

Sierra Vista City Council
Meeting Summary
July 11, 2023

Mayor McCaa called the July 11, 2023, City Council Special Meeting to order at 3:00 p.m., City Hall Council Chambers, 1011 N. Coronado Drive, Sierra Vista, Arizona.

Roll Call:

Mayor Clea McCaa II – present
Mayor Pro Tem Carolyn Umphrey – present
Council Member William Benning – present
Council Member Gregory Johnson - present
Council Member Angelica Landry – present
Council Member Marta Messmer - present
Council Member Mark Rodriguez – present

Others Present:

Chuck Potucek, City Manager
Victoria Yarbrough, Assistant City Manager
Adam Thrasher, Police Chief
Don Foster, Fire Marshall
Laura Wilson, Leisure, Parks, and Library Director
Chanel Kirkpatrick, Public Works External Service Manager
Gabriel Squires, Public Works Internal Operations Manager
Matt McLachlan, Community Development Director
Jonathan Kramer, Building Official
Jill Adams, City Clerk
Nathan J. Williams, City Attorney
Adam Curtis, Communications Manager
Dianna Cameron, Management Analyst

Invocation – Ms. Kirkpatrick led everyone present in prayer.

Pledge of Allegiance – Council Member Benning led the Pledge of Allegiance.

[Item 1](#) Acceptance of the Agenda

Council Member Messmer moved that the agenda for the Special City Council Meeting of July 11, 2023 be approved. Council Member Landry seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried, 7/0. Mayor McCaa, Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey, Council Members Benning, Johnson, Landry, Rodriguez, and Messmer voted in favor.

Presentations and Awards

[Briefing on the West Sierra Vista Partnership Program](#)

Mr. McLachlan briefed Council on the various facets of the West Sierra Vista Partnership Program, mechanics of it, and how it has been used. The success of the program as it is implied in the name, depends upon partnerships that are based on relationships. The Community Development Department works closely with Economic Development staff, the realtor

community, and the Chamber of Commerce, as well as other interested parties in initiating and developing those.

Turning around downtowns and distressed neighborhoods is one of the hardest things that cities do, which is what the West Sierra Vista Partnership Program is tackling. Ultimately, the goal is to establish enough positive rotation where the momentum of the private market takes over. The Community Development Department traces the origin of the Partnership Program back to the City Council Strategic Plan adopted in 2015. It has been recognized and supported in each successive Strategic Plan ever since and in there was a desire to develop, implement a set of incentives to assist commercial property owners. To be able to do that, the Department first had to go through the statutory process to designate and establish a redevelopment area that was done by the end of 2017. There was a decision by Council to start small, establish a consensus, and build out from there. A lot of the initial reservations or concerns that did not come to pass helped to establish the level of support for the two subsequent expansions of the redevelopment area.

The program is available to business and property owners inside the redevelopment area. It is a matching grant program with reimbursements made after a project is complete and inspected. Property owners and business will fill an application, review the application for the scope of work, and provide bids from local contractors. If everything matches up to the categories of eligible improvement, the Community Development Department will issue an authorization letter for them to proceed subject to any required permits being obtained. Property owners can apply for a grant each fiscal year to help on budget; therefore, the Department will start with the necessities on what is essential to open, and then follow up the following year with upgrade type enhancements to the property. Generally, projects should be done within six months from the grant being issued, but there are many reasons or situations that can cause a delay of which the Department is understanding and work with property owners on extensions when necessary.

All properties that are commercially zoned West of Fifth Street are eligible to apply. There are three main objectives that are guiding this program, one is to increase the number of businesses on the West End to ultimately reduce the commercial vacancy rate, which the Department has found that the program has been effective in getting prospective entrepreneurs to take a second look at the West End. Second, is to mitigate the initial costs of renovating older properties to make them ready for occupancy and more accessible to their customers, and third, that there is enough budget left over to invest in upgrades to the property to increase the curb appeal, improve the look and feel of the district through side upgrades, landscaping, public art and other type improvements, similar improvements.

