

DRAFT

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF EL MIRAGE
EL MIRAGE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
10000 N. EL MIRAGE ROAD
6:00 PM -TUESDAY, JULY 8, 2025**

Minutes

Present: Mayor Alexis Herмосillo; Vice Mayor Jacquelyn Parsons; Councilmember Monica Dorcey;
Councilmember Ryan Eldridge; Councilmember Scottie Gentry; Councilmember Donna Winston

Absent: Councilmember Anita Norton

1. ROLL CALL

2. CALL TO ORDER - meeting called to order at 6:05 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance
Moment of Silence

3. SPECIAL AGENDA

1. Consideration and action to convene into Executive Session for discussion or consideration of conduct and potential discipline of a member of the Council pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(1).

No action taken to convene into Executive Session.

4. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Discussion or consideration of conduct and potential discipline of a member of the Council pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(1).

5. SPECIAL AGENDA (Continued)

1. Consideration and action to impose sanctions or other disciplinary action as contemplated by the City of El Mirage Code of Conduct.

Trish Stuhan, City Attorney, outlined the purpose of this meeting and the responsibility of the Council. A notarized written formal complaint from a member of staff was given to the Mayor. The City Council Handbook states that upon receipt of a written complaint about a violation of this Code, the Mayor shall meet with the councilmember to try to come to a resolution on the matter. If the matter is not resolved as a result of the Mayor's meeting with the accused councilmember, the Mayor shall bring the matter to the City Council using the procedure for bringing allegations against councilmembers to the City Council. The responsibility of the Council, where there is a formal complaint from a member of staff that is notarized, is then to decide if additional information is required, if the allegation is sustained or not sustained, and

ultimately to decide if there are any sanctions against the accused councilmember.

All Councilmembers were notified, with guidance from legal counsel, that a special executive session was scheduled and noticed for July 8, 2025. On July 7, 2025, Councilmember Norton-McDaniel emailed the Mayor requesting the postponement of the executive session. A response was sent to Councilmember Norton-McDaniel on July 7, 2025, stating that the meeting would proceed as planned to discuss the nature of the concern, paired with its alignment to a broader pattern of behavior brought to the Mayor's attention and warranting timely review by the full council. A notice was provided to Councilmember Norton-McDaniel and to each of you that contains: the complaint itself, email communications, the relevant council policies, and potential next steps for Council to consider. Councilmember Norton-McDaniel is not available to attend this meeting in person or by telephone, but she requested that the discussion not be held in Executive Session and that the facts be discussed openly in public. This meeting is focused on the facts, providing background, and ensuring the full council is briefed. A second meeting will be scheduled after her return, where she will be present, and a more complete discussion and determination on how to move forward will be had.

Councilmember Gentry stated that the City Manager needs to be present because she is vital to the conversation, and she is not available tonight.

Mayor Hermosillo asked if there was a consensus of the council to proceed with the discussion tonight. There was a consensus of the council to move forward with the discussion.

Jill Boltz, City Clerk, read into the record the special agenda: the meeting is in consideration and actions to post sanctions out of disciplinary action contemplated by the City of El Mirage Code of Conduct.

Mayor Hermosillo stated that a notice was provided to Councilmember Norton-McDaniel and each Councilmember that contained the complaint, documentation, email communications, relevant council policies, and potential next steps for the council to consider. Councilmember Norton-McDaniel was invited to the meeting and given the option to attend in person or by telephone, but was unable to attend. Therefore, a second meeting will be scheduled after her return at her convenience to continue the discussion. Tonight's meeting is focused on laying out the facts, providing background, and ensuring all council members are briefed.

