

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M., IN THE FLORENCE TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, LOCATED AT 775 N. MAIN STREET, FLORENCE, ARIZONA.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Eaton called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Keith Eaton, Cathy Adam, Arthur Neal, Nicole Buccellato, Jose Maldonado, Tony Bencina, Sherrie Bedford

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Mayor Eaton held a moment of silence.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Eaton led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Call to the Public for public comment on issues within the jurisdiction of the Town Council. Council rules limit public comment to three minutes. Individual Councilmembers may respond to criticism made by those commenting, may ask staff to review a matter raised or may ask that a matter be put on a future agenda. However, members of the Council shall not discuss or act on any matter during an open call to the public unless the matters are properly noticed for discussion and legal action.

Kathy Leaman, Florence resident, expressed her frustration that there have been no changes made regarding the speed limit and truck usage on Felix Road. She expressed her frustration that the Town's calendar has not been updated to reflect upcoming meetings that have been canceled.

Mayor Eaton directed the Town Manager to provide Ms. Leaman with the information on what has been done regarding Felix Road.

Bonnie Bariola, Maricopa County resident, suggested using the money from the sale of the Brunenkant building to pay for a statue of Jason Lopez to be placed at Jason Lopez Memorial Park.

PUBLIC HEARING AND PRESENTATIONS

Public hearing on Ordinance No. 762-25: And Discussion/Approval/Disapproval of AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE, PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA, APPROVING A MINOR GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT TO THE LAND USE MAP FOR THE APPROXIMATELY 40.93-ACRE PROPERTY LOCATED EAST OF ATTAWAY ROAD AND SOUTH OF JUDD ROAD FROM THE SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD PLACE TYPE TO THE INDUSTRIAL PLACE TYPE, ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER (APN) 210-45-0020 (PZ-24-39). (AJ Monroe)

AJ Monroe, Community Development Director, stated that Council should review the 2022 General Plan when formulating questions regarding the proposed amendment and how the amendment fits to what the General Plan lays out and the impact to the surrounding area. He stated that a public hearing was held at the Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting on June 5, 2025, and that no public comment was received. He stated that staff finds the Industrial Place type zoning fits the location more than the Suburban Neighborhood zoning. He stated that ongoing development is priming the north section of Florence for more industrial projects. He noted that there is a concern that the area is still zoned as Suburban Neighborhood with the PUD associated with the area showing plans for single-family residential, and that there is a Major General Plan Amendment coming that will seek to further expand industrial development in the area.

Jon Gillespie, member at the Rose Law Group, stated he was speaking on behalf of esVolta, a battery energy storage developer. He stated that the battery energy storage system would house 400 megawatts of power, and the stored energy would be used to feed the system when demand is high, or when supply is low. He stated that the projects will provide property tax revenue to the Town and Florence Unified School District. He stated that the facility will be adjacent to an existing SRP utility substation. He stated that the site will have a dedicated open space along the CAP canal and that there are plans for an industrial park to the southwest of the facility. He stated that there are no homes existing or planned within 1,500 feet of the project site. He stated that the site will have 8-10-foot-tall battery enclosures on concrete pads and that the site will be accessible off of Judd Road. He stated that the batter enclosures will have a 100-foot minimum setback. He stated that in case of a fire, the site will have a dedicated response area and that the systems will have fire safety systems in addition to the training esVolta will provide to local firefighters.

Mayor Eaton opened the Public Hearing.

Melissa Cordero, Florence resident, stated that as a veteran, she used similar battery energy storage systems when deployed and praised the safety and durability of the systems. She noted that there are concerns, but stated that the system will be built to the highest standards and that there will be great benefits from the system.

Kathy Leaman, Florence resident, expressed her dislike of the proposed project and questioned why the batteries were not part of the original solar farm plan. She stated that the solar farm is ugly to drive by. She stated that the site does not blend in with any Florence neighborhoods and questioned if the Town would actually benefit from the project.

