Town of Wickenburg

MINUTES

WICKENBURG COMMON COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION MEETING
Monday, April 21, 2025 - 3:00 P.M.
155 N. TEGNER - COUNCIL CHAMBERS
WICKENBURG, ARIZONA 85390

A. **CALL TO ORDER** – Mayor Bratcher called the meeting to order at 3:03 PM

B. **ROLL CALL**

Present:	Mayor BG Bratcher
	Vice Mayor Brian Jones
	Councilmember Kristy Bedoian (Arrived at 3:07 PM)
	Councilmember Shawn Clark
	Councilmember Margaret Nyberg
	Councilmember Rebecca Rovey
	Councilmember Art Rubash
Staff Present:	Troy Smith, Interim Town Manager
	Trish Stuhan, Town Attorney
	Tim Suan, Deputy Town Manager/Economic Development
	Steve Boyle, Community Development Director
	Amy Brown, Town Clerk
	Les Brown, Police Chief
	Robert Martinez, Finance Director
	Tarah Mayerhofer, Human Resources Director
	Ed Temerowski, Fire Chief
	Herschel Workman, Public Works Director

C. **NEW BUSINESS**

1. Discussion and Direction to Staff Regarding the Proposed Draft Budget and Capital Improvement Plan for Fiscal Year 2025-26

   Troy Smith, Interim Town Manager, reported that this is a continuation of the meeting on April 7th with this being workshop 2 regarding the budget. The next step will be the tentative budget that has been moved back to May 19th and the final budget possibly on June 16th or July 7th or at a special meeting.

   Tarah Mayerhofer, HR Director, reported back on the town manager's recommendation for employee increases as there was a question on the cost and the Employment Cost Index (ECI). Step one was to move everyone up with a market adjustment of 4% which will cost an estimated $350,000. Step 2 was to increase all with more than five years of service in their current role to the mid-point of their range. This step will affect 18 employees, at a cost of approximately $118,000. Step 3 was to move anyone, that is not at 86% Compa-Ratio to 86%, which affects 4 employees, for a cost of approximately $5,000. The total cost for the three steps is $473,000. The steps will be completed in order, so anyone moving to mid-point will not also receive a 4% increase. The Employment Cost Index (ECI) measures the change in the hourly labor costs to employers over time. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provides this information. Compa-Ratio, also known as a comparison ratio, is a metric that compares an employee's salary to the midpoint of their salary range, or the midpoint of a market-based salary range for a similar role. She sent Council a memo regarding the market comparison of other agencies with 33 responses.

Tim Suan, Deputy Town Manager, reported on the Foundation for Senior Living (FSL) contract that is added into the budget each year.

- In spring 2022, the Town of Wickenburg was informed that Maricopa County would centralize CAP services through its online portal, ending local office support in Wickenburg. The town provided FSL $60,000 in funding in 2022.
- FY23 and FY24 - The town received $60,000 in "Community Impact Grants" from Maricopa County— In addition, The town continued its own local contribution of $60,000, making the total contribution from the town $120,000.
- o FY25 - The town increased its local funding to FSL from $60,000 to $120,000 (no funding from Maricopa County), however the town has discovered that as of February 2025, Maricopa County has restored $30,000 in funding to FSL for CAP services, through its Peoria contract.
- Performance Report - "In 2024, FSL reports continued delivery of key services in Wickenburg, including nearly $20,000 in direct CAP assistance and 990 referrals to Maricopa County, with a current focus on navigation services. The Senior Center Café served 29,310 meals in FY23, with increased engagement in congregate dining. Food bank distributions grew significantly from 258,292 to 347,736 pounds. Additionally, the Wickenburg Freedom Express provided 5,942 free rides and traveled 24,611 miles, with ongoing growth in ridership as more seniors rely on the service for transportation and independence."
- FY26 - The Town proposes returning the FSL contract amount to $60,000 in local funding
- FSL requests the town consider a FY26 grant/contract of $98,431 for services delivered by FSL/AllThrive 365, to seniors and families and add an additional $24,000 added to council contingency, to assist FSL should rumors of diminished Health and Human Services funds that support senior centers and home delivered meals come to fruition. FSL has changed its name to AllThrive 365 moving away from senior only assistance.
- FY26 - Maricopa County will increase funding to FSL to $72,744 and in addition to servicing Peoria, Youngtown and Wickenburg; FSL will also serve

Carefree/Cave Creek, Anthem, Morristown, and Aguila, sharing expenses across all service areas. Cave Creek and Carefree service area is new to FSL and will add to expenses for the Peoria Contract, according to an email from Lory Loredo.