Mayor Hermosillo stated there has been a long-standing pattern of behavior from Councilmember Norton-McDaniel that has led to this moment. There have been issues raised by fellow Councilmembers, staff, and community members. Her behavior has been described as dismissive, rude, confrontational, and demeaning. This behavior has become normalized and has become a problem. At the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting on October 10, 2023, Councilmember Norton-McDaniel addressed the Chair of the Commission in a way that was undeniably confrontational and inappropriate. Her actions and tone were aggressive and disregarded the expected decorum of public meetings. After this meeting, I sent Councilmember Norton-McDaniel an email to discuss what I witnessed at the Planning and Zoning meeting, and I never received a response. On January 17, 2024, I met with Councilmember Norton-McDaniel to talk about city priorities and discussed the Planning and Zoning meeting as well as other concerns that had been raised by others, but the conversation was cut short due to an upcoming Council meeting.

Mayor Hermosillo stated tonight's discussion comes from a formal complaint that has been filed against Councilmember Norton-McDaniel. On June 19, 2025, a city staff member filed a formal complaint about an interaction with Councilmember Norton-McDaniel. On June 30, 2025, a formal notice from the Mayor was sent to Councilmember Norton-McDaniel to address an incident that took place with a staff member on June 19, 2025, requesting a meeting with the intent of exploring if a resolution is possible. No response was received from Councilmember Norton-McDaniel. Subsequently, another incident occurred on June 30, 2025, involving the same staff member and Councilmember Norton-McDaniel, and a second formal complaint was filed.

Mayor Hermosillo read the two complaints that were received from a staff member regarding the two

incidents involving Councilmember Norton-McDaniel.

Councilmember Dorcey stated that she is extremely concerned about the employee who submitted the complaint. When dealing with employees, a superior has a responsibility to keep in mind when you have more control. The El Mirage Cares Trademark issue has also not been dealt with, which is a massive disrespect to this council's decisions and to the people of El Mirage, who are the owners of that intellectual property. The corporation was disbanded, but the trademark is still effective and needs to be removed.

Councilmember Winston stated the comments coming from Councilmember Norton-McDaniel and other residents living in El Mirage or other cities are very hurtful. There was an incident where Councilmember Norton-McDaniel shoulder-checked me from behind after a work session that was totally inappropriate. There has been a lot of discord within the community and comments about the new councilmembers. There has also been name-calling about Councilmember Gentry, and her behavior towards the new members of the council is very upsetting when they are not doing what she wants them to do at council meetings. The comments online coming from her and other members of the community, both here and in Surprise, are harassment and the need to file an informal complaint with the Police Department. She has caused a ridiculous amount of stress and extra work for staff, which has brought staff to tears. Staff need to be treated with respect, so there is no hostile work environment being created.

Councilmember Gentry stated that she has never had an incident with Councilmember Norton-McDaniel and is capable of addressing situations herself. She stated that currently, there is nothing in the council handbook that specifies how long a councilmember is given to respond to a request. She read an email sent by Councilmember Norton-McDaniel to the City Manager on July 2, 2025, that asked 14 questions related to the incident.

Mayor Hermosillo asked Councilmember Gentry to read the questions into the record.

Councilmember Gentry read the following questions into the record: 1) When did the employee first talk to Jose about this? 2) When did Jose speak to Jorge about this? Was this communication verbal or written, and by what means was it delivered to Jorge? 3) Did Jorge speak to the employee about the matter, and when? 4) What did the employee tell Jorge exactly if she spoke with him, and did she take notes of the conversation immediately? 5) How was Jorge notified, and by what means did he communicate with you? 6) When and what was your conversation in response to Jorge regarding this matter? Was it verbal or written communication or both? 7) When did you learn that Jose spoke with Amber Wakeman? And how did you learn that Jose had spoke with Amber about this? 8) When and how did you learn that Amber Wakeman spoke with Vice Mayor Jacque Parsons about this matter? 9) When and how did you learn that the Mayor learned about this, and by whom did she initially hear from regarding this? 10) When was the Human Resources Director told about this, and by what means was she told and by whom? What was the HR Director's response, and whom did she speak with about this matter? 11) When was the City Clerk told about this, and by whom, was she told? 12) When did the employee submit their written complaint to Jorge, and by what method was it delivered to Jorge? 13) When did you first learn that the reorganization of the CDAC was going to be put on the July 1 agenda, and how did you learn this? 14) Were you told of the actual reason why I was being placed on the agenda, and if you were, when were told that?

