



**Human Relations Commission**  
Wednesday, May 14, 2025, 5:15 pm  
Meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams



**Minutes**

**1. Call to Order/Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Smith at 5:18 p.m. Those present and absent were:

**Present:**

Ashley Jackson  
Cedric Smith, Chair  
Dr. June Webb-Vignery  
Eric Howard

Ward 2  
Ward 4  
Ward 5  
Ward 3

John Dalton  
Iris Berry

Non-Voting Advisory Member  
Non-Voting Advisory Member

**Absent:**

**Guest:**

Daniel Sullivan – University of Arizona  
Alisha Vasquez – Director of the Mexican American Heritage and History Museum  
Elizabeth Yee

**Staff Members Present:**

Rick Guerra

City Clerk's Office

**2. Approval of Minutes: meeting of April 9, 2025**

Chairman Smith moved to approve the Minutes of April 9, 2025. The Motion was duly seconded and passed with a roll call, the motion passed 4 to 0.

Commissioner Howard and Iris Berry Non-voting advisory signed in at 5:19 pm.

**3. Call to the Audience**

Daniel Sullivan asked Elizabeth Yee and Alisha Vasquez to join the meeting in connection with the agenda item regarding the resolution on environmental contamination.

No comment from the audience.

#### **4. Discussion of the City Budget**

Chairman Smith introduced Angele Ozoemelum, who will be doing the discussion on the City Budget.

Angele introduced herself, she is the Business Services Director for the City of Tucson. I will give you a brief overview of the budget process. Beginning with the budget process by forecasting revenues to ensure that we know what level of resources we are working with before we get into the full budget. We get the tax information from Pima County the assessor's office. We can calculate our primary and secondary property taxes. The secondary property goes toward the debt service. The principal and interest go to the general obligation bonds that the voters approved for the city. The budget is prepared with several departments in collaboration with directors and their staff. We ask our staff to submit supplemental budgets and it eliminates the one-time and we look at our base budget. The City Manager's then meets with the department directors and goes over their budget and base on the level of resources the City Manager determines what can be funded and what cannot be funded. Then this goes on the study session starting in January every meeting until the budget gets approved. Then we submit the recommended budget to the Mayor and Council and have a public hearing on the recommended budget. We also have a truth in taxation hearing if that is necessary and that means we are to inform the public if there will be an increase in the levy and the increase in the levy is absent of any new construction. From July to November, the starting of planning stage, forecasting, budget engagement, and budget priorities start. From December to March, the development stage, capital improvement, operation budget, supplemental request, and CMO budget discussion. From April to June, the budget submission stage, M&C budget updates, budget adoption, and property tax levy adoption. The government fiscal year starts in October and our fiscal year starts in July. The jurisdiction can pick when the fiscal year starts that best suits their process. Potential budget cuts for next year are funds for HUD and FTA. This will potentially impact the general fund and level of service. So now, we might have to slow the service or reduce the level of service, instead of eliminating it. So, we have to agree to probably not having an office of diversity if we want to accept the federal grants. We have to read the terms and conditions of the grants to make sure it doesn't adversely affect the programs that we have now in place.

Commissioner Howard had questions on the agenda item around the contaminated water and any potential funding cuts or proposed or anticipated changes that would impact some of the EPAS partnership or funding alliance to improve the current work that is happening to clean up our water.

Angele Ozoemelum mentioned that she is not aware of any potential cuts, and of course, the Water Department is an enterprise fund, meaning that they run like a business. And so, the resources collected to directly used to fund the service that is being provided. But in terms of federal funding and the EPA, I have not heard anything on that.

Iris Berry asked how do we find out that information?

Angele Ozoemelan answered that she was going to reach out to the director of the Water Department when he was back in town. He is currently out of town.

Commissioner June Webb asked how is the city looking at a reduction in federal funding for fiscal year 2025 / 2026? Certain federal funds have flowed into the City, for transportation for different parts of the budget, have there been reductions in funding from the Federal Government?

Angele Ozoemelan answered that not as far as she is aware but there is that potential for reduction in funding. Our reluctance or our decision not to agree to the terms and conditions offered in the acceptance of the grants may also impact the level of funding that the city can access.

Commissioner Webb asked if the city was affected in any way. What is the diversity, equity, and inclusion that has popped up in any way shape, or form?

Angele Ozoemelan answered that she believes that may be something that is in the new terms and conditions offered in the grants agreements that they are seeing. Those agreements are being reviewed very closely.

Commissioner Howard asked how do you look at the budget from an equity lens or from a kind of fairness lens in practice?

Angele Ozoemelan mentioned that the contracts affect several departments. For example, she oversees the procurement department, so, she has to ensure that minority and female-run businesses that we are given the opportunities available within the procurement contracting process in those groups. When preparing the budget we have to try and make sure that we have an attempt to ensure that we are taking all the other issues into account.

Commissioner Howard asked about the final public hearing or input on the proposed budget, are we anticipating that it is coming up, or have all those opportunities for public input passed?