Susan Maldonado, Florence resident, inquired about the toxicity of a potential fire at the site related to a typical house fire.

Mayor Eaton closed the Public Hearing.

Mayor Eaton noted that Council received multiple signatures from Arizonans in Support of a Clean Economy expressing their support for the project. He thanked the Planning & Zoning Commission for the questions they asked during their meeting on this proposed Minor General Plan Amendment. He stated that the Town updated its fire codes in anticipation of this site and noted

that this project will mesh with the potential Loop 505. He stated that the revenue from the project is not massive but noted that revenue from these projects makes up for lost state-shared revenues.

Councilmember Bencina stated he sees the energy storage project as a benefit for the Town. He inquired about the timeline to get the site up and running.

Mr. Gillespie stated that the estimated time for construction would be 2028, with a full buildout by 2030.

Councilmember Maldonado stated that this project will assist with the power outage issues the Town has faced.

Vice-Mayor Adam praised the work of the Planning & Zoning Commission. She inquired about the toxicity of fires at battery storage sites.

Mr. Gillespie stated that one battery storage unit would produce less toxicity than a house fire and that the units are separated to help contain the spread of fire. He noted that esVolta operates 70 battery storage sites and has not had a fire at one since 2017.

Vice-Mayor Adam inquired if any special equipment is needed to extinguish fires at these facilities and if the Fire & Medical Department is comfortable with these systems.

Mitch Snyder, Fire & Medical Chief, stated that no additional equipment and that he is comfortable with the systems and current regulations.

Vice-Mayor Adam inquired if this project would have a large impact on traffic.

Mr. Gillespie stated that there would only be an occasional vehicle checking on the site and would not impact traffic.

Councilmember Buccellato stated that she was originally opposed to this project but noted that this will bring in revenue. She expressed her concern for the safety of residents in regard to the facility but noted that Chief Snyder assured her that the Fire & Medical Department could handle this facility. She inquired about the environmental impact after the facility reaches its end of life.

Mr. Gillespie stated that esVolata is committed to providing the necessary training and resources to the Town in regard to facility safety. He stated that lifecycle of the systems are 20 years and that the land can transition to an appropriate use after that time.

Councilmember Neal expressed his concern that the revenue generation is not very high and wants to see more of a promise of revenue for the Town. He noted that most of the land that the battery storage facility would service is San Tan Valley and that Florence residents wouldn't benefit from the energy stored in the batteries.

Mr. Gillespie stated that Florence has room to grow and that this project would help in the growth of Florence. He noted that projects like this can help show energy providers that there are sustainable solutions for providing energy.

Vice-Mayor Adam noted that the storage facility is not just for SRP and that additional energy stored at the facility can be sold by SRP and can be provided to APS and SCIP energy customers in the area.

Mayor Eaton inquired about the nature of battery storage fires.

Mr. Gillespie stated that fires are seen with older technology that is part of indoor storage sites, and that industry standards call for the storage units to be outside and separated to prevent the spread of fire.

Mayor Eaton inquired about the timeline for roadway improvements around the battery site.

Mr. Monroe stated that his interpretation of the Town Code is that roadway improvements would be necessary for the development of the site but noted that there could be extenuating circumstances that would change that.

On motion of Vice-Mayor Adam, seconded by Councilmember Bencina to adopt Ordinance No. 762-25.

Mayor Eaton requested a reverse roll call:

Roll Call:

Mayor Eaton - Yes

Vice-Mayor Adam - Yes

Councilmember Neal – Yes

Councilmember Buccellato - Yes

Councilmember Maldonado - Yes

Councilmember Bencina - Yes

Councilmember Bedford - Yes

Motion carries 7-0.

