

Meeting Minutes

City Council Special Meeting

November 24, 2025 | 4:30 p.m.
Chandler City Council Chambers
88 E. Chicago St., Chandler, AZ



Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Kevin Hartke at 7:01 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 and Councilmember Harris attended virtually.

Staff in Attendance

Tadd Wille, Assistant City Manager
Dawn Lang, Deputy City Manager / Chief Financial Officer
Ryan Peters, Deputy City Manager
Leah Powell, Deputy City Manager

Invocation

The invocation was given by Mayor Kevin Hartke.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilmember Hawkins.

Discussion and Possible Action

1. Appointment of City Manager and Approval of Employment Agreement
Move City Council appoint John Pombier as City Manager and approve an Employment Agreement for the term of December 1, 2025 through June 30, 2027.

COUNCILMEMBER ENCINAS shared that over the past three to four months, Mr. Pombier, the Acting City Manager, has helped keep the city and its organization moving forward, building a foundation of stability and trust with the community. He took a moment to acknowledge and thank Mr. Pombier for the work he has put in during this time. Councilmember Encinas emphasized that from the beginning of the process, he has been clear about his commitment to honoring the city's traditions and established processes. He recalled that back in June, he stated that he would proceed with a nationwide recruitment process to explore leadership opportunities for Chandler's future. This process would allow for a competitive selection and ensure that residents, employees, and community partners had a voice in the decision. While Councilmember Encinas reaffirmed his commitment to that approach, he acknowledged that Council had chosen a different path. Though it was not the approach he advocated for, he respected the decision of Council. He clarified that his vote that evening was not a reflection of the Acting City Manager's experience or ability, but rather a vote on the missed opportunity to explore all possibilities for Chandler's future leadership.

COUNCILMEMBER POSTON shared that she agreed with Councilmember Encinas' comments and was both surprised and pleased when she learned that Councilmember Hawkins wanted to bring the item forward. She expressed confidence that Mr. Pombier is the best candidate for the role, though she initially hesitated about not making the process competitive, as she wanted Mr. Pombier to have the opportunity to prove his qualifications to everyone. Councilmember Poston also expressed concern about the short timeline, noting that posting the item on Friday and voting on it by Monday didn't allow enough time for public input or for the community to review the contract, especially with the changes made that evening. Despite these concerns, she expressed her support for moving forward, emphasizing that her vote was in favor of the contract. She concluded by commending the Council for having a respectful discussion, even when opinions differed, and reaffirmed her belief that Mr. Pombier is the best choice for the city.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO expressed concern about the process, noting in the past, Council has conducted a nationwide search, which was both thorough and cost-effective. He acknowledged that Council had agreed to move forward in June but was troubled by the short timeline for this meeting, posting the item on Friday afternoon and voting on it by Monday, which didn't allow for sufficient public input or proper preparation. Councilmember Orlando also mentioned his long history with Mr. Pombier, appreciating the opportunity being given to him, but reiterated that he felt the process lacked transparency and citizen involvement. He emphasized that, while the majority of Council chose to deviate from the traditional process, he would respect the democratic decision but remained concerned about the precedent being set. Ultimately,

Councilmember Orlando stated that while he had reservations about the process, he would abide by Council's decision and vote on the contract.

COUNCILMEMBER HAWKINS addressed the city manager selection process, acknowledging her initial concerns but reaffirming her support for Mr. Pombier. She shared that, despite her doubts at the start, she promised to back his appointment because she believed Chandler succeeds when he succeeds. Over the past few months, feedback from residents, employees, and business owners has shown that Mr. Pombier has earned the community's trust and confidence. Councilmember Hawkins emphasized that Mr. Pombier has consistently proven himself through his leadership. Given his performance, deep understanding of Chandler, and strong community support, she believes moving forward with this contract is the right decision. She concluded by stating that launching a national search now would not align with the Council's values of transparency and fiscal responsibility, especially when a proven leader is already in place. She thanked everyone for their input.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS addressed the city manager's contract and the process leading up to the decision. He emphasized that under the city charter, it is the Council, not the City Manager, that sets the contract terms, within the framework approved by voters. He stressed that the process was lawful, charter-driven, and rooted in voter direction. Councilmember Harris explained that the decision was not made overnight. Over the past four months, he closely observed Mr. Pombier's performance, including his interactions with Council, staff, and the community. He noted Mr. Pombier's ability to handle pressure and lead the city effectively, with no delays in service to residents. He outlined that Council, in line with the charter, negotiated the terms and severance, ensuring everything was responsible and legally sound. The final decision was made transparently in a public meeting, allowing for community input. He stated his vote was based on a smart, people-first approach, protecting both the organization's integrity and taxpayers' interests. He reiterated that his vote was not about personality or politics but based on a thorough evaluation process and Mr. Pombier's proven leadership. Councilmember Harris concluded that Chandler deserves a city manager who answers the people, and he would honor that responsibility with his vote.