Councilmember Dorcey asked Councilmember Gentry if anywhere in the email that was sent by Councilmember Norton-McDaniel was empathy for the employee shown or considered.

Councilmember Gentry stated that if any of the councilmembers are accused of violating policy, that councilmember has the right to ask questions. There should have been a process where she could speak to the Mayor and make an apology to the employee.

Mayor Hermosillo stated she reached out to Councilmember Norton-McDaniel and received no response. There were several opportunities for Councilmember Norton-McDaniel to respond to the email that was sent to her acknowledging the email or to set up a meeting. This has been a consistent pattern with Councilmember Norton-McDaniel to ignore going through a formal process and provide no response or

desire to participate in any type of process that would bring resolution or attention to improving the situation. As of July 8, 2025, Councilmember Norton-McDaniel has still not acknowledged the email sent to her requesting a meeting about the incident or to set up a meeting for further discussion. This has been a continuous pattern when there is an issue that involves her and that is problematic and is not conducive to our growth as a Council and how we serve the community. What we are addressing now has escalated to a personnel matter.

Councilmember Dorcey stated those 14 questions that were asked by Councilmember Norton-McDaniel sound like questions preparing discovery for a lawsuit. We are trying to avoid a lawsuit.

Councilmember Gentry stated she is going off the information that was presented to her and would like all the information to be presented to the residents.

Councilmember Gentry stated that there needs to be something put in the Council Code Book that gives a certain amount of time to respond to a request.

Vice Mayor Parsons read a reply sent to Councilmember Norton-McDaniel from the City Manager in response to an email she received requesting information regarding the incident with the employee.

Mayor Hermosillo stated the problem is giving people some information without giving the entire situation or entire story, and making things one-sided. Additionally, there is the issue of going to online platforms and spewing misinformation that is not conducive to the business of the city. This behavior lacks character, integrity, and accountability, and those are the issues we are trying to address. That is unacceptable, and the community deserves better.

Councilmember Gentry stated the City Manager should be present for this conversation because she is vital to the incident.

Mayor Hermosillo stated that a second council meeting will be held, at which the City Manager and Councilmember Norton-McDaniel will discuss this issue further. The City Manager was not present during the incident and was not a witness. That would put another staff member in a very uncomfortable situation because she was not directly involved in the incident.

Councilmember Dorcey stated that it would also single out the City Manager because she was not the only other staff member that was involved and none of them were present at the moment the interaction took place and the only thing that matters is what happened between the employee and Councilmember Norton-McDaniel.

Mayor Hermosillo stated that the purpose of this meeting and the second meeting to be scheduled is not to punish but to find a solution to improve behavior so that this does not happen again.

Councilmember Eldridge stated this is a tough topic to discuss. Councilmember Norton was considered a friend and was highly respected, but he personally witnessed some of the actions that have been talked about today. He thanked her for her help and all the information when he was running for election. In the world of professionalism, when you receive an email you respond back to the person that sent you the email. There have been quite a few times he has texted the Mayor and Department Heads on the weekend and has always gotten a response, even after hours. Harassment is not always what is said but how it is said and how you make someone feel. We have to take the complaint just as seriously from an employee as we would from a resident. I have found that her unwillingness to converse and acknowledge myself and others violates the ethics in the handbook. El Mirage Cares is another issue because so much work was put into that, and now it is falling apart. Proper conduct is to be observed not only inside this room but outside this room, with employees and with residents.