Public hearing on Ordinance No. 763-25: And Discussion/Approval/Disapproval of AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE, PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA, APPROVING A MAJOR AMENDMENT TO THE DOBSON FARMS PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT TO; (I) CHANGE THE SITE'S LAND USE CATEGORY FROM RESIDENTIAL LOW TO "COMMERCIAL-INDUSTRIAL (CI)", (II) ADD BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS TO THE LIST OF PERMITTED USES UNDER THE COMMERCIAL-INDUSTRIAL (CI) LAND USE CATEGORY, AND (III) ESTABLISH A SET OF DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS (I.E., SETBACKS, PERIMETER LANDSCAPING, ETC.) FOR BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS USES (PZ-24-40), with stipulations. (AJ Monroe)

Mr. Monroe stated that this item is tied to the previous item of the Minor General Plan Amendment. He stated that this PUD amendment will allow for a Battery Energy Storage System to be an allowable use within the PUD. He requested that the stipulation of a 100-foot setback for the battery storage facility be restated. He stated that this item had a public hearing at the June 5, 2025, Planning & Zoning Commission meeting. She stated that staff finds this proposal will increase opportunities for mixed land use and is in line with many development standards in the PUD.

Mr. Gillespie expressed his appreciation for both the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Council for the discussion on these items. He stated that the Development Impact Fee that the project will pay to the Town is something they are happy to pay and help develop infrastructure with the Town.

Mayor Eaton opened the Public Hearing, there being no public comment, Mayor Eaton closed the Public Hearing.

On motion of Councilmember Bencina, seconded by Councilmember Buccellato to adopt Ordinance No. 763-25 with stipulations.

Mayor Eaton requested a reverse roll call requested.

Mayor Eaton - Yes

Vice-Mayor Adam - Yes

Councilmember Neal – Yes

Councilmember Buccellato - Yes

Councilmember Maldonado - Yes

Councilmember Bencina - Yes

Councilmember Bedford - Yes

Motion carries 7-0.

Report from Amya Bandilla, regarding her attendance at the National Youth Leadership Forum in Washington, D.C. (Mayor Eaton)

Amya Bandilla, Florence High School Student, thanked Council for the opportunity to go to Washington, D.C. She stated that she as able to learn about America’s national security apparatus and how different agencies work together to protect our country.

Councilmember Buccellato praised Ms. Bandilla for representing the Town so well.

Councilmember Bedford thanked Ms. Bandilla for representing the Town and inquired what her plans are after high school.

Ms. Bandilla stated that she plans to major in criminology with a minor in psychology.

Councilmember Neal praised the work Ms. Bandilla did and expressed his hope that other students can experience what Ms. Bandilla was able to experience.

Councilmember Maldonado encouraged Ms. Bandilla to apply for the Florence Teen Council.

Councilmember Bencina praised Ms. Bandilla for her work.

Update from the Paul Felker Executive Director of the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce. (Mayor Eaton)

Paul Felker, Executive Director of the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce, stated that the Chamber has held many recent events and introduced new members of the Chamber staff. He invited everyone to the upcoming Chamber events and programs. He stated that the Chamber has gained 40 new members since the start of the year.

Councilmember Buccellato inquired if some of the Chamber meeting dates can be rotated so that those who cannot make the regular date will have an opportunity to attend.

Mr. Felker stated that he is open to moving the dates and times to accommodate.

Vice-Mayor Adam praised the work the Chamber has been doing and welcomed the new employees.

Councilmember Bencina praised the new Chamber website.

Update from Chris Knutsen Superintendent of the Florence Unified School District. (Mayor Eaton)

Chris Knutsen, Superintendent of FUSD, thanked the Town for the relationship between the Town and the school district, noting the help the Town has given in getting School Resource Officers into the schools. He noted the funding challenges the district has faced and how the Town has been able to help, notably with the driver's ed program. He stated that the district is looking to hold a bond election.

Councilmember Bencina praised the work FUSD is doing, noting its 98% retention rate for the previous year.

Councilmember Buccellato stated that Council will help FUSD in whatever ways they can.