Mr. McLachlan displayed a chart showing the breakdown of the eligible types of improvements by funding cap and private match that is required in terms of the building facade that is intended for improving storefronts that are visible to a public street that will go towards a fresh coat of paint, replacing doors and windows, adding decorative lighting, awnings, and other architectural features. A higher amount is available for tenant improvements for interior renovations on spaces that are open to the public for eating and drinking establishments to foster more of an entertainment district concept. There is also funding available for the installation of outdoor decks and seating areas in that regard. There's funding available for new or replacement signage, ADA improvements, public art, landscaping and closing dumpsters, site utilities, demolition, and site clearance. Another category that gets bumped up to the City Manager for review are projects that do not neatly fit within these categories but provide a similar public benefit. The Department prefers that applicants stack their grant with multiple categories to make a more significant impact. However, there is a \$25,000 cap in place on the overall grant

amount. There are criteria for granting exception based on the magnitude of economic impact and the Department judges that based on job creation, projected sales tax, and new construction value. There have been no exceptions granted to date. The median size grant award has been \$5,000 over the six years that the program has been operating. There have been 31 applications approved for a total payout of \$313,701.00 with \$4.5 million in matching private investment which yields a 14 to one public or private to public investment ratio that is very good.

A graph was presented that depicted the geographic distribution of the grants over the last six years. Most of them are concentrated along Frye Boulevard and Garden Avenue, which are the most visible in community streets on the West End. The expansion of the redevelopment area has resulted in projects beyond the original boundaries.

Most of the applications were tied to a new business or relocation of existing business or business expansion. Cochise Dental has two applications on the table due to the need to carry over one of their projects because of a construction delay. Cochise Dental came in last fiscal year for the sculpture that was installed out front; therefore, the total amount spent out of last year's budget was \$78,373.00, with about \$3.7 million in matching private investment. There were a few businesses that were not able to finish by June 30, and had to be carried over to this fiscal year that includes the West End Health Center, which now has their freestanding signage out by Second Street that should be wrapped up by the end of the month. Other projects completed in Fiscal Year 203 are:

- Tell Mama, a new cocktail lounge that is going to be occupying the space formerly used by the International Karaoke Bar. They encountered some hurdles by virtue of the age of the building;
- Gyfted Creations;
- New Soul Food Kitchen, occupying a space that was formerly used by Domino's next to the Jackson's Deli on Fry Boulevard.
- High Desert relocated their business from a County enclave on Fourth Street to a larger building on the backside of the former Horizon Moving and Storage complex; therefore, growing their business inside the City limits, which will produce good sales tax revenue.
- The Old Sun and Spokes building next to the Dairy Queen that Dan Abrams, a long time West End Commissioner, is refurbishing the facade of the building.

Mr. McLachlan commended the property owners for catching the vision, investing their resources, and making it a positive difference. He displayed a slide of Cochise Dental's building, one of the more significant projects from last year. They bought the building, renovated it, installed new landscaping with saguaro cactuses that stand out, repainted, and did a lot of renovations to the inside to adapt it for their office use on the ground floor. They also put up a statue of the Apache Leader Cochise, which serves as a focal point for that property and is befitting of the name of the business and the County.

Slides were shown of the following:

- Tombstone Brewery, a huge project that will impact sales tax revenue, was built where there was not a viable building that was demolished with grant funds in a prior year that assisted with the removal of what was deemed to be a blight structure. There was nostalgia and historic significance that was tied to the structure, which was salvaged and incorporated into the new use by the Ponderosa Company, who now owns the property, a beneficiary of grant funds to build the microbrewery, which was kind of a target use in the redevelopment area.

- AITC brought defense jobs to Sierra Vista, bought the building, and made renovations on the inside, with a new fresh coat of paint on the outside.
- We Frame It hired a muralist to add some public art to their building and installed ramps on the North and South side of the building to provide for increased accessibility.
- The West End Health Center put in awnings that were completed with the first phase as well as pop out windows without windows that they filled with murals.
- Weston Realty is a new company located on South Garden Avenue and the grant was made available for their monument sign and their wall sign that was installed.
- The Dance Company asked for help putting up a professional sign on their front entrance facing Fry Boulevard. The business filled a longstanding occupant vacant.
- Juan's Barbershop recently expanded their business to merge with the adjoining unit to add several chairs and new signage.
- John and Karen Gills' property on South Garden Avenue, who have been phasing in renovation.

