

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF FLORENCE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2026, 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 6:00pm.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Keith Eaton, Cathy Adam, Arthur Neal (joined at 6:06 pm), Nicole Buccellato, Jose Maldonado, Tony Bencina, Sherrie Bedford

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Mayor Eaton called for 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.

Karen Wall, Florence resident, expressed her support for the approval of the contract with Lees & Associates for the Florence Memorial Park. She stated that an Ad Hoc Committee for the Florence Memorial Park was created in the fall of 2023 and met 13 times through November 2024 and provided a list of recommendations to Council. She stated that some of the Committee's recommendations are included in the contract.

Mariel Watt, Director of Pinal County Historical Museum, stated that the museum is working on a project to update the facilities and working to draw in additional visitor traffic from Phoenix and Tucson.

Kathy Leaman, Florence resident, praised the Council for keeping the Call to the Public. She expressed her frustration that the Town has changed its hours of operation and that she was not able to pay her trash bill on Friday after receiving it the previous day. She stated that she is disturbed by the change and that it does not serve the residents.

Rita Ann Ezzai, Director of PR and Community Engagement for Florence Unified School District, stated that the community recently voted to allow Florence Unified School District to sell parcels of land they are not using and will help the District stabilize its budget. She noted that the bond measure did not

pass and that the District will not have the ability to engage in capital improvement projects and the District faces a budget deficit of \$5 million. She stated there are multiple reasons for the deficit and ongoing decline in funding. She stated that no changes are being made for the upcoming school year but noted that a four-day school week will be looked into as well as school closures, reconfigurations, and a 7th grade through 12th grade model. She encouraged community participation and feedback on these matters.

Jo Ruiz, Florence resident, expressed her support for the work done at Florence Memorial Park and urged Council to consider the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee. She stated that those with loved ones in the Florence Memorial Park deserve to have the area beautified.

Sherrie Haahr, Florence resident, praised the work done at Florence Memorial Park. She urged the Council to approve the contract with Lees & Associates. She encouraged them to visit the Florence Memorial Park and noted the consultants may provide additional ideas.

Greg Curl, Florence resident, thanked the Council for broadcasting work sessions and meetings online and praised the conversations held at the work session.

Dillon Lewis, Florence resident, stated that he would love to help the community grow and expressed his support of an Economic Development Board.

Mayor Eaton read a statement from Kathleen DeRosa expressing her support for the Council to move forward with the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations for Florence Memorial Park.

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.

Acceptance of certain improvements for AMR Unit 30-B subject to a one (1) year warranty period for maintenance, grading, paving, concrete, water, sewer, signing, pavement markings, and storm drain and two (2) year warranty period for street lighting, as applicable per Town Code. (Andy Smith)

Authorization to enter into a cooperative purchasing contract through the State of Arizona Contract No. CTR061660-1 with WAV Electric, LLC for the installation of lighting upgrades at Padilla Park, in an amount not to exceed \$94,595. (Jarod Thiele)

Authorization to enter into a cooperative use contract utilizing State of Arizona, Agreement No. CTR061660-1, with WAV Electric, LLC, for the installation of parking lot and pedestrian lighting at the High-Profile Parking Lot in the amount of \$91,861. (Jarod Thiele)

Authorization to purchase Recharge Room equipment for Fire Stations 1 and 2 with Positive Impact Alliance, LLC in the amount of \$62,645.90. (Jarod Thiele)

Authorization to purchase one Chevrolet 2500 pickup truck using the State of Arizona Contract No. CTR05932 from Midway Chevrolet, in an amount not to exceed \$66,558.29. (Paul King)

**Accept the Warrant Register for the month of December 2025 in the amount of \$6,565,688.93.
(Carl Dudding)**

On motion of Vice-Mayor Adam, seconded by Councilmember Buccellato and carried (7-0) to approve the Consent Agenda as written.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion/Approval/Disapproval of a direct select contract with Lees & Associates to complete an initial analysis and design for improvements at Florence Memorial Park in an amount not to exceed \$24,995. (Paul King)

Paul King, Community Services Director, stated that Less & Associates has experience in the design of cemeteries. He noted that the Florence Memorial Ad Hoc Committee provided Council their recommendations on December 2, 2024, and that staff are seeking direction from Council tonight in the creation of a plan for Florence Memorial Park. He stated that direction is needed for water management and assistance in the design of a columbarium.

Councilmember Buccellato stated that the Ad Hoc Committee was formed in response to concerns raised by residents regarding the state of Florence Memorial Park. She noted that she used to be embarrassed about the state of Florence Memorial Park, but noted the work staff has done to improve the park and that it should be just as beautiful as all the other parks in town. She praised the members of the Ad Hoc Committee and the work they did in coming up with solutions for the Florence Memorial Park. She stated that the cost of the contract is worth it for what will be done, and noted that the consultation will help fix the issues at Florence Memorial Park.

