

Meeting Minutes

City Council Work Session

December 8, 2025 | 4:30 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 5:07 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, City Manager
Kelly Schwab, City Attorney
Dana DeLong, City Clerk

Staff in Attendance

Tadd Wille, Assistant City Manager
Dawn Lang, Deputy City Manager / CFO
Ryan Peters, Deputy City Manager
Leah Powell, Deputy City Manager
Alexis Apodaca, Mayor & Council Public Affairs Senior Manager
Matt Burdick, Communications & Public Affairs Director
Jennifer Ekblad, Deputy City Clerk
Marge Zylla, Strategic Initiatives Director
Brittany Barba, Government Relations Senior Program Manager

Others in Attendance

Greg Burns, Thorn Run Partners*
Jim Davenport, Thorn Run Partners*
Dana Paschke, PolicyAZ

*Greg Burns and Jim Davenport attended virtually.

Discussion

1. Presentation and Discussion of the City's Legislative Agenda to Provide Guidance for Advocacy Activities at the State Legislature and the Federal Government During the 2026 Legislative Session

MAYOR HARTKE called for a staff presentation.

MARGE ZYLLA, Strategic Initiatives Director, introduced the discussion item.

BRITTANY BARBA, Government Relations Senior Program Manager, presented the following presentation.

- 2026 Legislative Agenda
- 2026 Session Overview
 - Opening Day
 - Themes
 - Ongoing Information
- Current Legislative Leadership
 - Senate
 - Senator Petersen, President
 - Senator Shope, President Pro Tem
 - Senator Kavanaugh, Majority Leader
 - Senator Carroll, Majority Whip
 - Senator Sundareshan, Minority Leader
 - Senator Miranda, Assistant Minority Leader
 - Senator Gabaldón, Minority Whip
 - Senator Alston Minority Caucus Chair
 - House
 - Representative Montenegro, Speaker
 - Representative Carter, Speaker Pro Tem
 - Representative Carbone, Majority Leader
 - Representative Willoughby, Majority Whip
 - Representative De Los Santos, Assistant Minority Leader
 - Representative Gutierrez, Assistant Minority Leader
 - Representative Crews, Minority Whip
 - Representative Travers, Minority Whip
- Legislative Delegation
 - LD12
 - Senator Mitzi Epstein
 - Rep. Patty Contreras
 - Rep. Stacey Travers
 - LD 13

- Senator JD Mesnard
- Rep. Jeff Weninger
- Rep. Julie Wiloughby
- LD 14
 - Senator Warren Petersen
 - Rep. Laurin Hendrix
 - Rep. Khyll Powell

MS. ZYLLA continued the presentation.

- Legislative Principles
 - Protect Local Authority
 - Preserve Local Revenues
- Fiscal Sustainability
 - Preserve current State-Shared Revenue and support enhancements to city resources
 - Protect authority of the City of Chandler and its local elected officials to determine and establish appropriate revenue sources
 - Encourage the Legislature to consider the fiscal impact of unfunded mandates
- Fiscal Sustainability
 - The forecast for the state budget is particularly constrained in the coming fiscal year and continues to have challenges through the remainder of the 3-year budget window
 - State-Shared Revenue and other municipal revenue sources remain vulnerable
 - The City of Chandler has continued to maintain a low cost of living for residents and endured challenging economic conditions due to a diverse tax base

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO asked about exemptions available for data centers, including property and transit taxes. He asked to investigate how Chandler can recoup dollars and collect revenue from data centers.

MS. ZYLLA said there is nothing new to report on the legislative side of this item but assured that staff can further investigate the available options.

MS. ZYLLA continued the presentation.

- Transportation
 - Support locally coordinated transportation planning efforts
 - Defend against actions that seek to limit local consideration in the transportation decision-making process
- Economic Development
 - Support efforts that enhance Chandler's economic success and strengthen Chandler's economic ecosystem
 - Encourage the establishment and diversification of economic development tools, particularly to help infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse projects

- Preserve local authority on development projects
- Neighborhoods
 - Support measures that enhance the quality of life in Chandler's neighborhoods
 - Protect the rights of residents to actively engage with their local governments in public policy matters

MAYOR HARTKE said the federal government withdrew a Notice of Funding Availability for the HUD Continuum of Care program, which affects Chandler and neighboring communities. He asked if more information about this decision could be provided to Council.

MS. ZYLLA said it remains to be seen what action will be taken next at the federal level. The lobbyists may be able to weigh in as well.

COUNCILMEMBER POSTON said that there have been state legislative actions regarding local control over housing development. She asked staff to follow up on discussions from a previous Council meeting regarding middle housing.

MS. ZYLLA said staff will continue to be engaged in advocacy for local decision making.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS shared concern for preemptive legislative policies related to housing. He noted that Downtown Chandler would be affected by the legislative actions by the state. He asked if a tour of the city is available to offer to Chandler's state legislators to share the city's perspective.

LEAH POWELL, Deputy City Manager, said this has been offered before, and a tour can be planned.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS noted that one on one conversations with state legislators are a great tool to advocate for Chandler.

MS. ZYLLA continued the presentation.

- Public Safety
 - Preserve and strengthen the ability of local governments to strategically plan for and respond to emergencies

VICE MAYOR ELLIS asked how resources for public safety improvements are pursued at the state level.

MS. ZYLLA said that while individual appropriations have been accepted by the city before, it is unknown if the same resources are available in the current state budget cycle.

MAYOR HARTKE explained it seems like there is a modest amount of funds to distribute for local projects at the state level. He stated that the city should likely not expect the same level of funding this year.

MS. ZYLLA said based on current projections, that is correct; but the outcome may change as the session progresses.

MS. ZYLLA continued the presentation.