City Manager's Report: Mr. Potucek stated that this meeting is in place of the meeting that would normally have been held on Thursday, July 13, 2023. This is primarily due to Ms. Yarbrough and him being out of town and the lack of items for the agenda. The next work session is scheduled for Tuesday, July 25, 2023; however, prior to that, there is an executive session dealing with real property at the airport at 2:00 p.m. The next regular meeting is on Thursday, July 27, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers that has the final budget vote on that agenda. He reported that in this year's budget, Council budgeted for land purchase of the property next to Fire Station II and Paseo San Luis. Ms. Downing is working hard on that transaction and is expecting that contract to be completed by the start of the next month. He also reported that although the sales tax reports during the last couple of months were at flat in terms of growth for sales tax revenue, May's sales tax report shows an increase of 8.2 percent. The City is year over year for fiscal 2022 versus 2023 and at 8.67. In closing, he acknowledged Police Chief Adam Thrasher and noted that this is his last public meeting as police chief because he will be retiring on Friday, July 14, 2023. He thanked him for his 27 years of service to the City of Sierra Vista and the community. He announced the promotion of Deputy Police Chief Chris Heiser to the position of Police Chief effective Saturday, July 15, 2023, who brings his 20 years of experience with the Sierra Vista Police Department. Lastly, he stated that he looks forward to working with him and believes that he will be a great successor to Police Chief Thrasher. Kudos to Police Chief Thrasher for preparing him for this position.

Item 2 Consent

[Item 2.1](#) Discussion and Possible Action of the Council Work Session Minutes of June 20, 2023

[Item 2.2](#) Discussion and Possible Action of the Regular City Council Minutes of June 22, 2023

Council Member Landry moved that the Consent Agenda consisting of the minutes of the June 20, 2023 work session, and the June 22, 2023 regular meeting, be approved. Council Member Benning seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried, 7/0. Mayor McCaa, Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey, Council Members Benning, Johnson, Landry, Rodriguez, and Messmer voted in favor.

New Business

[Item 3](#) Discussion and Possible Action of Resolution 2023-054, Authorization to proceed with Intergovernmental Agreement between the City of Sierra Vista, the Cochise County Sheriff's Office, and the Cochise County Community College District

Council Member Johnson moved that Resolution 2023-054, an Intergovernmental Agreement between the City of Sierra Vista, the Cochise County Sheriff's Office, and the Cochise County Community College District, to operate the Southeastern Arizona Law Enforcement Training Academy, be approved. Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried, 7/0. Mayor McCaa, Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey, Council Members Benning, Johnson, Landry, Rodriguez, and Messmer voted in favor.

[Item 4](#) Discussion and Possible Action of Ordinance 2023-004, Amendment to Chapter 33, City Departments, City Code

Council Member Benning moved that Ordinance 2023-004, amendment to Chapter 33, City Departments of the City Code of Ordinances, be approved. Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried, 7/0. Mayor McCaa, Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey, Council Members Benning, Johnson, Landry, Rodriguez, and Messmer voted in favor.

[Item 5](#) Discussion and Possible Action of Ordinance 2023-005, Amendments to Chapters 150 and 152 of the Sierra Vista Code of Ordinances Adopting by reference certain Building, Mechanical, Plumbing, Energy Conservation, Fire, Fuel, Gas, Residential, Existing Building, Swimming Pool, and Accessibility, Fire Codes Regulating and Governing the Construction, Conditions, and Maintenance of all Property, Buildings, and Structures in the City

Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey moved that Ordinance 2023-005, amendments to Chapters 150 and 152 of the Sierra Vista Code of Ordinances and adopting by reference the 2018 edition of the International Building Codes, effective September 1, 2023, be approved. Council Member Johnson seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried, 7/0. Mayor McCaa, Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey, Council Members Benning, Johnson, Landry, Rodriguez, and Messmer voted in favor.

[Item 6](#) Discussion and Possible Action of Resolution 2023-055, Intergovernmental Agreement with the State of Arizona for Theater Drive Corridor Improvements between 7th Street and Carmichael Avenue

Council Member Rodriguez moved that Resolution 2023-055, an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Arizona Department of Transportation for Theater Drive Corridor improvements, be approved. Council Member Johnson seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried, 7/0. Mayor McCaa, Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey, Council Members Benning, Johnson, Landry, Rodriguez, and Messmer voted in favor.

