

Meeting Minutes

City Council Work Session

February 2, 2026 | 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 4:38 p.m.

Roll Call

Council Attendance

Mayor Kevin Hartke
*Vice Mayor Angel Encinas
*Councilmember Christine Ellis
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

*Vice Mayor Encinas and Councilmember Ellis 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
Alexis Apodaca, Mayor & Council Public Affairs Senior Manager
Matt Burdick, Communications & Public Affairs Director
Tawn Kao, Deputy City Attorney
Jenny Winkler, Assistant City Attorney
Jennifer Ekblad, City Clerk
Marge Zylla, Strategic Initiatives Director

City Charter Amendment Resident Advisory Committee Members in Attendance
René Lopez, Chair

Jim Jurnak, Committee Member
Lisa Askey, Committee Member
Heather Anguiano, Committee Member

Discussion

1. Discussion and Presentation of the City Charter Amendment Resident Advisory Committee Recommendations

MAYOR HARTKE called for a staff presentation.

JOHN POMBIER, City Manager, introduced the discussion item.

RYAN PETERS, Deputy City Manager, thanked committee members in attendance.

RENÉ LOPEZ, Chair of the City Charter Amendment Resident Advisory Committee, presented the following presentation.

- City Charter Amendment Resident Advisory Committee Council Presentation
- Background
 - The City Charter Amendment Resident Advisory Committee was established by City Council in June 2025 to make recommendations on potential charter amendments to be considered for referral to the voters.
 - Members of the committee include:
 - Chair Rene Lopez
 - Pastor Brad Davis
 - Heather Anguiano
 - Ursula Gordwin
 - Sherida McMullan
 - Lisa Askey
 - Jim Jurnak
 - Jennifer Pawlik
 - Allison Stewart
- Committee Review and Recommendation Process
 - Committee Review Charter & Identified Opportunities to Revise
 - Committee Consensus on Proposed Charter Revisions
 - Committee Directed Staff to Prepare Draft Charter Amendment Language for Consideration by Committee
 - Committee Makes Recommendations to Council on Proposed Charter Amendments
- Recommendation No. 1 – Gender Neutrality, Grammar, Punctuation, Capitalization, & Elimination of Legalese
 - Description: Non-substantive changes to modernize and ensure consistency throughout the Charter.

- Key Changes: Applies across Articles II-X (e.g., gender neutrality, grammar/punctuation fixes, removal of legalese, consistent capitalization). Adds words like “city” before “manager” or “council”.
- Committee Vote: Unanimous recommendation.
- Visual: Green highlights from original summary.

COUNCILMEMBER POSTON asked about the section of the charter that already addresses gender neutral language. She said she understood the existing charter language to be there because it would cover everything, as these changes would have to be voted on individually. She asked if this could be written in a way to make that change all in one vote.

JENNY WINKLER, Assistant City Attorney, explained that it was reviewed with outside election attorneys whose opinion it was that the single subject rule for elections does not apply to charter amendments.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO asked how this amendment would be presented to voters in a way that makes sense.

MS. WINKLER said it is likely that the full text of the city charter would have to be included in the publicity pamphlet, as the language changes to modernize and ensure consistency occur throughout the whole document.

MR. LOPEZ continued the presentation.

- Other Charter City Comparisons
- Recommendation No. 2 – Clarifying Changes
 - Description: Changes to clarify existing provisions, align with state law, and remove outdated initial-adoption language.
 - Key Changes:
 - Article I: Clarifies contract authority
 - Article II: Clarifies reimbursement policies, city employment prohibition, petition rights, eliminates outdated utility rate references.
 - Article X: Strikes obsolete initial-adoption sections.
 - Committee Vote: Unanimous recommendation
 - Visual: Blue highlights from original summary.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO stated this recommendation would likely contain many language changes like the first proposed recommendation. He asked about how this charter amendment would be proposed to voters.

MR. LOPEZ noted that Recommendation 2 does not have as extensive language changes as Recommendation 1.

KELLY SCHWAB, City Attorney, explained that if Council wanted to refer both Recommendations 1 and 2 to voters, the entire charter would likely be published with strikethroughs to show the proposed changes. Recommendation 2 would require only the articles with relevant changes to be published.

MR. PETERS said the publicity pamphlet would contain the entirety of changed charter language, and the summary question on the ballot itself would be a shorter description for voters to understand.

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COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO emphasized that the intent behind the clarifying changes must be made clear to voters, so that voters understand that these changes are intended to make existing charter provisions easier to understand and interpret. The voters may think the removed language removes their rights but that is not the case.

MS. SCHWAB said how the information is communicated to voters is key. Most of the language is clean up for language that is no longer relevant. The intent must be communicated to voters clearly, so it is understood that no rights are being lost.