Angele Ozoemelan answered that the public hearing will be held on June 3rd for the budget, property tax levy, and as well as the adoption of the budget.

Chairman Smith asked where is the meeting going to be located for the public hearing?

Angele Ozoemelan answered that the meeting will be at City Hall at the regular Mayor and Council meeting on June 3rd at 5:30 p.m. There will also be a study session on the tentative budget. It is more or less like a round table where we inform the Mayor and Council on various topics. We will also have a study session on May 20<sup>th</sup> to discuss the tentative budget at City Hall.

Chairman Smith thanked Angele for taking the time to attend this meeting and for sharing the valuable information.

Commissioner Jackson had to drop off the call at 6 p.m.

5. **Recruit Effort**
6. **Review the recruitment PowerPoint presented ALOS**
7. **Draft Resolution for TCE Situation**

Commissioner Howard mentioned that he, John, and Daniel form some kind of subcommittee on the TCEP fast and water situation in Tucson and have met a couple of times. Also, they have developed a timeline and some strategy around what the commission can do to kind of amplify some of the advocacy work around this issue. So, something that we can look at tonight is the proposed draft resolution that was sent out to folks back in April. Tonight, we can look at the resolution together and get it drafted as a group that we can share it with the public to get their input. The Museum of Contemporary Art is doing an exhibit opening in September and we thought it would be a good idea to present the resolution there. We can invite the media and that can be an opportunity to amplify some of the advocacy voices and voice our support in a way that makes sense.

Daniel Sullivan introduces Alishia Vasquez who is the Director of the Mexican American Heritage and History Museum and is open to answering any questions. She is the one who put together the Museum of Contemporary Art exhibit that Eric was mentioning. Alisha, Elizabeth, and I (Daniel) can advertise the meeting if you want to put a public hearing together.

Alisha Vasquez talked about looking at TCE from multiple lenses, one is the environmental justice lens which makes a lot of sense when we're talking about water contamination. But the other is the disability justice lens, so what does it mean to become a community that has a lot of new disabilities? And knowing that we have about 30 years left of clean water for Tucson. What will happen when Phoenix doesn't want to provide us with any more CIP water? We are going to have to go back to the contaminated wells. My generation doesn't know the story of what happened. We are just trying to educate and bring a message of healing. MOCA is going to have a mural unveiling on December 13<sup>th</sup> at Mission Manor Park dedicated to the people impacted by or lost because of the TCE contamination.

Commissioner Howard thanked Alisha and Daniel for the helpful context to just kind of know the spirit and intent of the resolution we are trying to get across.

Commissioner Webb read the letter and it was beautifully written.

Commissioner Howard mentioned that it was a collaborative effort on that.

Chairman Smith asked if we could spell out the abbreviations initially, the reason is because we are familiar with the abbreviations but someone who's looking at this may not be familiar the first time, they read it.

Commissioner Webb agrees that it should be spell out and if we have anyway to make it clear and get it done is better.

Commissioner Howard mentioned he is taking notes so they can get the letter updated. The subcommittee did meet and talked about this a little bit more and it might be easier if I share the screen with some of the edits that we have. In this letter, we advocate for community-led solutions and decision-making processes that prioritize and document voices, knowledge, and leadership. This also acknowledges the history, the pain in a way that is documented and takes some of the voices and knowledge of people in the South side.

Commissioner Webb asked if the letter is to suggest encouraging efforts to expand education and cooperation.

Alisha Vasquez answered that this is to build trust, educate, and ensure that newcomers to the desert are aware that they might have to drink some contaminated water.

Daniel Sullivan mentioned that he would be very interested in sort of hearing the public comment on the resolution and see what comes up like in that meeting.

Commissioner Webb mentioned that the important thing is that water is front-page news today and it's becoming more so because it looks like Arizona's going to be in a battle for water. Keeping this at the forefront of consideration is what HRC was set up to do.

Commissioner Howard thanked everyone for the feedback. The proposal is that we would look at what works best for the commission and any other advocates that should be involved in this too. We should look at having the public comments in the next three weeks before the next meeting so that we are able to amend the letter that we are endorsing.

Chairman Smith asked if by public hearing they meant public discussion. Can this wait until September since we still have to make some edits?

Alisha Vasquez mentioned that Daniel and she wanted this letter to be reviewed by some key folks who have lived this pretty much their whole lives to have the opportunity to look at the wording, the language, and make sure they interpreted what they've been sharing with us correctly.

Commissioner Howard mentioned that he was not sure what the formal etiquette or protocol would be around a public forum or public hearing. If Rick from the City Clerk can provide guidance it would be helpful. If we can still pass the letter with some edits from the public forum.

John Dalton mentioned that they have had meetings at the Mayor and Council conference room and/or at a ward office if they have the space.

Rick Guerra said that the City Clerk can check to see if the conference office was going to be available on June 4th for them to use.

Chairman Smith mentioned that if they plan to meet do it later in the day around 6 p.m. or 5:30 p.m. that you give time for people to get out of work and that traffic.

John Dalton commented that the meeting can be scheduled virtually.

