

**MINUTES OF THE GILBERT PUBLIC WORKS ADVISORY BOARD, IN REGULAR MEETING OF MONDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2023, AT 3:00 PM, MUNICIPAL BUILDING I, COMMUNITY ROOM 202, GILBERT, ARIZONA**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chair Fariya Sharif, Vice Chair Sam Elliott, Members David Barazoto, Greg Froehlich, Karen Goldwasser, Eric McLeskey, Jason Gilmore and Jason Robinson (virtual)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Member Matt Carpenter

**STAFF PRESENT:** Public Works Director Jessica Marlow, Assistant Public Works Directors Eric Braun and Giao Pham, Assistant Town Manager Leah Rhineheimer, Solid Waste & Recycling Manager Paul Montes, Administrative Assistant Tonya Holmes, and Digital Media Marketing Officer Kelsey Perry

**GUESTS PRESENT:** Council Liaison Yung Koprowski

**ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Fariya called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m.

**2. Roll Call**

Administrative Assistant Tonya Holmes called roll and declared a quorum present.

**AGENDA ITEMS**

**3. Approve October 30, 2023 Minutes**

A MOTION was made by Member Gilmore, seconded by Member Robinson, to approve the October 30, 2023 meeting minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

#### 4. Office of Digital Government presentation on Utility Rates Campaign

Digital Media Marketing Officer Kelsey Perry shared marketing avenues Gilbert's Digital Team uses and the statistics behind them. A few avenues mentioned were press release, social media, mailers and the Town's website. She also shared that the Town's Digital Marketing Menu is extensive, including X, Facebook, Instagram, Video Reels, Digital Displays in Town facilities, Utility Billing System notifications, Gilbert's Website and other platforms.

Marketing Officer Perry then shared highlights of the Utility Rates Campaign: the why, who, when, and what we want to achieve. For the digital outreach of this campaign, Gilbert's Digital Team will utilize many digital outreach platforms, including a dedicated Utility Rates webpage with Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and a Utility Bill Calculator. Director Marlow advised she was already scheduled for an interview with AZ Republic regarding the rate increase messaging and said mailers would be sent out in utility bills beginning December 4, 2023.

Member Goldwasser inquired about residents with paperless billing who do not typically use social media. Member Gilmore asked if the message could be shared in the email for paperless customers. Director Marlow advised that those emails are automatic from a 3<sup>rd</sup> party "pay" company, but that she would visit with the Utility Billing Team to discuss options for paperless billing customers.

Member Goldwasser also stated the Gilbert website "search bar" does not work efficiently. Council Liaison Koprowski advised that the Town is aware that the website is somewhat difficult to navigate and a project to revamp it is in the works for the near future.

Council Liaison Koprowski shared other recent items that have not been highlighted yet in the press regarding this topic. One of them being the three water emergencies projects in the past year. She also stated the North Water Treatment Plant (NWTP) remodel work and expense is not only increasing the capacity of the plant, but is also increasing the quality of the water, and that is meeting and projected to meet any future Federal regulations that are coming down for the Town. She added that would become part of the outreach conversation that we would be ahead, because items are already part of this project that other municipalities would have to make improvement projects for as they occur.

Director Marlow shared information regarding the open house coming in January. She advised it will include a presentation to the community with the information shared with this Advisory Board, as well as Council as to what is driving the need for the utility rate increase. She stated it is a structured open opportunity for citizens to

learn more about the rate increase, utility bill calculator, and other items; it will be at 75 E. Civic Center Drive. Council Liaison Koprowski advised that two newspapers have already run articles about the rate increase proposal and the open house associated with it. Chair Fariya asked if homeowners associations (HOAs) were given information related to the rates increase proposal. Council Liaison Koprowski relayed that Assistant Director Braun previous shared with Council that the homeowners associations were given a heads up that Council was looking at a rate increase proposal.

Member Barazoto asked if Gilbert would include rate comparisons of other cities and how much higher they are than Gilbert in our messaging. Director Marlow will be providing that feedback to Assistant Director Braun to review at the open house.

Deputy Director Rhineheimer explained that Gilbert is pulling comparison data with other cities in the valley; however, the extent to which they may be forecasting their future needs can be wildly different than ours. She said as an organization Gilbert has typically been on the lower end of rate costs. She added other municipalities may not be looking as far into their future needs, and we are constantly challenging ourselves to look not only 2-5 years ahead, but 5-10+ years, looking to cover far out.

Member Goldwasser asked for more information on the specifics of Cash Funded and Bond Funded compared to other municipalities and their services. Member McLeskey provided insight as to the benchmarks of services provided by various municipalities. Assistant Director Pham also provided some insight, as other cities may not release the finite details like what this Board has reviewed for Gilbert for some time now. Member Gilmore stated it should not be a factor in what we do versus what other cities are doing; he added the Board knows what Gilbert is doing, they know what the money will be used for, and the Board's focus should be on goals of these projects and what the Town is trying to accomplished.