MR. PETERS added that in the existing charter it reads "the citizens of Chandler have a fundamental interest in the development of harmonious and cooperative relations between city government and its managers," the change would be to reword this phrase to include "fostering harmonious cooperative relationships among city government and its manager."

MAYOR HARTKE asked what would happen if the first two recommendations did not pass.

MR. LOPEZ said these are intended to be grammatical clean up changes, that will not change the intent of the charter.

MR. LOPEZ continued the presentation.

- Recommendation No. 3 – "Resign to Run" & Filing Council Vacancies (Sections 2.05 & 2.06)
 - Description: The proposed changes bring the charter's "resign to run" provisions in line with Arizona state law (A.R.S. §38-296) by requiring the mayor or a councilmember intending to run for any other public office to resign upon filing nomination papers for that office.
 - Key Changes: Resign to Run: Brings local rules in line with A.R.S §38-296, which deems an incumbent to have offered themselves for nomination/election (triggering resignation) specifically on the "filing of a nomination paper" (per A.R.S. §38-296(b)).
 - Vacancy Filing: Provisions for filing vacancies in the office of mayor or councilmember are consolidated under section 2.06. The council has 45 days to fill the vacancy;

otherwise, it is filled at the forthcoming election or, if no election is forthcoming, at a special election held as soon as practicable.

- Committee Vote: Unanimous recommendation.

MAYOR HARTKE asked if the intent behind this recommendation is to update the charter to be in alignment with existing state law and current practice.

MR. LOPEZ agreed.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO noted that whenever state law changes, the city charter must be updated to stay current.

MAYOR HARTKE affirmed that this recommendation is in line with state law.

MR. LOPEZ said the provisions for filling vacancies in the office of mayor or councilmember are not outlined in Arizona Revised Statutes.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS asked about the resign to run provision in state law.

MS. SCHWAB explained that the state law used to say, when an individual held themselves out for election, they had to resign from their current office in order to run. The question was when is the time when that applies, which was determined to mean at the time when the individual files signed petitions to campaign for the new office. Currently, the city charter as written could be interpreted differently, so this recommendation is to clear it up and align with state law.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS asked if the current vague language applies to the current candidate election and if it constitutes a violation of the charter.

MS. SCHWAB said no, the city charter language is consistent with the old practice of state law. That language was vague; thus, the state law was amended to require resignation upon filing of nomination petitions for office. This change is to make city charter language consistent with the actual practice of state law.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS asked if this interpretation would affect Chandler's current election practices.

MS. SCHWAB said state law is of the highest authority. Regardless of what is written in the charter, the city must follow state law and constitutional provisions. It does not change any current election practices.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS summarized that Chandler must follow state election laws, so even if charter language is vague, the state interpretation must be followed.

MS. SCHWAB said there are different laws applying to different parts of municipal elections. The resign to run provision is in the state constitution.

MR. PETERS explained the difference between the charter as written and the proposed change. The current language has a specific number of days before the election that someone must resign, but the update would contain language referencing filing nomination petitions for the new office sought.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO said there have been several court cases for charter cities and asked if courts have been consistent in their ruling regarding election laws in city charters.

MS. SCHWAB answered that this is a constitutional provision versus a legislative position, which is what the courts have determined.

COUNCILMEMBER HAWKINS asked if there is existing language in the charter regarding vacancies in the office of mayor or councilmember.

MR. LOPEZ said the recommendation is to have 45 days to fill the vacancy, otherwise the vacancy is filled at the next upcoming election.

MAYOR HARTKE shared that the current language in the charter says Council has 30 days to fill the vacancy. This change is to extend the amount of time Council has to fill the vacancy to 45 days.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS asked about the experience of filling a vacancy on Council.

MAYOR HARTKE said they were able to get it done in thirty days, but announcements, applications, and then interviews all had to be completed in that time frame. It is possible but quick paced.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO agreed.

MR. LOPEZ added that when this process was done before, it helped to know a councilmember was going to resign before they did. The heads up allowed them to prepare ahead of time. Not anticipating a vacancy may be a struggle to complete within that timeframe.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS said he had wanted to know more about the situation and that context helps.

VICE MAYOR ENCINAS thanked them for sharing that experience.

MR. LOPEZ continued the presentation.

- Other Charter City Comparisons

- Recommendation No. 4 – Authorization to Recognize City Departments with Council Approval (Section 2.08 & 2.13)
 - Description: Authorizes the city manager to establish and organize the offices and departments of the city subject to review and approval of the city council.
 - Key Changes: Eliminates ordinance requirements for establishing or altering city departments and provides for council review and approval of city manager's proposed changes by resolution.
 - Committee Vote: 5-2 recommendation.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO asked if there is state law regarding this subject.