Councilmember Maldonado inquired if there are plans to start an ROTC program.

Mr. Knutsen stated that there is an ROTC program that FUSD students attend at Poston Butte High School.

CONSENT: All items on the consent agenda will be handled by a single vote as part of the consent agenda unless a Councilmember objects at the time the agenda item is called.

Approval to enter into a contract with Weems Asphalt to repair portions of Merrill Ranch Parkway and American Way, in the amount not to exceed of \$114,498.60. (Andy Smith)

Approve entering into a contract with Shade N' Net through the Mohave Educational Services Cooperative Contract #20Q-SHADE-0402, in an amount not to exceed \$91,627.26, for the installation of shade structures over the bleachers at Jason Lopez Memorial Park Ballfields and the Little League Field. (Paul King)

Authorization to purchase 40 Patrol Rifles with optics and suppressors through SIONICS Weapons Systems in an amount not to exceed \$76,953.08. (Matthew Thomas)

Authorization to enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Florence Unified School District to provide School Resource Officer Services. (Matthew Thomas)

Authorization to enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement for Florence Police Department to utilize the Pinal County Sheriff's Office outdoor firearms range for firearms training and qualifications. (Matthew Thomas)

Approval of the six Florence Transportation Authority Title VI Program documents for FY 2025 required by the Arizona Department of Transportation External Civil Rights review. (Bruce Walls)

Adoption of Resolution No. 1937-25: A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE, PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA, RESCINDING RESOLUTION NO. 1484-14 RESCINDING THE TOWN CORE ADAPTIVE REUSE PROGRAM AS IT NO LONGER MEETS STATE LAWS. (Bruce Walls)

Adoption of Resolution No. 1939-25: A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE, PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA, APPROVING THE FINAL PLAT FOR ANTHEM MERRILL RANCH UNIT 71 (PZ-25-21) with conditions. (Maricella Benitez)

Adoption of Resolution No. 1940-25: A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE, PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA, APPROVING THE FINAL PLAT FOR ANTHEM MERRILL RANCH UNIT 73 (PZ-25-22) with conditions. (Maricella Benitez)

Adoption of Resolution No. 1941-25: A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE, PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA, APPROVING THE FINAL PLAT FOR ANTHEM MERRILL RANCH UNIT 75 (PZ-25-18) with conditions. (Maricella Benitez)

Adoption of Resolution No. 1945-25: A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE, PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA, APPROVING THE FINAL PLAT FOR ANTHEM MERRILL RANCH UNIT 77 (PZ-25-19) with conditions. (Maricella Benitez)

Adoption of Resolution No. 1942-25: A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE, PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA, APPROVING THE FINAL PLAT FOR ANTHEM MERRILL RANCH UNIT 80 (PZ-25-23) with conditions. (Maricella Benitez)

Adoption of Resolution No. 1943-25: A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE, PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA, APPROVING THE FINAL PLAT FOR ANTHEM MERRILL RANCH UNIT 82 (PZ-25-24) with conditions. (Maricella Benitez)

Adoption of Resolution No. 1944-25: A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE, PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA, APPROVING THE FINAL PLAT FOR ANTHEM MERRILL RANCH UNIT 84 (PZ-25-20), with conditions.

Approval of the Map of Dedication to formally accept the rights-of-way located in Anthem at Merrill Ranch east of Felix Road granting the Town a non-exclusive Public Road Right-of-Way from Pulte Home Company. (Andy Smith)

Appointment of Xavier Fedor as Youth Liaison to the Community Services Advisory Board with a term to expire December 31, 2026. (Lisa Garica)

Authorization to enter into a Non-Exclusive, Revocable License Agreement with AZMW, LLC with a term to expire on August 5, 2030. (Lisa Garcia)

Approval of the April 21, June 3, 17, and 26, 2025 Town Council Minutes. (Lisa Garcia)

Receive and file the following Board and Commission minutes. (Lisa Garcia)

- i. Charles Whitlow Rodeo Grounds Advisory Board minutes of February 27 and March 27, 2025.**
- ii. Planning and Zoning Commission minutes of May 1, 2025.**
- iii. Florence Teen Council minutes of April 9, 2025.**

Councilmember Bencina requested items A, B, C, and D be pulled so that explanations can be given for the money being spent.