Assistant Director Pham suggested any further marketing questions or feedback be sent to him to provide to the Digital Team.

## **5. Sister Cities methodology for recycling and sustainability presentation**

Council Liaison Koprowski shared a presentation that she and Vice Mayor Tilque had previously shared with other East Valley Councilmembers. She said Gilbert has been Sister Cities with Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council in Northern Ireland for 25 years and we do delegation meetings with them every 5 years. She said she recently visited one of their recycling centers along with Mayor Peterson, Vice Mayor Tilque, Director Marlow, and others.

She shared some economic and environmental benefits of their recycling program as well as their “Kerbside Collection Model” which consists of a smaller Residual Waste container, a three tier “Wheelie Bin” for recycling, and a Garden & Food waste container. The idea of this recycling program is that the items are sorted at the source in people’s homes. Trucks are designed to keep items sorted with different compartments for different items such as glass, cardboard, and aluminum. An interesting fact she learned while visiting is glass and aluminum are always 100% recyclable for their life. Due to these sorting efforts, there is not a lot of sorting to do once items reach the recycling plant.

Council Liaison Koprowski then displayed two disposable cups in which one was not recyclable and the other was a recyclable, molded fiberboard. She advised that in Ireland, companies that make and sell cups to businesses pay for the recycled materials from the recycling center to make them, which is why this program is working so well for them. They also have a company that recycles textiles by shipping to a third world country or creating construction material out of it.

The presentation then transitioned to what Gilbert is doing, with Manager Montes presenting information on Gilbert landfills. He shared that without waste diversion programs, landfills become higher and higher and use large amounts of land. There are 42 acres of unusable space in Gilbert from a landfill that closed in 1981 on Val Vista and Ray Roads. He said our goal is to minimize our use of landfills.

Manager Montes shared that Gilbert is currently using the blue recycle cans; however, our diversion rate is only about 17%. Gilbert currently offers an appliance recycle program and a Christmas tree recycling program. This year we will partner with AZ Game and Fish on our Christmas tree recycling program and to be used in Canyon Lake and other lakes to provide living environment for fish. Gilbert also has a Household Hazardous Waste Facility. He also shared data pertaining to Gilbert’s recycle program, which, compared to nine other valley cities, is below average. He also shared that Gilbert recently started a pilot green waste program by source separating at the residence. In this pilot, we will be working closely with our HOAs to let them know we will be separating the green waste from other bulk waste and will be collecting twice a week during their scheduled bulk week. Assistant Director Pham explained that the Solid Waste & Recycling Team are trying to gather data in this initial phase of source separating to see if there are opportunities for a full green waste program in the future.

Manager Montes then relayed that glass was removed from Gilberts recycle program a while back due to several factors. Since then, residents have been asking what to do with glass, and Gilbert has been looking onto other opportunities for recycling glass. He advised that another pilot program that will launch soon is “glass

only” roll-off receptacles that will be placed at Freestone Park and Discovery Park, in the overflow parking lots in early January.

Member Gilmore asked what the benefit of recycling would be by doing so independently of everything else. Manager Montes explained that Gilbert does not have its own glass recycling facility, causing glass to go through regular recycling facilities with other products, leaving “contaminated” glass that is then recycled at a fee to Gilbert. “Clean”, sorted glass only could bring a revenue and other benefits.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### **6. Report from Staff**

Assistant Director Pham thanked Assistant Director Braun for his role in the Rate Recommendation presentation to Council.

### **7. Report from Board Members**

Member Goldwasser asked for clarity on the financials regarding the process that brought the Board to the decision for the letter of recommendation, and if other Board members have similar questions or want more clarification and understanding. Deputy Town Manager Rhineheimer suggested taking any questions to staff who can provide answers to bring back to the group. Member Gilmore and Member Robinson did not see a need for more information.

Chair Sharif stated we did not have to dive into details but could have something on a future agenda to satisfy any questions. Director Marlow relayed that the Budget Director was originally scheduled to do a high level presentation on Enterprise Funds, bonds and other financials but that item was postponed due to the timeline of the vote for rate increases. Staff will coordinate to have Budget Director Kelly Pfost on a future agenda.

### **8. Report from Council Liaison**

Council Liaison Koprowski thanked all members of the Public Works Advisory Board, recognizing that a lot was given to them for review lately. She presented all members with Gilbert pins as a small token of appreciation.

### **9. Report from Chair**

Chair Sharif thanked everyone and said it has been a wonderful experience.

### **10. Future Agenda Items**

Staff Liaison Pham said he will look at initial agenda templates that were modified for the urgent timeline for letter of recommendation and will create some agenda

items. He advised there are still a lot of topics on the table for this Board, and staff will also determine a meeting schedule for 2024.

**CONCLUSION**

**11. ADJOURN**

Chair Sharif adjourned the meeting at 4:39 p.m.

**ATTEST:**

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Fariya Sharif, Chair

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Giao Pham, Staff Liaison