MS. SCHWAB said they will confirm that.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO spoke about the difference between ordinances and resolutions, approval by ordinance would be entered into city code while a resolution would not.

MS. SCHWAB agreed.

VICE MAYOR ENCINAS asked how the committee brought up this subject.

MR. PETERS said this suggestion was brought up by city staff in prior discussions in order to streamline and promote operational efficiencies. These staff recommendations were presented to the charter committee for their consideration. This topic was reviewed by the committee.

VICE MAYOR ENCINAS stated he felt like the accountability of establishing, organizing and altering departments should remain with Council.

MR. LOPEZ continued the presentation.

- Other Charter City Comparisons
- Recommendation No. 5 – Elimination of the “Two-Readings” Requirement for Ordinances (Section 2.15)
 - Description: Eliminates the requirement that the city council consider an ordinance twice – as introduced and as adopted.
 - Key Changes: Removes the requirement for ordinances to be considered twice by the City Council.
 - Committee Vote: Unanimous recommendation.

MR. PETERS added this was discussed in Council previously. The intent of this was to streamline charter language. This will help to improve the speed of business in housing and development projects. There is interest in maintaining two readings and allowing for citizen input on other types of ordinances, such as those related to fees and taxes. Further clarification on what ordinances require two readings would be put in ordinance.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO asked if the differentiation would be included in the charter.

MR. PETERS said the staff recommendation was to be concise in the charter to reduce confusion. Instances of when two readings would be required can be approved by ordinance, which would be entered into city code.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO asked if the ordinances are currently two readings to allow for resident input.

MR. LOPEZ said the minimum two reading requirement for all ordinances would be removed from the charter. Any types of ordinances that Council wished to have two reads on could still be done.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO emphasized his concern was for clarity in the charter.

COUNCILMEMBER POSTON noted that other cities do this many different ways. She asked about the charter language for emergency meetings and ordinances.

MS. SCHWAB said an emergency can be declared for an ordinance to be effective immediately. COVID-19 is an example of where an ordinance is effective immediately. Ordinances approved with an emergency clause are not subject to referendum. Ordinances cannot all be approved with emergency clauses, in order to protect the voter right to referendum. This authority is both in city charter and in state law.

COUNCILMEMBER POSTON said that is very specific language regarding emergencies and asked if there is a legal definition provided.

MS. SCHWAB said there is language there that says it must be for an actual emergency, not just to increase the speed of business.

MAYOR HARTKE said his only experience with emergency meetings and ordinances was with COVID-19. He mentioned other cities may have declared emergencies for funding.

MS. SCHWAB clarified that cities declaring an emergency for meetings and ordinances is different than declaring an emergency to get emergency funding, such as due to natural disasters. Emergency ordinances are not commonly used in the state. The Council would have to find if there is an emergency justifying the ordinance going into immediate effect rather than waiting the usual 30 days.

MR. LOPEZ continued the presentation.

- Other Charter City Comparisons
- Recommendation No. 6 – Add “gender” and “other protected status” as bases for prohibited discrimination (Section 9.02)

- Description: Expands prohibited discrimination grounds.
- Key Changes: Adds “gender” and “other protected status” to existing list.
- Committee Vote: Unanimous recommendation

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS asked if this is a generally accepted practice.

MS. SCHWAB said nondiscrimination language is included other places, such as personnel policies and the nondiscrimination ordinance, and are part of federal and state protected status. Charter amendments do not change the policies that are already in place. These protections exist in other areas.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS shared concerns about putting all these recommendations on the ballot for voters to consider. He asked if all charter amendments would be considered at once and how they would be presented to voters.

MAYOR HARTKE said that would be up for discussion. This is the first review of this subject by Council.

MR. LOPEZ continued the presentation.

- Other Charter City Comparisons
- Recommendation No. 7 – Residency requirements for department directors (Section 9.03)
 - Description: Eliminates requirement that department heads establish residency in the city within six months of appointment; continues residency requirement for city manager; authorizes council to require residency as a condition for any other position council appoints.
 - Key changes: Removes automatic residency requirement for department directors.
 - Committee Vote: 5-2 recommendation.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO asked for the committee’s perspective on this recommendation.

MR. LOPEZ said considerations included community buy-in, the employment market and succession planning, and considerations where people live. He shared a situation where an appointed officer could not find housing in Chandler for their family.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO said this would have to be made clear for other appointive officers: City Attorney, City Clerk, and City Magistrate.

MR. LOPEZ continued the presentation.

- Other Charter City Comparisons

MR. PETERS continued the presentation.