- Land Use Planning
 - Protect local authority in land use planning
 - Support efforts that promote organized growth
 - Oppose efforts that seek to obstruct growth management
- Water and Environmental Resources
 - Support the wise use and conservation opportunities regarding our natural resources
 - Preserve Chandler's long-term investments and planning for water resources and infrastructure
 - Protect Chandler's ability to provide safe and reliable water resources and wastewater services to our residents

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO said recent legislative developments have targeted the 100-year water supply. He asked where that fits under the Water and Environmental Resources focus.

MS. ZYLLA said the 100-year water supply affects aquifer stability and residents in Chandler. She said some additional language can be added in advance of Council's meeting with state legislators.

MAYOR HARTKE suggested that the topic could be incorporated into the last bullet point on the slide.

MS. BARBA continued the presentation.

- Federal Overview
 - Federal Administration
 - Government Shutdown and Restart
 - Continuing Resolution
 - House – Republican Majority
 - Speaker Mike Johnson
 - U.S. Rep. Jeffries, Minority Leader
 - Senate – Republican Majority
 - Senator John Thune, Majority Leader
 - Senator Schumer, Minority Leader
 - Senator Gallego
 - Senator Kelly

- Rep. Biggs (CD 5)
- Rep. Stanton (CD 4)
- Rep. Hamadeh
- Rep. Ansari
- Rep. Grijalva
- Rep. Ciscomani
- Rep. Crane
- Rep. Schweikert
- Rep. Gosar
- Federal Priorities
 - Pursue federal funding for City projects and programs
 - Support CHIPS Act implementation and funding
 - Encourage regulatory actions that support Chandler’s housing initiatives
 - Support Low-Income Housing Tax Credit expansion
 - Encourage increased investments in the Chandler Airport
 - Support the preservation of municipal bond tax exemptions

VICE MAYOR ELLIS asked where federal funding is sourced from and asked if anything has been received.

MS. ZYLLA said there are two community project funding items currently, and introduced Jim Davenport

JIM DAVENPORT, Thorn Run Partners, explained that the city has two projects that are waiting for approval by Congress: \$1 million for wells and \$2 million for sewer rehabilitation. Congressman Stanton submitted these projects to the House Appropriations Committee for consideration. These bills should be finished by January 30, 2026. These two projects should have been funded in FY 25, but Congress passed a full-year continuing resolution that removed funding for local governments.

COUNCILMEMBER HAWKINS asked if water should be listed as a federal priority in addition to a state priority.

MAYOR HARTKE asked why that was not included.

MS. ZYLLA said water could be added to the federal priorities list. She asked if there was any specific focus Council wanted.

COUNCILMEMBER HAWKINS answered that her focus was on representation in Colorado River water discussions.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS stated the Surface Transportation Act will expire in September 2026. If this funding is not renewed, there will be implications for Chandler regional mobility and for meeting community demands. He asked for more information on the expected outcome.

MR. DAVENPORT said the administration had discussed eliminating transit and the states' ability to transfer highway-specific funds to highways. The current chair of the House transportation committee has indicated that transit funding will be included in the bill. It is possible that, as the bill is being developed next year, there will be back-and-forth on the funding available for transit.

MS. ZYLLA asked Mr. Davenport for more information on the HUD Continuum of Care decision.

MR. DAVENPORT said the concern is the reduction of permanent supportive housing funds from 87% of Continuum of Care (COC) dollars to 30%. The Conference of Mayors is trying to ensure that COC dollars are extended for 12 more months during the policy change. The current appropriations bills contain necessary COC funds; Congress is still trying to fund the program. The firm is monitoring the situation and will follow up.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO asked for a project list of what Chandler's lobbyists are working on.

MS. ZYLLA said that it can be provided. She explained that staff have reviewed items that were not successful last year and have had conversations with Congressman Stanton's office to work together on these projects.

MR. DAVENPORT added that the two projects mentioned earlier were two that were revisited from last year. He noted that Congressman Stanton can only make 15 requests total per year on behalf of his district.

MS. ZYLLA asked Mr. Davenport to give a brief overview of the federal government's use of AI.

MR. DAVENPORT agreed and explained that it was announced that an executive order would be forthcoming on preempting states' rules regarding AI. The executive order has not been released yet. The firm is monitoring this carefully and will share more information once released.

MAYOR HARTKE asked if when the firm provides the information to Council, commentary could be provided on if the order would extend to preempting cities and towns as well.

MR. DAVENPORT said yes. He expected that cities and towns would be preempted as well. The intention is to support the progress of AI usage at a federal level.

GREG BURNS, Thorn Run Partners, added that the federal government is not regulating the local zoning and siting of data centers.

MAYOR HARTKE asked whether this would be considered land use or regulatory.

MR. BURNS said previous legislative language could be shared, but it is unknown what the final draft will contain.

- Thank You

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS asked for information from Dana Paschke.

DANA PASHKE, PolicyAZ said the significant topics of note at the state level were covered in the presentation. Legislative sessions can be difficult when state legislators are up for election or reelection in 2026. She mentioned that there is also a state budget deficit and that there will likely not be excess revenues due to the funds available. She noted that subjects like water and housing will likely be a focus again.

Public Comment

TERRI KIMBLE, Chandler Chamber of Commerce, spoke about legislative actions affecting the Chandler business community. She said that some businesses may be affected by federal changes going forward. She acknowledged that the next state legislative session will be busy, with a focus on preserving local authority on development projects, CHIPS funding, and transit funding.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:49 p.m.

ATTEST: _____
City Clerk

Mayor

Approval Date of Minutes: January 8, 2026.

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 8th day of December 2025. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

DATED this _____ day of January, 2026.

City Clerk