to hold more people.

MS. MAC LENNAN said the black box stage and dance studio are reused on weekends for dressing rooms and catering but no larger space is available.

MS. MAC LENNAN continued the presentation.

- Exploration of Facility Scenarios
- Six Scenarios evaluated
 - A flexible studio theater for CUSD's needs
 - A flexible studio theater for CCA's programs
 - Like previous, but bigger – a flexible venue
 - Community arts hub
 - Reimagine a CUSD space for Chandler HS performing Arts
 - An outdoor, music forward facility
- Elements of three combined for recommended scenarios
 - A flexible studio theater for CUSD's needs
 - A flexible studio theater for CCA's programs

- Reimagine a CUSD space for Chandler HS performing Arts
- A Center for Arts Education
 - Creating a dedicated space for CUSD programs to live creates more space for community arts programs to grow in the most cost-effective way
- Order of magnitude cost estimate
 - Rough range, exclusions include site work, demolition, pre-construction, planning, design, fundraising, legal costs, etc.
- If we build it..., what other opportunities does it create?
 - Reduce pressure on existing CCA facilities and calendar, which would allow CCA to host/present more programs
 - CUSD unbounded by day of week or time of day
 - Increase storage space available to CUSD fine arts
 - More space for administrative and production offices in existing CCA facility
 - Space for small studio performance /rehearsal venue in CCA building available to community groups
- If we built something new, what might happen there?
 - At least 172 CUSD events/year could be served by new spaces with capacity <=300. Relocated dance & drama teaching spaces would be regularly active.
- Improvements to CCA
- Map diagram
- Visualization
- Existing Fine Arts Building
- All-in-one option
- What are the possible steps forward?
 - With and/or without a new building
 - Relocate as many CHS non-arts events as possible to open availability for arts use.
 - Revisit the IGA; and explore scheduling strategies that prioritize public-facing arts users
 - Explore phase 1 CCA admin. Building and improvements
 - Determine site and conceptual plan for the Center for the Arts Education
 - Develop capital funding/financing plan

KURT ROHRS, Board Member, asked for clarification on whether the arts building located nearby is part of CCA property or belongs to the Chandler Unified School District.

MS. MAC LENNAN said the school district owns the building and is not part of the CCA. It is used exclusively by students and occasionally shared when needed.

MS. MAC LENNAN continued the presentation.

- Questions
- Thank you

MAYOR HARTKE asked if the IGA would include a study on future facility use, specifically analyzing the four or five venues to determine vacancy rates and explore better space-sharing or simultaneous events.

MS. MAC LENNAN said that since 2007, yield management has been used to handle overlapping events. Smaller events, like those with about 40 attendees, could be relocated to free space for larger or arts-focused events, which are prioritized.

MR. NARDUCCI said that some elementary schools value performing at the arts center, though events rarely fill the 1,300-seat venue. He mentioned plans to renovate Chandler High's overcrowded cafeteria to include space for arts programs, potentially reducing pressure on the arts center.

MS. MAC LENNAN emphasized the importance of students performing at the theater but stressed practical space use, often selecting clients who can fill the venue.

MR. NARDUCCI said that none of these topics are included in the current bond and will require future attention.

LANA BERRY, Chief Financial Officer, explained that 68% of facility usage over four days reflects full-day student use, similar to other high schools, driven by increased enrollment.

PATTI SERRANO, President, highlighted intentional multipurpose designs in projects like the cafeteria rebuild, aiming to meet student needs even when staying on campus.

VICE MAYOR ELLIS said the concern is that the city only uses about 3% of the facility, paying separately for events despite being a 50/50 partner, calling the arrangement inequitable.

MS. MAC LENNAN said that city events are counted through the foundation's contract, but actual city-sponsored events are few due to limited availability, often booked years in advance.

VICE MAYOR ELLIS shared that her business frequently used the lobby for events, but costs have risen over time.

MS. MAC LENNAN said pricing is benchmarked to industry standards and competitive, but high demand forces many event rejections weekly, indicating the venue's success.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS said that city access is limited compared to student use and supported increasing city event scheduling and flexible spaces in future renovations to strengthen partnerships, especially for underfunded arts programs.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO asked if a strong, holistic team and a clear timeline are in place.

MS. MAC LENNAN said the site conceptual plan would guide timelines and capital planning.

JOHN POMBIER, Acting City Manager, affirmed the strong partnership with the school district and readiness to move forward once funding is secured.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO sought clarity on which of the three options to prioritize for progress.