Mayor Bratcher requested the town funds be used for Wickenburg residents, not residents in other areas, or for a new location in Cave Creek and Carefree. She would like them to break out to show the number of Wickenburg residents that they serve. Interim Town Manager Smith stated that staff are proposing to move from an annual report to quarterly reports and ask for more details. Otherwise, the annual report comes in after the Council has had to make the decision regarding the funding for the next year. The issue might be that FSL pools their funds for all their locations and doesn't distinguish between Wickenburg residents and other residents.

Councilmember Bedoian would like to know what other communities provide to FSL. FSL was supposed to take care of the seniors since the town doesn't have a senior center. Now they have changed their name and are offering family services.

Mayor Bratcher would prefer to give them $60,000 next year and have them provide reports showing where the funds are going and how they are serving Wickenburg residents. Interim Town Manager Smith stated that the contract says that the funds are for Wickenburg residents, however their reports don't say how many Wickenburg residents they serve as they include people from Aguila, Congress and Morristown.

Consensus of Council was to reduce the amount back to the $60,000 and request reports that show how they serve Wickenburg residents and how much other communities (Youngtown, Carefree, Cave Creek, Anthem, Morristown, and Aguila) are funding FSL. The Council also wants to receive quarterly reports with more information, specifically the service for Wickenburg residents.

Tim Suan, Deputy Town Manager, moved on to the FSL Freedom Express program. The Freedom Express is the senior transportation in Wickenburg that is paid partially by the town's Local Transportation Assistance Fund (LTAF) funds. On November 18, 2024, the Council authorized the Town Manager to execute a contract with FSL for the Freedom Express program, that new draft contract is now complete and ready to be signed. This contract approved up to an additional $15,000 of funding per year for three years to cover all vehicle-related expenses: lease, insurance, fuel, and maintenance for a total estimated annual program cost of $28,000. In the past the town passed along LTAF funds of approximately $16,500 annually and FSL and the Salvation Army paid the costs. With the new agreement, the town retains the LTAF funds of approximately $16,500 annually to cover all the costs of the vans. FSL is responsible for staffing and finding volunteer drivers and related expenses.

Mayor Bratcher stated that she thinks that they go outside the town five miles to offer services. In addition, the agreement doesn't consider that they raise approximately $17,000 with the Salvation Army bell ringing and might receive money from Yavapai County for transportation. None of this was reported to the town when they asked for more money.

Consensus of Council was to not sign the new agreement until FSL presents information regarding other funding sources for the Freedom Express along with ridership information such as the number served, number of Wickenburg residents and whether it is for seniors only or what demographic is served.

Tim Suan, Deputy Town Manager, next moved on to the Bed Tax Funding Agreements that are designated for marketing and economic development. The distribution takes the previous fiscal year's actual revenues, subtracts the town's operating expenses (FY24 operating expenses: $25,000 Façade Improvement Grant, $10,000 Marketing II Grant, $5,500 Devore Statues and 5% toward contingency) and the remainder is distributed equally at 33.3% on or before Aug 1 to the Chamber of Commerce, Desert Caballeros Western Museum, and Del E. Webb Center for the Performing Arts to be used for marketing. The expiration of all three agreements is July 1, 2026.

Councilmember Bedoian thought that the town should also take out money for the town's events for marketing. Deputy Town Manager Suan stated that those events are covered by the General Fund in the recreation budget. These are for those organizations to market their events.

Deputy Town Manager Suan reported that an example is the Chamber funding agreement where they will receive $66,347 in FY26 to be used to advertise Wickenburg or Wickenburg Special Events in publications or media with 10,000+ exposure. The special events include Gold Rush Days, Street Dance & Food Truck Fest, Fiesta de September, Bluegrass Festival, Cowboy Christmas Poetry Gathering, Christmas Parade of Lights, and trade shows. Funds may be used for brochures, guides, billboards, and other promotional materials and the Town of Wickenburg must be listed as a sponsor in all materials funded by town dollars. An annual report must be submitted each year, detailing the use of the funds and marketing efforts. The report shall also include the total number of website visits recorded, including traffic to WickenburgChamber.com and OutWickenburgWay.com. It should also include a description of trade shows attended, the number of visitors to the Wickenburg Visitor Center, and the number of tourism-related telephone inquiries received. The town is proposing changes from annual reporting to quarterly reporting and requires proof of publication, invoices, and receipts. The additional reporting is to have them include number of impressions/views, engagement numbers for digital advertising, and an economic impact narrative.

