

# Meeting Minutes

## City Council Special Meeting

January 16, 2026 | 8:30 a.m.  
Chandler Museum, Saguaro Room  
300 S. Chandler Village Dr., Chandler, AZ



### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Kevin Hartke at 8:46 a.m.

### Roll Call

#### Council Attendance

Mayor Kevin Hartke  
Vice Mayor Angel Encinas, arrived at 8:50 am  
Councilmember Christine Ellis, arrived at 8:55 am  
Councilmember Jane Poston  
Councilmember Matt Orlando  
Councilmember OD Harris, arrived at 9:04 am  
Councilmember Jennifer Hawkins

#### Appointee Attendance

John Pombier, Acting City Manager  
Kelly Schwab, City Attorney  
Jennifer Ekblad, 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  
Marge Zylla, Strategic Initiatives Director  
Brittany Barba, Government Relations Program Manager  
Matt Burdick, Communications and Public Affairs Director

#### Others in Attendance

Representative Jeff Weninger, LD-13  
Representative Patty Contreras, LD-12  
Senate President Warren Petersen, LD-14  
Senator J.D. Mesnard, LD-13

### Welcome and Introductions – Mayor Kevin Hartke

MAYOR HARTKE welcomed guests and staff.

### Discussion

1. Discussion of the 2026 Legislative Session

MAYOR HARTKE asked the group to discuss their priorities and what they will address during this legislative session. He emphasized that legislators and councilmembers serve the same communities and called for collaboration. He noted that Chandler has lowered property tax values 10 years in a row and prioritizes a low cost of living, low sales tax, and low utility rates. He asked that, when legislators make decisions, they consider whether constituents' needs align with the city's actions. State legislative actions that affect local revenues affect each municipality differently. He noted that Chandler is committed to implementing Proposition 479, which received overwhelming support in November 2025, to fund regional transportation. He commented that municipalities do a great job of their economic development and welcomed new developments in existing Chandler industries.

PRESIDENT PETERSEN said a high volume of bills go through the legislature each year. He commented that the biggest issue is tax conformity, where tax cuts are passed on to Arizona residents. He mentioned that water is up for discussion; there is an agreement with seven states right now that the legislature will have to sign off on. Arizona sets the standard for conserving and growing water use. He mentioned a measure on election results and speed of results will come to the voters in the fall 2026 election.

SENATOR MESNARD made comments regarding the tax conformity bill going to the governor. He noted there has been interest in renewal of Proposition 123 that would fund public schools through state land trust funds.

REPRESENTATIVE PATTY CONTRERAS spoke about funding litigation for water rights in order to support Arizona's Colorado River water needs. She said her focus is on affordable housing, education, and healthcare in Arizona. She spoke about her background working for the City of Phoenix and supported local decision-making. She mentioned a bill she has been working on to protect property owners from title fraud.

REPRESENTATIVE JEFF WENINGER spoke about resolving issues where level two and level three sex offenders cohabit. He mentioned on a local level, municipalities should focus on bringing certain agenda items, such as tax or fee changes, to an action agenda for consideration, rather than passing them on a consent agenda with many other items. He mentioned there is consideration regarding the zoning timeframe and isolating historic districts, bills that came into effect in 2025. He brought up community districts and mentioned that Arizona historically has fewer community districts than other states due to the longer lead times; however, community districts could help reduce down payments and home costs for buyers. He said another focus of his is public safety and mentioned running a bill that would prevent a public safety official testifying on another's behalf from being retaliated against by their employer.

MAYOR HARTKE said the city is working to reach a consensus on housing with the League of Arizona Cities and Towns to share information with their legislators.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO thanked legislators for being approachable and amenable to collaboration. He mentioned the trend of schools closing and requested more flexibility on what the city and school districts can do with that land. He emphasized that supporting water rights and potential future litigation will help Arizona. He requested more flexibility and feedback on historical housing that matches the surrounding neighborhoods. Another avenue to support housing is supporting financing. The city is supporting education programs for homebuyers which helps which purchase and retention.

COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS reaffirmed the flexible school land use brought up by Councilmember Orlando. He supported funding regional transportation for connectivity. He commented that he would like to see fuel prices decrease in Arizona.

VICE MAYOR ENCINAS said Chandler has been working on creating housing solutions for residents including a housing study to determine need, redevelopment of commercial properties, and revitalizing public housing. He highlighted maintaining local control on land use and historic districts and designations.

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS stressed the importance of funding public safety in dealing with human trafficking. She mentioned the high costs and high demands of housing across the state can be mitigated by state action. She prioritized funding for the Chandler microtransit service, Flex, which supports students and other riders in the city.

COUNCILMEMBER POSTON spoke regarding AI data centers and asked about the reason behind tax incentives for data centers. She said tax benefits should be for businesses and industries that will benefit Arizona economically.

MAYOR HARTKE said the League of Arizona Cities and Towns' opinion is that they will support communities that want them, but request guardrails on the implementation of data centers.

SENATOR MESNARD said he will follow up regarding these points.

COUNCILMEMBER HAWKINS said regarding data centers, she wanted to look ahead to the future and consider impacts down the line. She spoke about local control over land use, as cities consider future infrastructure needs and other demands.

REPRESENTATIVE WENINGER said data centers are a complex topic to discuss. He commented that Chandler did a good job in developing criteria for development. More rural communities may have a different opinion on tax incentives. The tax incentive was put in place in 2013. It is important to incorporate new technology in Arizona, but there are more appropriate places for data centers than by residential neighborhoods.