MR. POMBIER suggested combining the school cafeteria expansion with a potential city administration building as phase one, possibly unlocking larger future funding.

COUNCILMEMBER ENCINAS asked about the Chandler High Gold Gym's status.

MR. NARDUCCI said the Gold Gym is historic and costly to renovate but actively used for after-school athletics and fully booked due to multiple teams.

RYAN HEAP, Board Member, expressed concern about future declining enrollment and questioned if projections were considered, given the project's multi-year timeline.

MS. MAC LENNAN acknowledged enrollment decline concerns but said the study used current data and emphasized flexible spaces could serve broader community needs regardless of enrollment.

MR. NARDUCCI confirmed enrollment was considered but noted ongoing production needs justify the facility. He highlighted the strong city-school partnership and suggested that funding would require a future bond, emphasizing the need for an immediate focus on maximizing existing spaces and partnerships.

MS. MAC LENNAN described Phase One as city-driven, involving non-shared spaces like administrative offices and city-managed volunteers, with potential to open more space and improve operations. She stressed the need for long-term planning.

MR. HEAP noted the arts center's high demand and suggested upgrading underused school auditoriums as a cost-effective way to expand access.

MS. MAC LENNAN added that Chandler High must use on-campus space, limiting relocation options.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO asked about alternative financing beyond bonding, such as leasing, purchasing, or private partnerships.

MS. MAC LENNAN said the foundation is developing plans for a potential matching capital campaign, leveraging strong donor relationships, though it would be their first campaign.

MR. ROHRS emphasized extracurriculars like band, theater, and chorus as vital for education, social growth, and keeping students engaged after school to prevent community issues. His primary concern was preserving these programs.

MAYOR HARTKE agreed, stating that the key question is not the importance of these activities but where they should take place, an issue the group continues to explore.

2. City and School District Bond and Override Roundtable

DAWN LANG, Deputy City Manager/CFO, gave a brief presentation on the City of Chandler's upcoming special bond election on November 4, which will coincide with the Chandler Unified School District's election. The city's ballot includes four bond questions and two charter amendments. She explained that the bond supports the City's 10-Year Capital Improvement Plan. The 2021 bond was intended to last seven years but was impacted by inflation, requiring a new election. A 31-member resident committee reviewed all proposed projects and recommended a total bond amount of \$475 million. Key areas include parks and recreation, public safety, and streets. The bond would fund park improvements, a new fire station, equipment replacement for fire and police, renovations to the police admin building, and street infrastructure upgrades. Bond funding supports about 70% of Chandler's capital projects. Ms. Lang emphasized that continued investment is essential to maintain city services and infrastructure.

MS. SERRANO asked how the city can best promote the upcoming bond and what tools are available to support this effort.

MS. LANG said that city staff are conducting a "road show" meeting with various community groups to provide education about the bond. While the city cannot advocate, it aims to inform residents about the bond's purpose and benefits. Additionally, an independent advocacy group will be placing signs and engaging with the community. City staff and Mayor and Councilmembers are also actively providing bond information to residents.

MS. BERRY provided an overview of the district's funding history and its current efforts to inform the public about two upcoming elections: a bond and an override. She recalled when "excess utilities" funding once supported key community projects like pools, libraries, and the Chandler Center for the Arts, funding that no longer exists but was vital to the district's early success. She emphasized that the district's role is to share factual information, not campaign. Outside groups handle advocacy. The override supports teacher pay and student programs, the bond funds school repairs, new buses, and updated technology. Voters have historically supported these measures—only two have failed in the past 34 years (2012 and 2023). Despite declining enrollment due to demographic and housing shifts, the district still serves 40,000 students and employs 5,000

staff, making it the second-largest district and employer in the region. Some question the need for bonds as enrollment drops, but Ms. Berry explained that students still need safe, modern facilities and tools. The district maintains 46 schools on 49 campuses, equivalent to managing 40 Costcos daily. Technology needs have grown, especially post-COVID, with every student now using a device. To keep the public informed, the district has published detailed resources online, including a fact sheet, spending breakdowns, videos, and presentations. Ms. Berry closed by emphasizing that this is a mail-in-only election. Ballots must be returned by the 28th to be counted. Mailing them after Election Day means they won't be processed. The district's goal is to ensure that voters have clear and accurate information to make informed decisions.