There are also bed tax sponsorship agreements. In July 2024, the Town Council approved a renewal of the Chamber Sponsorship Agreement, in the amount of $65K and extended the term of the contract from 1 year to 3 years, ending on June 30, 2027. These funds can only be used in support of Gold Rush Days, Bluegrass Festival, Christmas Light Parade, and two Tourism Trade Shows. The funding is limited to marketing, promotion, and the operation of special events for upcoming fiscal years. The Chamber must keep and maintain attendance records for the events and provide the data to the town on a quarterly basis or after each special event.

The next agreement is the Train Depot Rental of suite A, which holds the visitor center. The Chamber may use the building in exchange for running it as an Official Visitor Center, compliant with the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT). The Chamber is responsible for all repairs, maintenance, and cleaning inside the building. The Chamber must promote all businesses in town, businesses within two miles of town limits, and local tourist attractions at the Visitor Center. The Chamber must operate the VisitWickenburg.com (OutWickenburgWay.com) website in cooperation with the town, however this website is not operable. The Visitor Center is currently not consistently open on weekends and major holidays. At least twice a year, the Chamber must present a report to Town Council showing Visitor Center activity and compliance with AOT guidelines. This agreement ends June 22, 2026.

Vice Mayor Jones stated that the Chamber of Commerce does a better job than the town at marketing. He thought that requiring them to be open more was a good idea. Interim Town Manager Smith stated that in the past they were required to be open seven days per week, but the AOT standards have changed, so they are meeting those standards. The town can set up their own standards to require them to be open on weekends and holidays.

Consensus of Council was to amend the requirements to have them have to be open at least on Saturday and Monday holidays for more than just 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, with a preference for them being open on Sundays also during the season. The Council also wanted the Chamber to get into compliance by having the website VisitWickenburg.com operational with a deadline for that compliance, but left it to staff to set the deadline.

Deputy Town Manager Suan reported that the Train Depot Rental of suite B has the Chamber of Commerce office space. In 2021 the Chamber agreement specified market value lease payment for the space. In 2023 the lease agreement was modified for a reduction in lease amount. In 2024 the lease agreement was modified to $1 a year in recognition that the Chamber invested over $500,000 in improvements to the space. The term of this agreement ends July 21, 2027.

This past year the Council approved new sponsorship agreements with the Del E Webb Center and Desert Caballeros Western Museum for $5,000 and $4,000 per year respectfully. There were one-year terms on those agreements, so they expire on June 30, 2025. Those were funded through the Bed Tax Contingency funds with any payments back to the town for services to go back into the Bed Tax contingency. The contractor must submit a report to the town by May 1, 2025 (at least 60 days before the agreement ends). The report must include visitor attendance and impact on local businesses, quality of life impact summary of events, meetings, and activities organized, and their public benefits. These sponsorships were for specific events where those entities pay the town for services such as Guys Who Grill and Cowgirl Up.

Consensus of the Council was to extend the time to be on the same schedule as the Chamber sponsorship agreement, so it will expire in 2027, at which time they will all be reviewed.

Interim Town Manager Smith reported that the Bed Tax Fund Contingency is currently $298,470. He has proposed a project for some improvements at the swimming pool using approximately $222,000 of those funds. The first would be to replace grass surface in two areas to eliminate issues with the chemicals due to grass getting into the pool and add shade structures for families and guests at a cost of $80,000. The second project would be to add a pool heater to extend the swimming pool season to hopefully March to October at a cost of $142,000, which doesn’t include utility relocation but does include a cover. He gave them three funding options, if Council wishes to proceed with the project in FY26:

- Charge 100% of Project Cost as an annual operating expense – eliminates available funding for marketing contracts
- Charge 50% to operating & 50% to the fund contingency – results in 57% reduction in Bed Tax Marketing Funding
- Charge 100% of the Project Cost to Contingency – leaves marketing funding whole for FY26

Vice Mayor Jones suggested possibly looking at using it on the fields, instead of the swimming pool. Interim Town Manager Smith stated that there has to be a nexus to bring in people from outside as it needs to be for economic development. Town Attorney Stuhan stated that Bed Tax can be used for hospitality and tourism including developing, maintaining and operating town facilities for tourism.