On motion of Vice-Mayor Adam, seconded by Councilmember Maldonado and carried (7-0) to approve items on the consent agenda, excluding items A, B, C, and D.

Approval to enter into a contract with Weems Asphalt to repair portions of Merrill Ranch Parkway and American Way, in the amount not to exceed of \$114,498.60. (Andy Smith)

Andy Smith, Public Works Director, stated that this item is to repair settling issues with bridges over the Magma Flood District wash.

Approve entering into a contract with Shade N' Net through the Mohave Educational Services Cooperative Contract #20Q-SHADE-0402, in an amount not to exceed \$91,627.26, for the installation of shade structures over the bleachers at Jason Lopez Memorial Park Ballfields and the Little League Field. (Paul King)

Councilmember Bencina inquired what the item was for and if additional shade structures will be purchased.

Paul King, Community Services Director, stated that the item is for the purchase of bleacher shading at the baseball fields within town. He noted that the item cost less than what was budgeted and conversations with the Town Manager regarding additional shade structures are being held.

Authorization to purchase 40 Patrol Rifles with optics and suppressors through SIONICS Weapons Systems in an amount not to exceed \$76,953.08. (Matthew Thomas)

Councilmember Bencina stated that this item was part of the budget and will replace the outdated rifles the Police Department currently has.

Authorization to enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Florence Unified School District to provide School Resource Officer Services. (Matthew Thomas)

Bruce Walls, Town Manager, stated that this IGA sets in motion to get school resource officers into local schools.

On motion of Councilmember Bencina, seconded by Councilmember Buccellato and carried (7-0) to approve consent agenda items A, B, C, and D.

NEW BUSINESS

Notification that the Florence Police Department attained reaccreditation through Arizona Law Enforcement Accreditation Program. (Matthew Thomas)

Mr. Walls expressed his pride in the Florence Police Department, noting the hard work the department undertook to go through the accreditation process. He stated that the 174 standards reviewed had no fallacies or errors and praised the work of the Police Department.

Discussion/Approval/Disapproval to adopt Ordinance No. 761-25: AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE, PINAL COUNTY ARIZONA, AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO EXECUTE DOCUMENTS FOR THE SALE OF THE BRUNENKANT BUILDING LOCATED AT 291 NORTH BAILEY STREET, FLORENCE ARIZONA, APN 200-49-0110 TO CODY WEAGANT, WEAGANT LAW OFFICE, PLC FOR THE AMOUNT OF \$190,000.00, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. (Bruce Walls)

Mr. Walls stated that one offer was received for the purchase of the Brunenkant Building from the current occupant, Cody Weagant.

Mayor Eaton expressed his happiness that Mr. Weagant understands the historical importance of the Brunenkant Building and the upkeep necessary for a historical building.

On motion of Councilmember Bencina, seconded by Councilmember Buccellato and carried (7-0) to adopt Ordinance No. 761-25.

Discussion/Approval/Disapproval of Resolution No. 1936-2: A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE, PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA, ESTABLISHING AND ADOPTING THE TOWN OF FLORENCE REDEVELOPMENT AREA FAÇADE GRANT PROGRAM UPDATE 2025. (Bruce Walls)

Mr. Walls, Town Manager, removed this item from the agenda.

Discussion/Approval/Disapproval of Amendment No. 1 with Hills Brothers Chemical, authorizing an increase in the contract amount from \$180,000 to \$300,000 for the continued purchase of water treatment and wastewater treatment chemicals. (Jonathan Tuomey)

Jonathan Tuomey, Utilities Director, stated that the amendment will allow for the contract to be fully budgeted through its term ending in 2026.

