CITY OF TUCSON
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ESAC)

Thursday, July 9, 4:00 PM
Hybrid Meeting

Legal Action Report and Meeting Minutes
Approved on [*]

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Kris Yarter at 4:03 PM.

Those present and absent were:

Present:

Kris Yarter, Chairperson	Representative, City Manager's Office
Margot Garcia	Representative, City Manager's Office
Trevor Anthony Ledbetter	Representative, City Manager's Office
Douglas Jennings	Representative, City Manager's Office
Halley Hughes	Representative, City Manager's Office
Val Little	Representative, City Manager's Office
Alfredo "Fred" Araiza	Representative, Ward 2
Polly Parks	Representative, Ward 5
Chuck Ray	Representative, Ward 6

Absent:
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Staff Members Present:

Carlos A. De La Torre	Director, Environmental Services
Isaac Marcor	Finance Manager, Business Development Services
Frank Bonillas	Administrator, Environmental Services
Brittany Aldrich	Staff Assistant, Environmental Services
Nadia Ispiani	Executive Assistant, Environmental Services

Both members and staff attended the meeting virtually via Zoom.

2. Chairperson's Report

No report.

3. Director's Report

Carlos A. De La Torre, Director, reported on the following items:

Mr. De La Torre updated the committee on the City's ongoing response to the EPA Findings of Violations (FOV) and Pima County Department of Environmental Quality (PDEQ) Notice of Violation (NOV) resulting from the April 2024 inspection. He reported that PDEQ notified the City on April 27, 2026, that it is in substantial compliance with its air quality permit following corrective actions. A comprehensive response addressing more than 60 lines items is currently being prepared, including documentation for activities that occurred before the City took over the operation of the landfill gas system in 2019.

He also announced that the City's Air Quality Permit, submitted two years ago, has completed PDEQ review and is awaiting final EPA approval. He added that the Phase 2 Gas Collection Improvement Plan is scheduled for submission by next Monday and includes approximately $5–6 million in improvements over the next four years, including replacement of more than 40 gas extraction wells, infrastructure upgrades, and enhanced monitoring and automation.

Ms. Garcia asked about the lengthy permit review process, and Mr. De La Torre explained that extended review periods are typical due to technical evaluations and agency coordination. Mr. Ray asked whether elevated methane levels contributed to the delay and whether the proposed improvements include continuous monitoring. Mr. De La Torre responded and explained that the elevated methane findings may have contributed to the permit timeline, as additional coordination between EPA and PDEQ was likely needed to align permit requirements and enforcement interpretations before the permit could be issued.

Mr. De La Torre reported that the ByFusion facility has received its Certificate of Occupancy. Under the agreement, ByFusion has 90 days to move equipment into the facility and 270 days to begin operations. He noted that Hefty Renew is experiencing challenges with end markets for recycled plastics.

Mr. Ray confirmed that the City has completed its contractual obligations and that implementation now rests with ByFusion. Mr. De La Torre agreed, noting the City invested more than $4 million in the facility and provides quarterly operational support of approximately $85,000 for up to four years.

Mr. Ray also asked about Tucson's plastic supply, and Mr. De La Torre explained that the City's collection represents only 10–15% of the facility's capacity, with ByFusion expected to develop additional feedstock sources. Ms. Little asked about the City's relationship with Hefty Renew and the handling of collected plastics. Mr. De La Torre explained that Hefty Renew served as an interim recycling partner and that plastics without viable mechanical recycling markets have been stored because the City does not allow energy recovery. Ms. Yarter asked about current inventory, and Mr. De La Torre reported approximately 187 bales (about 200 tons) are being stored for future processing. Mr. De La Torre suggested resetting and rebranding the plastic collection program once ByFusion is operational to improve public understanding, reduce contamination, and better align the program with its long-term goals.

Mr. De La Torre provided updates on several Sustainability Campus projects, including ongoing permitting for the multi-use facility and delays to the landscaping project due to right-of-way issues. He also reported that estimates for the container maintenance facility have increased from $5–6 million to approximately $12 million, and staff are evaluating cost-saving design alternatives. He summarized the City's landfill capacity analysis, noting that current operations provide approximately 9 years of lined-cell capacity and 44 years of permitted landfill life, with closure projected around 2070. The proposed expansion could extend landfill operations by an additional 50 years, resulting in roughly 100 years of total capacity. Current compaction averages 1,400 pounds per cubic yard, with a goal of 1,500–1,600 pounds, while soil cover currently averages 23% compared to the target of 20%.

Mr. Jennings asked whether the projections were based on current disposal rates, and Mr. De La Torre confirmed they include approximately 800,000 tons of waste received annually along with projected population growth.

Mr. De La Torre announced his resignation, effective next Friday, and thanked the committee for its support and collaboration. He noted that the department remains in a strong financial position with more than $70 million in reserves and is well positioned to continue its long-term sustainability initiatives.

4. Financial Monthly Report

Isaac Marcor, Finance Manager, reported on the following items:

Mr. Marcor presented the June Fiscal Year 2026 financial report, noting that year-end projections closely align with forecasts. Total revenues are projected at approximately $69.9 million, compared to the $75.6 million budget, with lower-than-budgeted residential, commercial, and investment earnings. He noted that the report reflects preliminary figures and will be updated once the fiscal year is officially closed.

On the expenditure side, most categories were below budget, including salaries, contractual services, commodities, grants, and capital projects. However, capital outlay exceeded budget by approximately $5 million due primarily to the purchase of collection vehicles and equipment. Despite these purchases and approximately $1.2 million in debt service payments, the department is still projected to make a positive contribution to the fund balance.

5. Subcommittee Reports, Appointments, Meeting Dates, and Assignments

a. Waste Diversion, Collections, and Education
No meeting was conducted in July.

6. Future Agenda Items for Next Meeting dated August 13, 2026

Future agenda items are as follows:

- Update on the new director, ByFusion, and LRSC Gas Collection System Update

7. Call to the Audience – No audience.

8. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 PM.