Consensus of the Council was to fund up to $222,000 for both projects from the Bed Tax Contingency during the next fiscal year with utility relocation coming from another place in the budget, as they don’t want to affect the current agreements nor deplete the contingency line item. Public Works Director Workman stated that the projects won’t take place until after the swimming season this year.

Robert Martinez, Finance Director, reported on revenues for the General Fund year to date with construction revenues down 53%, income tax is down 40.5% because of legislative changes. The overall revenues are down by about 18%. The chart shows the actual figures from last year at this time compared to the mid-April numbers for this fiscal year. The budget shows a shift in revenue projections to not stay flat but reduce the local sales tax by $1 million.

Account Number	Account Title	07/21-03/22 Prior year 3 Actual	07/22-03/23 Prior year 2 Actual	07/23-03/24 Prior year Budget	07/23-03/24 Prior year Actual	07/24-03/25 Current year Budget	07/24-03/25 Current year Actual
GENERAL FUND							
GENERAL FUND REVENUE							
100-101-000-42503	STATE GRANT/LOAN	0	0	115,000	113,340	115,000	276,042
100-101-000-44110	PRIMARY PROP TAX	352,153	402,386	600,000	419,219	600,000	392,335
100-101-000-44120	PRIOR PERIOD TAX	37,583	17,676	26,369	26,369	30,000	8,599
100-101-000-44210	LOCAL SALES TAX	5,481,855	6,535,933	9,500,000	7,851,520	9,500,000	7,069,342
100-101-000-44215	PROP 207 SMART & SAFE	39,453	0	0	0	0	0
100-101-000-44418	AUTO LIEU TAX	297,942	297,880	394,216	304,722	404,879	301,997
100-101-000-44420	STATE SALES TAX/TPT	774,055	849,449	1,158,398	897,432	1,208,395	915,516
100-101-000-44422	STATE INCOME TAX/URS	750,958	1,094,815	2,098,742	1,574,050	1,700,982	1,295,992
100-101-000-45489	BANNER FEES	920	1,560	1,467	1,200	1,467	1,280
100-101-000-45490	COMM & REC CENTER RENTALS	26,566	36,464	33,831	25,373	33,831	34,878
100-101-000-45491	SWIM POOL ADMISSION	9,161	7,111	24,629	18,472	24,629	5,647
100-101-000-45494	PARK FEES	13,449	7,354	8,991	6,743	8,991	480
100-101-000-45495	RECREATION PROGRAMS	6,895	4,153	22,647	17,160	22,647	4,617
100-101-000-46432	CABLE AGREEMENT	30,815	39,167	52,638	38,302	52,638	32,384
100-101-000-46434	POLE ATTACHMENT	7,970	7,970	7,970	7,970	7,970	7,970
100-101-000-46436	SOUTHWEST GAS FRANCHISE	12,866	15,383	31,650	17,863	31,650	9,904
100-101-000-46438	APS FRANCHISE	129,356	145,621	216,949	169,304	216,949	194,364
100-101-000-46441	LIQUOR LICENSE FEES	2,925	2,800	3,325	3,325	3,325	3,275
100-101-000-46444	OCCUPATIONAL FEES	61,993	66,044	65,364	65,364	65,364	55,505
100-101-000-46445	OTHER PERMIT FEES	255,221	148,755	153,668	115,251	153,668	128,155
100-101-000-46459	INTEREST INCOME	6,239	561,917	741,352	559,261	700,000	804,276
100-101-000-46460	LGIP LOSS	0	0	0	0	0	173
100-101-000-46463	TOWN RENTALS	8,503	20,056	26,149	21,395	26,149	15,063
100-101-000-46470	LIBRARY - MISC REVENUES	2,273	749	937	703	937	1,003
100-101-000-46471	LIBRARY - COPIES	1,618	2,052	1,819	1,364	1,819	1,675
100-101-000-46481	ZONING & SUBDIVISION FEES	15,580	28,855	5,000	5,000	10,000	3,700
100-101-000-46483	NEW BLDG PERMIT FEES	768,780	298,604	402,458	301,841	500,000	328,443
100-101-000-47452	PUBLIC SAFETY - RENTAL & REIMB	6,511	28,411	13,927	13,927	13,927	30,415
100-101-000-47453	FIRE - IGA	0	0	889,185	0	946,781	0
100-101-000-47465	FINES & COURT CHARGES	120,477	106,315	154,183	115,637	154,183	153,644
100-101-000-47467	POLICE MISC FEES	7,002	8,547	7,529	7,529	7,529	8,674
100-101-000-47469	ADMIN CHARGE - GF	682,321	845,862	983,250	737,437	1,100,465	733,644
100-101-000-47471	ADMIN CHARGE - PS & CIP	131,759	135,325	238,737	179,053	261,081	174,054
100-101-000-47510	RESTITUTION	374	89	1,420	1,420	0	3,386
100-101-000-48821	EVENT STAFF/EQUIPMENT USE	8,616	9,015	48,000	48,000	48,000	37,888
100-101-000-48830	CREDIT/DEBIT FEES	46,784	4,763	6,088	4,987	6,088	22,223
100-101-000-49999	CAPITAL LEASE PROCEEDS	0	(2,350,573)	0	0	0	0
Total GENERAL FUND REVENUE:		10,098,973	9,380,508	18,035,888	13,670,534	17,959,344	13,056,544

