

Sustainability and Economic Vitality (SEV)

Council Committee Meeting Minutes
Virtual and In-Person Meeting in City Council Chambers
31 East 5th Street
March 8, 2024
1:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER/ ROLL CALL

Meeting called to order by Councilmember Chin at 1:00 p.m. with Councilmember Chin attending in person and Vice Mayor Adams attending virtually.

2. REVIEW MEETING MINUTES

A. February 9, 2024 SEV Meeting Minutes

Approval of the February 9, 2024 SEV Meeting Minutes was moved by Vice Mayor Adams, seconded by Councilmember Chin, and approved unanimously.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS - The committee welcomes public comment. According to the Arizona Open Meeting Law, the Committee may only discuss matters listed on the agenda. Matters brought up by the public under public appearances that are not listed on the agenda cannot be discussed by the Committee. A 3-minute limit per person will be in effect.

A. Comment Cards Submitted

No comment cards were submitted.

4. COMMITTEE SESSION ITEMS

A. Current Items and Updates

I. Rio Reimagined

Maggie Soffel from Arizona State University provided an update on the Rio Reimagined Initiative. She opened her presentation with a land acknowledgement that the Salt and Gila River corridor has been used by the Akimel O'Odham and the Pee-Posh people since time immemorial and remains a vital resource for the peoples of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community and Gila River Indian Community today.

The Rio Reimagined Initiative began as an ASU Design School assignment back in 1967. The project was to reimagine 40 miles of the Rio Salado river corridor and propose a master plan designed to improve the environmental quality and economic vitality of the region.

Over the next several decades and through several different advisory groups, a master plan was formed and changed until in 1985, a 38-mile plan between Mesa and Phoenix was presented to the State, before being vetoed by Maricopa County voters in 1987.

At that point, then-Tempe Mayor Harry Mitchell decided to develop Tempe's portion of the river and put forth a Tempe Town Lake Conceptual Development Plan in 1995. Ground-breaking ceremonies for Tempe Town Lake took place in 1997, and the lake was filled with water in 1999. Since that time other communities along the corridor have initiated their own plans to improve their portions of the river corrido, from parks and trails to habitat restoration and flood management.

In 2018, regional leaders signed a statement of intent to actualize the river corridor as an iconic landmark for the Valley. It was during this time that ASU was selected to lead this initiative as Rio Reimagined.

The Rio Reimagined study area includes over 55 miles of river corridor and extends 1-2 miles above the banks on either side. Six cities, 2 tribal nations, Maricopa County, SRP, MAG, regional and federal government entities, and various non-profits are part of these efforts to address such diverse conditions as the health, hydrology, infrastructure, public access, planning structure, and cultural history of the region. An opportunity exists to elevate a regional approach to leverage resources and projects over the long-term.

Over the last several years, public and private grant funding for these community projects have totaled over \$30 million and have funded local food systems, bridge infrastructure, environmental cleanups, improved water quality, assisted with habitat restoration, and provided environmental education to the community. These projects continue through the direct advocacy of Rio Reimagined.

2. Tempe Chamber of Commerce

Tempe Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Colin Diaz presented an update on the work of the Chamber. He opened the presentation by stating the Chamber's Sustainability priorities: to advise, educate, and promote best methods on preserving natural environments, economic vitality, and community health, to drive sustainable value for members of the business community, to foster an environment that provides flexibility and policy tools for business success, and to promote a balanced approach between economic and environmental factors to ensure sustainability for present and future generations.

They accomplish these priorities by focusing on six key areas of action: education, engagement, advocacy, collaboration, efficiency, and resources. Regarding education and engagement, they have a sustainability committee, host an annual health, wellness, and sustainability summit, and have taken the sustainability pledge.

Regarding collaboration, the Chamber has partnered with the City of Tempe Clean Energy partnership and hired an intern to update the sustainability website with news and resources and keeps the flow of communication regarding clean energy going between local businesses and utilities. They have also acquired their own Local First Green Business

Certification and partnered to make the program accessible to Tempe Chamber of Commerce Sustainability Committee members at no cost.

To promote efficiency and advocate for a circular economy, the Chamber has partnered with SRP, APS, Fabric, and the East Valley Chamber of Commerce Alliance. They believe that collaboration fuels innovation and supplier diversity, helps to promote best practices and resources for clean energy and waste reduction, and support policies that incentivize and reward best practices.

From an economic vitality standpoint, the Chamber has hosted several events educating the public and other community leaders on the current standing of the business community in Tempe and the wider region. They also host a mentoring program that connects emerging entrepreneurs with established business owners and focus on workforce development through programs such as Career Ready Tempe, the Tempe Chamber Business Academy, and the Tempe Workforce Skills Accelerator, in partnership with Rio Salado Community College.

3. Sustainability and Economic Vitality Council Committee Work Plan Review

Council Assistants Ty Lee and Brooke St. George presented a re-cap of the previously-approved Fiscal Year 2023/2024 SEV work plan, a review of what items have been presented before the Council Committee since January of 2023, and recommendations for slight changes to the plan for the Fiscal Year 2024/2025, which include slight changes to language in order to stay current with the status of projects and offer more inclusion, as well as the addition of new performance measures 4.04 Solid Waste Landfill Diversion, 4.16 Groundwater Supply, and 5.13 Unemployment Rate.

The 24/25 SEV Council Committee Work Plan was approved by the co-chairs of the SEV committee and will move before Council this summer for Committee of the Whole approval.

B. New Items for Consideration

- 1. Councilmember Chin requested future updates after major City/Downtown events (Tempe Blooms, Innings Fest, Spring Training, Aloha Festival, Festival of the Arts, etc.) regarding the economic impact of these events on our City revenues.*

C. Announcements

- 1. Councilmember Chin announced that the Mill Avenue Arts Festival is currently taking place outside the Council Chambers and throughout the weekend and encouraged everyone to attend.*

5. NEXT MEETING DATE: April 19, 2024

6. ADJOURN

Meeting was adjourned at 1:39 p.m. by Councilmember Chin.