Councilmember Maldonado thanked the Ad Hoc Committee for their work. He stated that one of the things he ran for Council on was fixing the issues at Florence Memorial Park.

Councilmember Bencina stated that the Florence Memorial Park had unspent budgets for many of the previous fiscal years and that he did not feel there was budget capacity for this item. He expressed his frustration that this will only result in a design and said that the Town gets many designs they never use. He stated that Public Works and Utilities could fix the water issues. He stated that he did his own research and that columbaria are for cemeteries that are running out of space. He stated that the Town could purchase a small columbarium and design the garden without spending the money on the consultation. He expressed his appreciation of the Ad Hoc Committee.

Councilmember Buccellato noted that budgeted monies in fiscal years 23-24 and 24-25 due to a moratorium put in place and that the thinking at the time was that the money would be saved for a consultation like the one being proposed. She stated that the money saved from the previous years is meant to be used on this and noted it is a budgeted item.

Vice-Mayor Adam praised the staff report and that she felt that those providing the consultation will truly respect the history of Florence Memorial Park and the families interred there.

Councilmember Bedford praised the work has been done at Florence Memorial Park and that Council should do whatever needs to be done to finish the work at the park.

Councilmember Neal stated that he has family buried at Florence Memorial Park and while he understands Councilmember Bencina's concerns about the cost of the consultation, he feels that the work should be done to improve the cemetery.

Councilmember Bencina stated that the Florence Memorial Park looks better than other cemeteries such as Wickenburg's and that he feels the money that would be spent on the consultation would be better used elsewhere.

Mayor Eaton stated that when he came to work for the Town and was part of the team overseeing Florence Memorial Park, nobody knew the rules and regulations and how things were supposed to run. He stated that a third-party consultant will be able to provide a more objective view and that he supports that. He stated that Council will have the responsibility to finish the project once provided the recommendations from the consultant.

On motion of Councilmember Buccellato, seconded by Councilmember Maldonado to approve the direct select contract with Lees & Associates to complete an initial analysis and design for improvements at Florence Memorial Park in an amount not to exceed \$24,995.

Roll Call Vote:

Mayor Eaton – Yes
Vice-Mayor Adam – Yes
Councilmember Neal – Yes
Councilmember Buccellato – Yes
Councilmember Maldonado – Yes
Councilmember Bencina – No
Councilmember Bedford – Yes

The motion carries 6-1 with Councilmember Bencina opposing.

Discussion/Approval/Disapproval of entering into a cooperative purchasing contract through Sourcewell Agreement No. 052725-CXT with CXT, Inc. for the purchase and installation of a precast restroom building at Main Street Park, in an amount not to exceed \$139,022.84. (Jarod Thiele)

Jarod Thiele, Administrative Project Manager, stated that this item is for a prefabricated restroom at Main Street Park. He noted that there is a 180-day lead time from the purchase of the restroom.

Councilmember Bencina expressed his support for this item.

Councilmember Bedford inquired when the restroom would be put in place.

Mr. Thiele stated that the goal is to have it in by the end of the fiscal year.

Councilmember Buccellato inquired where in the park the restroom would be placed.

Mr. Thiele stated that the restroom is planned for the northwest corner.

Councilmember Buccellato expressed her appreciation for the changes coming to Main Street Park.

Mayor Eaton praised the work of staff and Mr. Thiele in getting projects moved forward.

On motion of Councilmember Maldonado, seconded by Councilmember Bedford and carried (7-0) to approve entering into a cooperative purchasing contract through Sourcewell Agreement No. 052725-CXT with CXT, Inc. for the purchase and installation of a precast restroom building at Main Street Park, in an amount not to exceed \$139,022.84.

Discussion/Approval/Disapproval of entering into an agreement regarding Local Border Support (Grant Agreement) and accept \$219,559.75 for financial support of a full-time dedicated Fentanyl Detective and one support vehicle. (Matthew Thomas)

Matthew Thomas, Chief of Police, stated that this grant will fund a detective focused on fentanyl narcotics cases. He stated that this is a one-year grant and that the position would be funded for one year off this grant.

Councilmember Neal stated that fentanyl is a horrible drug and expressed his support for this item.

Councilmember Bencina stated that his understanding is that a current Florence PD officer will be promoted to detective via this grant and that would free up salary to hire an additional officer. He expressed his support for this item.

Councilmember Buccellato expressed her support for this item.

Vice-Mayor Adam expressed her support for this item.

Councilmember Maldonado expressed his support for this item. He stated that he would like a program similar to D.A.R.E for fentanyl awareness.

On motion of Councilmember Buccellato, seconded by Councilmember Bedford and carried (7-0) to approve entering into an agreement regarding Local Border Support (Grant Agreement) and accept \$219,559.75 for financial support of a full-time dedicated Fentanyl Detective and one support vehicle.