- Recommendation No. 8 Staff Recommendation for Additional Clarity (Section 2.03)

- Description: Provides additional clarity regarding the timing of the selection of the vice-mayor by codifying a long-standing past practice of the City Council.
- Key Changes: Clarifies that the vice-mayor is selected at the first regular City Council meeting in January of each year, rather than within a specified number of days (31 days).
- Committee Vote: Not applicable – staff recommendation.

MAYOR HARTKE said single year vice mayor terms were introduced by a former mayor.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO noted that there could be changes at the state level that affect this charter amendment, if it was tied to a specific month.

MAYOR HARTKE said the language could be amended to say when the Council takes office.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO said that would be every two years.

COUNCILMEMBER POSTON asked for the language in the charter that says this.

JENNIFER EKBLAD, City Clerk, read that within thirty-one (31) days after taking office, each council shall elect from among its members a vice-mayor who shall act as mayor during the temporary absence or disability of the mayor. The interpretation of this language is vague and could allow the term of vice mayor to be for two years. The suggested change would be to clarify selection of vice mayor to once yearly in January, for a one-year term.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO thanked the City Charter Amendment Resident Advisory Committee for their work on providing recommendations to Council.

MR. LOPEZ said the committee looked at the charter with the intention to streamline and make it easier to understand. Some recommendations were provided by staff, and some were discussed by committee members but not recommended to Council.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO requested information on the other recommendations, as they may be valuable to consider.

MAYOR HARTKE said the purview was to ask the committee to look at the entire charter. He thanked the committee for their work.

MR. LOPEZ thanked staff for their hard work.

MR. PETERS continued the presentation.

- Other Charter City Comparisons
- Current Estimated Election Costs

- Informational Pamphlet:
 - Varies by page count, arguments submitted, & postage
 - No pamphlet cost if no ballot measures on General Election
- Additional Election Costs:
 - (~\$9,000): translation, security, legal notices, etc.
- Note: special election costs are higher because the costs are not shared unless other jurisdictions have ballot measures.
- 2026 Election Timelines
- 2027 Election Timelines
- Thank you!
- Questions

MAYOR HARTKE asked if the date of the primary election was moved, what would the new deadline be for the Council to vote on the call of election at a meeting.

MR. PETERS said if the primary election date was moved up, it would have to be voted on at the next Council meeting.

MAYOR HARTKE asked what would happen if the primary election date was moved up two weeks instead of the previously anticipated two weeks.

MR. PETERS said a special meeting would have to be called for approval.

DANA DELONG, City Clerk, explained that if the election date was moved two weeks earlier, the deadline for Council approval would be February 23, 2026. Council is planning a special meeting that day to call the election for the 2026 General Plan, and the charter amendment call to election could be at that same meeting. If the election date was moved one week earlier, the deadline would remain February 26 for the primary election.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO commented he would not be prepared to take this to a primary election. He asked if there is a franchise election planned for 2027.

MR. PETERS replied that the recommendation for the franchise election with APS was for November 2026.

MAYOR HARTKE asked if both the charter amendments and franchise election went in November 2026 at the general election, the franchise would bear some of the costs of the election in partnership with Chandler.

MR. PETERS said that was correct.

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS asked if the franchise election details needed to be discussed in executive session.

MS. SCHWAB affirmed that it is okay to discuss the timing of the potential franchise election at this time.

MR. PETERS asked for Council's opinion on bringing charter amendments to a primary or a general election in 2026.

COUNCILMEMBER HAWKINS requested staff recommendations for the timing of the election.

MR. PETERS said staff recommendations regarding the timing of this election can be provided to Council.

Council consensus was to bring City Charter amendments to the ballot in November 2026.

MAYOR HARTKE commented that planning for the November 2026 general election will give Council until early June to discuss potential charter amendments.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO shared concerns about ballot fatigue on the November 2026 general election. He noted that the ballot items must be concise and clear for voters to understand. He emphasized bringing forward those ballot items that are important for Chandler voters.

MAYOR HARTKE recommended that Council review charter amendments further to get all the information needed to feel confident putting this on the November 2026 general election.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS emphasized that educating the community on the charter and delivering information about proposed charter amendments will be key before this election.

MAYOR HARTKE said Council can ask staff to put together a communication plan to share information with residents on charter amendments. He added that members of the City Charter Amendment Resident Advisory Committee were passionate and can be part of the process of education in bringing these questions to the ballot.

Public Comment

None.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:41 p.m.

ATTEST: Jennifer Ehlbaud
City Clerk

Kevin Harbo
Mayor

Approval Date of Minutes: February 26, 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 2nd day of February 2026. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

DATED this 27th day of February, 2026.

Jennifer Ehlbaud
City Clerk