Chairman Smith asked if this would this a commission meeting.

John Dalton mentioned that I would be like a special meeting or something of that sort, but it would still be like a recorded meeting just outside of the regular meeting.

Alisha Vasquez mentioned that for some of the elders that they are inviting a library or ward office would be best. Just so that they don't have to walk far.

John Dalton mentioned that we can keep options open to maybe a church or another venue that we may have connections to. Something like the Pima Community College library in the downtown campus and we can kind of do pretty much anywhere we like as long as we properly report it and give the proper notice and locations. A good location would be the Mexican consulate for example they have meeting areas and they have let us use that in the past. Also, there have been some non-profits that have hosted other commissions.

Chairman Smith mentioned that we should have at least 3 locations as a backup plan but the 1st location should be more accessible for everyone.

Commissioner Howard mentioned that June 4th which is a Wednesday at 6:15 p.m. We should have a final HRC-endorse language for the resolution and meeting notice. We can get everything by May 28th.

Chairman Smith asked if the public forum needs to be on a Wednesday. Can the meeting be on Tuesday the 3rd?

Commissioner Howard answered that they are open on any day and if the 3rd works, he is good.

Alisha Vasquez mentioned that if the date doesn't work for in-person they can also try to do it via Zoom, if it makes things less stressful.

Commissioner Webb mentioned that it would be a wise point to invite the people who live in the South Side and encourage them to participate because they are the ones who are more affected by this.

Iris Berry agreed and said that definitely because of the neighborhood that is mostly impacted are the Southside of Tucson. Unless we have a huge campaign for it to be virtual. She thinks that will be challenging, they predict getting young residents but not seniors, and those who might need it like adults with special needs. Families with low income are also talking about not having access to the internet or a basic phone. Other locations could be Saint Javier Mission, Kennedy Park, or the library on Valencia. How do we get the point across because I think some people have a language barrier and also help them understand the impact on their community.

John Dalton mentioned that Eric Howard, Daniel Sullivan, and he have talked about this, and we believe that in person is better because you have more potential impact, and face-to-face interaction is more meaningful. In many more ways than virtual. In person would be more impactful and the Southside would be a target in terms of location.

Alisha Vasquez proposed the Valencia library since that is kind of where the TCE archives exist or one of them. I would move the meeting to 5:30 p.m. because the library closes at 7 pm on Tuesday and Thursday. That has been a hub that we've used in the past, specifically with the group of people who were invited to look at this document.

Daniel Sullivan mentioned that they should plan for a tentative date, and we can ask people if they can make that the public forum, because what if we make the calendar but people are not able to attend?

John Dalton mentioned that technically everything in the letter is already public record. So, if we publish a draft for the upcoming meeting /special meeting / public engagement meeting people can see it ahead of time in that form. Of course, it's a draft and not a final and approved version.

Iris Berry mentioned that you would get a larger population of working-class people on a weekend because we are talking about working class to low income in some areas on the South Side. The library and wards office are the areas that will greatly impact the community.

Commissioner Howard mentioned that maybe a Sunday after church would be a good time around 1:30 p.m. or 6 p.m. or 6:15 p.m.

Commissioner Webb signed off at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Smith mentioned that they public forum can be done on in June but his will be out of town but can follow up with them on the outcome.

## **8. Draft Letter to Raul Grijalva's Family**

## **9. Update from HRC Representative to LGBTQ**

Commissioner Webb mentioned that they had a quorum this passed month, but just recently lost a member since Rocque is not a council member.

## **10. Vacancy and Advisory Positions**

No updates at this point.

Iris mentions that she will start following up and should have more information next meeting.

## **11. Chairperson's Summary of Current Events**

Chairman Smith moved this item above #4 because the person giving the discussion of the city budget was not ready yet. The chairman had a meeting at Dunbar Center last Thursday, concerning the kind of executive order and how that affects the community. It was interesting how they are cutting funding and how they can cut corners and use verbiage and certain words to get the results they want. He was just curious about how these budget cuts would affect the programs and organizations. Had a good meeting with great information. Sam Brown was at the Dunbar; he is local and works for the state attorney's office as well.

## **12. Commissioners' Summary of Current Events**

Commissioner Webb wanted to share that Pima County Interfaith was issuing a card through the churches. The churches are starting to step up and are starting to give an identification card to people who don't have any other way of getting an ID. She has received this ID. It is called a Parish ID/Congregation identification in the Churches.

Chairman Smith is looking for data to desegregate counties, cities, on income wealth, and education. The zone mapping and kind of use that too to kind of distinguish levels of income, economic status within certain parts of town.

Commissioner Howard was wondering if we have any data on a local level that would provide the legal status of people and that is how they are getting targeted by deportation? What data we do have to make informed decisions at the city and state levels?

Commissioner Webb mentioned that City Clerk might have something to that effect called SMS and she knows this because she used to work at the City Manager's office and City Clerk was the one who provided this information in the past, or they might know where to find that information.

## **13. Future Agenda Items**

## **14. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:02 pm. due to lack of quorum.