Vice Mayor Parsons stated she had heard the narrative that Councilmember Norton-McDaniel is the victim of a plot against her from this Council. Councilmember Norton-McDaniel is not the victim but the

perpetrator of workplace harassment and creating a hostile work environment for employees of the City of El Mirage. This disrespect and rudeness go back to October 2017 when she confronted 2 employees of El Mirage. The confrontation is referred to as the Anita Norton incident and was brought up at the October 3, 2017, City Council Meeting. City Manager Isom read a memo he received from staff dated August 18, 2017, which noted an encounter she had that day with two City of El Mirage employees. I have had other employees who have worked with her on different committees tell me how she is unresponsive, rude, and demanding. Residents have asked what is going on with her and why her attitude has changed. We are here tonight to stop the future victimization of employees of the City of El Mirage and to foster a work environment where employees can come to work and not feel threatened by those in authority over them. The duty of the Council is to hold members of this Council accountable when they are outside the bounds of the Code of Conduct.

Mayor Hermosillo thanked everyone for sharing their concerns regarding Councilmember Norton-McDaniel and reiterated that there will be a second meeting where there can be a deeper discussion of the complaint that was issued, and we can collaboratively come up with a resolution.

Councilmember Winston spoke about the way Councilmember Norton-McDaniel has treated staff regarding her extra night's stay in Washington, D.C. Councilmember Norton-McDaniel decided to stay an additional night, but has not paid back the City of El Mirage and wants to negotiate the price she owes. She felt the Expedia price was sufficient and still owes the city \$114.54. It is also ridiculous that she charges the city mileage to go from her house to City Hall. That has been done in the past, and I hope that isn't being done now. There should be no mileage reimbursement for going from your home to your place of business.

Councilmember Gentry asked if she could be provided those invoices.

Councilmember Winston stated the invoices were included in the public records request made and received for travel documents by Councilmember Gentry.

Mayor Hermosillo stated the mail in question that was being retrieved by Councilmember Norton-McDaniel was actually about her information and a city employee's information for travel to perhaps compare and try to find a gap or misuse of city funds. I do not conduct myself in such a manner that I waste city funds when I am being tasked to do my job. There was a day when Councilmember Norton-McDaniel did not show up for a full business meeting during the trip to Washington, D.C. Vice Mayor Parsons, Councilmember Gentry, and I attended, but she was not there. This was a very important meeting with Luke Air Force Department of Defense representatives and a national federal-level briefing. That is a misuse of city funds.

Councilmember Eldridge stated the Vice Mayor informed him that she paid \$369.88 for the additional night's stay in Washington, D.C. If you skip out on a business day, you should be responsible for paying those funds back. That is the respectful and ethical thing to do.

Mayor Hermosillo stated that it summarizes the type of behavior and the behavior pattern that has been consistent over time as it relates to city business and how she treats staff. These are the issues we are trying to address so that these matters do not continue to happen. We need to address the complaint directly.

Councilmember Winston stated that the meeting in Washington, D.C., was for the Department of Defense and was purposely planned for the City of El Mirage delegation, but she did not show up.

Mayor Hermosillo stated there was a point made earlier about Open Meeting Law and the ability for councilmembers to meet that she would like the attorney to clarify for the record.

Ms. Stuhan provided a reminder of the Open Meeting Law. Public business should occur in public. Four members of the council can be together in public, and it will not be a violation of Open Meeting Law as long as no city business is being discussed.

Vice Mayor Parsons moved to hold a second meeting after the summer hiatus at a time that is convenient

*for Councilmember Norton-McDaniel; seconded by Councilmember Winston.
Motion passed (6/0)*

6. **ADJOURNMENT - meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.**

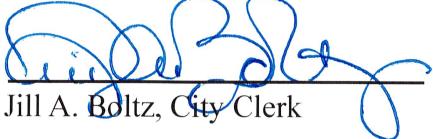
Alexis A. Hermosillo, Mayor

ATTEST:

Jill A. Boltz, City Clerk

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify the aforementioned minutes are a true and accurate record of the El Mirage City Council Special Meeting held on Tuesday, July 8, 2025, and a quorum was present.



Jill A. Boltz, City Clerk