Councilmember Bedoian requested the percentage as a column to give them a better idea with it being 75% through the fiscal year.

Finance Director Martinez shows a chart with the year-to-date expenditures and includes a line for a new operating contingency. This budget does include the 4% employee increase as well as the other steps for dealing with the compression issues in salaries. Interim Town Manager Smith stated that this new operating contingency includes some funding taken out of different departments' budgets for what if costs for more cost control. If those funds are needed, this contingency will be under the Town Manager's authority to address the costs that arise. This will also give the Town Manager the ability to approve items that are in the budget, without having to come back to the Council, to speed up the approval process.

	2023-24 ACTUAL	2024-25 BUDGET	2024-25 YTD ACTUAL	2025-26 PROPOSED
FINANCE	767,086	759,888	557,067	840,277
GENERAL SERVICES	604,371	666,016	381,914	626,016
OPERATING CONTINGENCY	0	0	0	750,000
TOWN MANAGER	658,434	367,879	97,224	554,638
HUMAN RESOURCES	1,003	362,927	255,297	402,959
TOWN CLERK	177,482	242,303	158,310	243,197
TOWN COURT	357,763	563,957	343,154	483,684
TOWN ATTORNEY	269,552	301,320	187,999	285,000
RECREATION	575,600	585,086	276,950	613,139
ECON DEV & PUBLIC OUTREACH	228,307	456,847	281,151	406,935
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	415	583,356	345,586	570,167
LIBRARY	496,468	319,422	202,231	322,403
PARKS & FACILIY MAINTENANCE	1,562,785	2,282,240	1,569,023	1,773,128
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	665,089	670,637	436,179	717,969
PUBLIC SERVICES ADMIN	424,218	488,807	335,103	469,323
POLICE	4,934,165	6,531,732	4,091,787	6,397,048
FIRE	4,006,920	5,251,011	3,703,987	4,589,956
TOTALS	**15,729,658**	**20,433,428**	**13,222,962**	**20,045,839**

Finance Director Martinez stated that the town is still waiting for the property tax numbers from the counties. Council direction at the last study session was to keep the levy at $600,000 and reduce the rate.

Finance Director Martinez then provided some fund balance information:
- Restricted Projected End of Year Fund Balance - $22,068,517
  - ✓ Contingency $3,173,744
  - ✓ Capital Reserve $1,000,000
  - ✓ Reserve $5,394,773 (at 30%) – policy is 15%
- Unrestricted Fund Balance - $12.5M

Mayor Bratcher would like to use some of that unrestricted fund balance on some of the capital projects, but would like to review the list.

D. **EXECUTIVE SESSION -** (Council May Vote to Go Into Executive Session Pursuant to A.R.S §38-431.03(A)(3) to Receive Legal Advice from the Town Attorney on Any of the Above Agenda Items.)

E. **ADJOURNMENT**

MOVED BY Councilmember Rebecca Rovey to adjourn at approximately 5:06 PM
SECONDED BY Councilmember Margaret Nyberg
VOTE: 7 – 0 (Yes – Mayor Bratcher, Vice Mayor Jones, Councilmembers Bedoian, Clark, Nyberg, Rovey, and Rubash)

BG Bratcher, Mayor

ATTEST:

Amy Brown, Town Clerk

CERTIFICATION

I, Amy Brown, the duly appointed and qualified Town Clerk of the Town of Wickenburg, do hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the special meeting of the Town Council of Wickenburg, Arizona held on April 21, 2025. I further certify the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Amy Brown, MMC
Town Clerk