Discussion/Approval/Disapproval of extending the Program Management Services Contract with I move to [approve/deny] extending the Program Management Services Contract with Arcadis U.S., Inc., through Amendment No. 2, in an amount not to exceed \$279,128.00, for environmental consulting support services for the Utilities Department, including the South Wastewater Treatment Plant, North Wastewater Treatment Plant, and the development of the El Dorado North Wastewater Treatment Plant, for a total contract amount not to exceed \$616,124.00, and extending the contract term through December 31, 2026. (Jonathan Tuomey)

Johnathan Tuomey, Utilities Director, stated that this extension will allow for continued consultation services on complex and high-risk utility projects. He praised the work Arcadis has provided for the Town.

Councilmember Bencina inquired if there will be money saved on this contract in the next year.

Mr. Tuomey stated that staff are hopeful that there will be a reduction in need for this contract in the next year but stated that with the ongoing projects they are currently needed.

Vice-Mayor Adam stated that Arcadis has been very helpful to the Town and thanked them for their work.

On motion of Councilmember Maldonado, seconded by Councilmember Buccellato and carried (7-0) to approve extending the Program Management Services Contract with I move to [approve/deny] extending the Program Management Services Contract with Arcadis U.S., Inc., through Amendment No. 2, in an amount not to exceed \$279,128.00, for environmental consulting support services for the Utilities Department, including the South Wastewater Treatment Plant, North Wastewater Treatment Plant, and the development of the El Dorado North Wastewater Treatment Plant, for a total contract amount not to exceed \$616,124.00, and extending the contract term through December 31, 2026.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Mayor Eaton opened the Call to the Public. Seeing no such comment, Mayor Eaton closed the Call to the Public.

CALL TO THE COUNCIL – CURRENT EVENTS ONLY

Councilmember Bedford praised the Tene Council for their recommendations provided to staff. She stated that she enjoyed the visit to the opening session of the State legislature. She stated that she spoke with local youth engaging in entrepreneurship along Main Street and noted there is a need to support the young entrepreneurs in Town.

Councilmember Bencina stated that he enjoyed the opening day of the State legislature. He stated that he attended the League of Cities and Towns legislative event and learned that it might be good to hold off on filing taxes until Arizona passes legislation to match what was passed at the federal level. He praised the most recent Third Friday event. He stated he is encouraging more people to move to the community and praised the Town.

Councilmember Maldonado expressed his appreciation for the recent The Longest Day event at the Viney Jones Library around Alzheimer's Awareness. He encouraged everyone to attend the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce awards event. He expressed his appreciation of the Third Friday events. He praised the recent chamber mixer at the mortuary in Town.

Councilmember Buccellato stated that there are many different committees for FUSD regarding potential changes for the future. She encouraged members of the community to run for Council in the upcoming election. She expressed her condolences for the passing of Joe Nolan, owner of L&B's

Cantina, and praised local businesses for reaching out to help the staff of the restaurant. She expressed her praise of State Representative Teresa Martinez.

Councilmember Neal stated that he was once kidnapped by a lady from New York City who provided him with more information on the Town than he had ever received, and thanked Vice-Mayor Adam for doing so. He praised the Florence High School basketball team and encouraged people to support them. He expressed his happiness with the new curtain for Council, noting he can finally see himself on the broadcast. He asked for prayers for the Robles family and expressed his appreciation for them.

Vice-Mayor Adam admitted that she had kidnapped Councilmember Neal to show him all of the issues around Town, but expressed her appreciation that those issues are being fixed. She praised the local state representatives and all they have done to help the Town with funding for first responders. She thanked Senator Rogers for giving her time to host and speak to the Council about local issues. She encouraged the community to provide their input on agenda items as they come up. She praised the recent Power Performer employees who were recognized. She encouraged everyone to attend the Historic Home Tour.

Mayor Eaton stated that the Town continues to build partnerships, noting that Council recently met with the Arizona Department of Corrections. He expressed his appreciation of being in attendance at the opening session of the State legislature. He congratulated the recent Power Performer recipients. He stated he was able to meet with and discuss local issues with Senator Mark Kelly. He praised the hard work of staff that strengthens partnerships with other entities. He praised the work of the budget committee and their work preparing items for the agenda. He praised all of the speakers who spoke at Call to the Public.

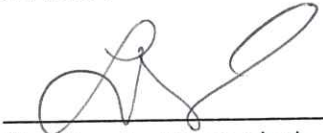
ADJOURNMENT

On motion of Vice-Mayor Adam, seconded by Councilmember Bencina and carried (7-0) to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 p.m.



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 special meeting held on January 20, 2026, and that the meeting was duly called to order and that a quorum was present.



Lisa Garcia, Town Clerk