[Item 7](#) Discussion and Possible Action of Resolution 2023-056, Addendum to the City Attorney's Contract

Council Member Messmer moved that Resolution 2023-056, Addendum to the City Attorney's Contract, be approved. Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried, 7/0. Mayor McCaa, Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey, Council Members Benning, Johnson, Landry, Rodriguez, and Messmer voted in favor.

Comments and Requests of the Council

Council Member Benning wished Ms. McCaa a happy birthday, thanked his son for coming out for his birthday, congratulated Police Chief Thrasher on his retirement, thanked Mr. McLachlan for his presentation, and Mr. Williams.

Council Member Johnson had nothing to report.

Council Member Landry congratulated Police Chief Thrasher and wished him all the best on his retirement, shared that this upcoming weekend at Kartchner' s Caverns there are going to be a few different things going on. On Saturday, July 15, 2023, at 7:30 a.m., there will be a scorpion seek and find to be able to see what they are doing in their natural environment. On Sunday, July 16, 2023, from 9:00 a.m. until noon, there will be a World Snake Day event where Bill Shoemaker, Cochise County Snake Guy, is going to be present with some snakes so that people can learn more about them.

Council Member Messmer announced that the Arts, Humanity and Cultural Diversity Commission Meeting will be on July 19, 2023, at 4:30 p.m. at the OYCC. She also congratulated Police Chief Thrasher on his retirement and wished him good luck, shared that she has been training on the new track that is beautiful, and does not hurt her knees. Lastly, she announced that the City still needs commissioners for the Tourism Commission.

Council Member Rodriguez thanked Police Chief Thrasher for his services and congratulated him on his retirement, noted that his offer still stands if he wants to get a free tattoo of a hummingbird. He reported that Echoing Hope Ranch had a good hiring event during the week and noted that local businesses i.e., Mod Pizza were out there. Echoing Hope Ranch is interested in looking at how people with special needs may be hired and they have also offered to help with the Youth Commission to do mock interviews. He added that he loves that the businesses are wanting to get involved with the community's youth. He further added that during the morning at the Good Morning Sierra Vista Program, the CSV Coaching serving veterans with their grant was mentioned by the Director of the VA. He thanked all the veteran service organizations in the community that are doing good things for veterans and pushing for those grants for the greater good of the community because it does affect everybody. In closing, he stated that he is looking forward to the executive session about the airport because there is need for some movement out there. He further stated that he likes seeing people using the track and he hopes everybody does their part of taking care of it to keep it looking good. Lastly, he announced that during the weekend, he will be getting married to his fiancé, Nancy Ledesma.

Council Member Benning stated that it was a great Fourth of July and noted that City employees Matt and Ismael are there before he gets out there. He then leaves at about 10:00 p.m., but they stay. A lot of people know that the Rotary and City put on the July Fourth festivities, but Ms. Wilson and Killberg' s staff are there all the time working behind the scenes He thanked them all.

Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey congratulated Council Member Rodriguez and Nancy Ledesma on their upcoming marriage, thanked the Fire Department and Police Department for their fast response to some brush fire during the fireworks. She voiced her gratitude to Police Chief Thrasher for making her first four years and seven months on City Council much easier because of his leadership and dedication to the City. She added that she is going to have a hard time not picturing him as Kindergarten Cop when he is out playing teacher and noted that Palominas School is lucky to have a teacher like him. She then congratulated Police Chief Thrasher and wished him well on his retirement.

Mayor McCaa thanked Police Chief Thrasher and stated that he is looking forward to great things out at Palominos. He wished farewell to Major General Hale on his change of command next week, and welcomed Brigadier General Appelhans, a great, great leader. Recognized Todd Ryan from Cool FM Online for all that he does, congratulated Adam Curtis on his promotion and thanked him for his direction on the interview for NBC Nightly News. Lastly, he noted that Council Member Benning did an outstanding job on the July Fourth festivities as well as staff.

Adjournment

Mayor McCaa adjourned the July 11, 2023, meeting of the Sierra Vista City Council at 3:54 p.m.