On motion of Councilmember Buccellato, seconded by Councilmember Maldonado and carried (7-0) to approve Amendment No. 1 with Hills Brothers Chemical in an amount not to exceed \$300,000.

Discussion/Approval/Disapproval of entering into a contract with Tierra Right of Way Services, Ltd., in the amount of \$438,229.35, for additional land acquisition services associated with CIP Projects T-112 and SU-98. (Andy Smith)

Mr. Walls, Town Manager, removed this item from the agenda.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Mr. Walls introduced the new Utilities Director, Mr. Jonathan Tuomey.

Mr. Tuomey introduced himself to the Town Council and thanked them for the opportunity.

Councilmembers Maldonado and Bencina welcomed Mr. Tuomey to the Town.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Community Development

Community Services

Courts

Finance

Fire

IT

Police

Public Works

See Click Fix

Councilmember Bencina and Mayor Eaton thanked the directors for their reports.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Gordon Leaman, Florence resident, stated that there needs to be good representation when ADOT is presenting at Florence High School regarding the southern portion of the proposed Loop 505. He stated that the southern portion should be built first because of the potential for semitrucks to use the northern portion and exit onto Arizona Farms Road.

CALL TO THE COUNCIL – CURRENT EVENTS ONLY

Councilmember Bedford thanked town staff for the work that they do. She requested that the online Town calendar be updated. She expressed her hope for more Town events like the dance party held over the summer.

Councilmember Bencina stated that he will not be able to attend the ADOT meeting but expressed his agreement with Mr. Leaman. He stated he has been accepted into the Civic Craft Designing the Future of Public Service program.

Councilmember Maldonado expressed his happiness with the Chamber's Casino Night event. He encouraged everyone to attend the upcoming events within the Town.

Councilmember Buccellato reminded everyone to attend the Loop 505 meeting. She requested that the online Town calendar be updated. She expressed her happiness with the recent Town dance held and encouraged more events like it. She praised the work of the staff regarding the state of Jason Lopez Memorial Park.

Councilmember Neal stated that the Consent Agenda allows for meetings to be more streamlined and noted that the items on the Consent Agenda are available for the public to review. He offered his condolences to the Lopez and Salazar families for their losses. He expressed his happiness with the Town dance and stated that another should happen before the year ends.

Vice-Mayor Adam welcomed Mr. Tuomey to the Town. She commended the work of the Florence Police Department for earning their reaccreditation. She stated that she was able to see the work the Public Works team does regarding valve exercisers and how they work, noting how critical these items are to the water infrastructure.

Mayor Eaton encouraged everyone to attend the Loop 505 meeting. He reminded everyone to attend the Coffee with Keith event and noted that the next Moment With the Mayor podcast will be recorded soon.

ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

On motion of Councilmember Buccellato, seconded by Councilmember Bedford and carried (7-0) to adjourn to executive session.

For the purposes of discussions or consultations with designated representatives of the public body and/or legal counsel pursuant to A.R.S. Section 38-431.03 (A)(1), (A)(3), and (A)(4) to do the following:

- 1. Instruction to the Town Manager on key assignments.**
- 2. Discussion on contract negotiations related to Infrastructure.**

ADJOURN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

On motion of Councilmember Buccellato, seconded by Councilmember Bedford and carried (7-0) to adjourn from executive session.


ADJOURNMENT

On motion of Vice Mayor Adam, seconded by Councilmember Bedford and carried (7-0) to adjourn the meeting at 9:55 pm.




Keith Eaton, Mayor

ATTEST:



Lisa Garcia, Town Clerk

I certify that the following is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Florence Town Council meeting held on August 5, 2025, and that the meeting was duly called to order and that a quorum was present.



Lisa Garcia, Town Clerk