VICE MAYOR ELLIS explained that her vote tonight is for the people of Chandler, who entrusted her to serve their best interests. She recalled how, a few months ago, she trusted her colleagues' judgment that Mr. Pombier was the best candidate, and she has seen firsthand his ability to lead under pressure and build a strong team. She emphasized that Mr. Pombier's leadership is about understanding Chandler's needs and creating a team to address them effectively. Her vote reflects her trust in Mr. Pombier, her colleagues, the staff, and the people of Chandler, who have expressed a need for stability and continued leadership. Vice Mayor Ellis concluded that her vote is for the 291,000 residents of Chandler and for the city's employees, ensuring they have a leader who will continue to guide them forward. She thanked the people of Chandler for giving her the opportunity to vote in their best interest.

MAYOR HARTKE expressed his appreciation for the collaborative efforts of the Council, noting that while they may not always agree, they work together thoughtfully and diligently. He commended each Councilmember for their commitment to making Chandler a better place, recognizing the responsibility they all carry. Reflecting on the process, Mayor Hartke admitted that while he didn't like how they got to this point, he was glad they did. He expressed confidence in Mr. Pombier's ability to represent Chandler's business community, nonprofits, schools, and residents, noting that Mr. Pombier had provided valuable insights and wise advice during his brief time as Acting City Manager. Mayor Hartke concluded by acknowledging that he had been won over by Mr. Pombier's leadership and was grateful that he applied for the position. He thanked the Council and the community for their continued trust and for placing the future of Chandler in their hands, expressing hope that Mr. Pombier would accept the contract.

Public Comment

SALLY PUTNAM, 1912 W. Thompson Way., Chandler, AZ, 85286, as a resident of Chandler and a local business owner, she expressed her strong support for the city's current City Manager. In her statement, she emphasized her active involvement in the community, noting her role on the board of directors for the Chandler Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Putnam praised Mr. Pombier for his effective leadership, stating that he has been instrumental in addressing various issues and has been approachable and willing to engage in difficult conversations. She stated that with Mr. Pombier in place, there is no need for the city to spend time or resources searching for a new City Manager, as he is already providing strong and effective leadership. She concluded by reiterating her support for Mr. Pombier and his continued role in the city.

CHUCK WOLF, 721 N. Apache Dr., Chandler, AZ, 85224, as a business owner in Chandler, he expressed his strong support for the city's current Acting City Manager, Mr. Pombier. He noted that Chandler has always been a community that fosters economic growth, business expansion, and partnerships, and that Mr. Pombier has continued these efforts. Mr. Wolf defined Mr. Pombier as professional, direct, and responsive, and emphasized that Mr. Pombier has also taken the time to understand the long-term needs of businesses in Chandler. He pointed out that when companies decide to grow, they need certainty, and a city partner who is present, informed, and collaborative. Mr. Wolf said that there was no need to waste taxpayer money or time on a search when Mr. Pombier is already a qualified candidate. He concluded that confirming Mr. Pombier as City Manager would help maintain momentum, reassure businesses and residents, and demonstrate Chandler's commitment to stability and continued growth.

Action Agenda Motion and Vote

Mayor Hartke moved to appoint John Pombier as City Manager and approve an Employment Agreement for the term of December 1, 2025 through June 30, 2027 with amendments to include salary of \$360,000 per year with a \$10,000 sign on payment, clean up 60-day language in Section 8.I-1, and change Section 3.B-3 to allow for six months to relocate consistent with the City Charter; Seconded by Councilmember Ellis.

Motion carried by majority (6-1), Councilmember Encinas dissenting.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

ATTEST: *Dana R. D'Long*
City Clerk

Kevin Harthe
Mayor

Approval Date of Minutes: December 8, 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 24th day of November 2025. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

DATED this 8th day of December, 2025.

Dana R. D'Long
City Clerk