3. Hartford Neighborhood Revitalization

MR. NARDUCCI shared that he sees the long-standing partnership between the school district and the city as a significant opportunity. He noted that many towns don't have such collaboration. He recalled jointly undertaking shared space projects, such as libraries, pools, parks, and emphasized that this cooperation extends beyond arts centers to core community facilities. He described the Hartford Elementary area project as a similar effort: rebuilding the facility for improved learning, enhancing infrastructure such as lighting and sidewalks, and promoting community growth around the school. He said they engage the community, teachers, and students to define what "21st-century learning" looks like locally. He also mentioned that the district is waiting on voter approval for funding (via a bond) to build Hartford, after completing architectural planning. He projected the bond would enable construction once it passes and the plan is ready.

TOM DUNN, Assistant Superintendent, Operations, presented the following presentation.

- Slides
- Chandler Unified School District – Hartford Elementary DD Review
- Site Plan for Hartford, Phasing Plan
- Finished Site Plan
- Entry
- Entry – Close up view
- Courtyard
- Courtyard – Internal view
- Fields
- Outdoor Learning Space
- Classroom Entry

COUNCILMEMBER HAWKINS asked if the project would increase student capacity, noting that the city's general plan is underway and future population growth should be considered.

MR. DUNN said that current enrollment is about 750 students, a number that has remained steady, and the new facility will be built to support that same capacity.

MR. ROHRS asked how the redesign would improve traffic, citing heavy congestion during school drop-off times.

MR. DUNN said that all parent drop-off traffic will shift to Hartford Street. The plan, coordinated with the city's traffic engineers, includes on-site queuing to prevent backups. Parents will enter from the south, loop north for drop-off, then exit south. Bus traffic will be routed separately on the west side of campus.

MR. NARDUCCI added that the area along Monterey often receives complaints from residents during events. He noted that the new plan addresses concerns about blocked driveways and current bus traffic in the area.

VICE MAYOR ELLIS asked for the estimated cost of the project and whether it would involve city participation like the Galveston project, especially for underground utilities and infrastructure.

MR. DUNN said the project is budgeted at \$40 million through school district bond funds and is on track. He noted that city-related infrastructure improvements, such as roads or utilities, would fall under the city's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), as is the case with Galveston.

MS. BERRY added that adjacent waste costs will be covered through a dedicated tax.

LEAH POWELL, Deputy City Manager, shared that Public Works is replacing a water main in the area, with road overlays to follow. She confirmed Hartford is an Envision neighborhood, and the city is coordinating across departments. Neighborhood outreach has begun, with infrastructure cited as a top concern. A playground upgrade is planned this year at Navarrete Park, with a \$2.4 million renovation scheduled for FY 2030–31.

4. Quick Overview

a. Revitalization of COE (Cooperative Office Education) Program

MR. POMBIER shared that the city is exploring the idea of revitalizing the COE (Career Opportunities and Education) program. This program previously allowed high school seniors to spend part of their school day working for the city, gaining real-world job experience. Mr. Pombier explained that programs like COE are valuable because they help build a talent pipeline for the city. Many students who participated in the past became long-term employees. One example is the city's current DEI Director, Nikki Tapia, who was part of the program 27 years ago. He emphasized that the city sees this as a strong opportunity to reconnect with the school district and encourage students to consider careers in local government. City staff are currently having internal discussions about how to support restarting the program, which they view as a great tool for attracting and developing future city employees.

MR. POMBIER presented the following presentation.

b. MAG (Maricopa Association of Governments) - The 2025 MAG Region in Review Presentation

- The MAG Region in Review Data Trends Shaping Our Future
- About Mag
- About this Report
- The MAG Region – Map
- Region Highlights
- Population Trends
- Population Change
- A Diverse Population
- Youth Education
- Evolving Housing Patterns
- Housing Vacancy Trends
- Market Trends and Affordability
- Renting Challenges
- Labor Force Trends
- Economic Indicators
- Household Income
- Worker Earnings Trends
- Employers
- Commuting to Work
- Global Connections
- Commercial Real Estate Trends
- Footnotes

Public Comment

LISA CALDERON, 806 S. Emerson St., Chandler, AZ, expressed strong support for the bond proposal from the city and the school district. She shared that she has been actively talking with her neighbors to help raise awareness about the upcoming November election, stressing the importance of voter education. Ms. Calderon thanked the organizers for the opportunity to be involved and expressed appreciation for their efforts.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:59 pm.

ATTEST: _____
City Clerk

Mayor

Approval Date of Minutes: October 13, 2025

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Special Meeting of the City Council of Chandler, Arizona, held on the 3rd day of September 2025. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

DATED this _____ day of October, 2025.

City Clerk