

Upon notice duly given under Arizona Revised Statutes, Section 38-431, et seq., as amended, the City Council of the City of Bullhead City held a Special Meeting on Tuesday, April 15, 2025, in the Council Chambers, 1255 Marina Blvd., Bullhead City, Arizona.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor D’Amico called the special meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Council Present

Alfonzo, Dallman, D’Amico, Head, Newlin, O’Neill, Ring

Council Absent

None

Staff Present:

CITY MANAGER: Toby Cotter

CITY ATTORNEY: Garnet Emery

CITY CLERK: Debie Ogden

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR: Angie Johnson

PARKS SUPERINTENDENT: Dave Heath

DISCUSSION ITEM(S)

1. Discussion regarding Bullhead City river access – City streets and rights of ways.

City Manager Cotter said staff is holding this meeting today because they have received several calls from angry residents over people using street ends for various reasons. He said he would like to talk about some of the street ends and bring an item back to the next council meeting for any requested changes if needed. He said this topic has been discussed several times over the years, and said it has always been the council’s position to keep the street ends open and allow public access. He said when the street ends were created, they were never envisioned to be boat launches or swim beaches, they were just street ends that funneled into the river. He said the issue they are going to discuss today is what to do about the neighbors that are upset and what should be done with the street ends that have river access. He said one street end had to be blocked recently because it is a safety hazard. He said he would like to discuss each river access point individually.

City Manager Cotter said the first public access point is Davis Camp. He said no discussion is needed other than more beaches have been created. He said Davis Camp is in the northern portion of Bullhead City and is under the jurisdiction of the Mohave County Parks Department. He said there is beach camping as well as full RV hookups and a residential area with vacation rentals. He said it is a fee area and has a boat launch and swim beach access.

City Manager Cotter said south of Davis Camp is Heritage Park, and said the city recently closed it. He said the city also has 12 acres of land that the State of Arizona gave the city, making this a significant park. He said the park is not open to the public right now because it gets overrun with people and there are no bathroom facilities or trash receptacles. He said it would be a nightmare for the city if the park was open to the public right now because there would not be a way to handle the large amount of visitors and trash. He said they need to keep the park closed until they have a system in place.

City Manager Cotter said Fourth Street access point is a city right of way and was dedicated to the city in 1942. He said the right of way was originally 60 feet wide before part of it was purchased by a downstream property owner. He said now the width varies from 30-40 feet. He said it is in a residential area and extremely rocky with no boat launch capabilities and no beach area. He said two property owners were so disgusted with the right of way and took it upon themselves to improve it without the city's permission. He said since then, staff have been working with them to bring the area into compliance. He said the area is now in compliance, and open to the public.

City Manager Cotter said the end of Third Street is unimproved and located in a residential neighborhood. He said it is not a good place to hang out, and said the river is pretty wicked at that location. He said it is open and accessible, and said it certainly works for drainage.

City Manager Cotter said Second Street is very similar to Third Street. He said it is not the safest spot to gain river access, and said it is rarely maintained. He said part of the predicament is that the policy directive was to keep it open, but they have not been maintained well. He said if the policy directive is to keep it open, then much greater consideration to maintenance, liability, trash, and policing must be given.

City Manager Cotter said Community Park now has massive beaches and people are allowed to use them for free.

City Manager Cotter said the Colorado River Vista area does have a concrete area that is used as a boat launch and a swim area. He said there is signage located in the area that states all the rules and regulations.

City Manager Cotter said the end of Trane Road is used as a boat launch and swimming, and said people have neighborhood gatherings at the location from time to time. He said there were a few issues last summer where the police had to be called out to eject some people and there were problems with people parking their vehicles. He said the neighbors were very upset about people parking their vehicles in the area even though there are no parking signs posted. He said they also get complaints from the neighbors about people trespassing onto their property and going onto their private boat docks. He said a lot of time the trespassers have left before the police arrive.

City Manager Cotter said Park Lane was specifically addressed by the council 20 years ago, and said the neighbors wanted to keep it open as a boat launch. He said a big issue was parking because as a boat launch that is open to the public, a lot of people would park their trailers up and down the street which caused chaos. He said staff installed no parking signs and post and rail barriers to keep people from parking in the area. City Manager Cotter asked Recreation Superintendent Heath if they received complaints from residents in the area. Recreation Superintendent Heath answered affirmative.

City Manager Cotter showed pictures he received from a resident on Lakeside. He said the photos depicted what their property looked like when they first purchased it and what it looks like today. He said some of the pictures show there is not a boat launch and the area has not been maintained over the years.

City Manager Cotter said Langford is not a boat launch, and said it is used as a swim beach. He said it does have nice access to the river and is very good for drainage.

City Manager Cotter said River Gardens Drive was recently closed by the City because it is dangerous and there were liability concerns.

City Manager Cotter said Yale Drive does not have boat launch capabilities and is used as a swimming area. He said it is blocked off so people cannot drive down it.

City Manager Cotter said Veterans Memorial Park is owned by the city and contains memorials to honor American Veterans. He said there is a walking path, boat launch, and swim beach area.

City Manager Cotter briefly spoke about the access points and swimming areas located in Rotary Park.

City Manager Cotter said Playa del Rio is a private park for the homeowners in the Playa del Rio subdivision. He said it is a great park with a boat launch and beach access.

City Manager Cotter said Palo Verde Meadows is a private boat launch and has beach access. He said you must be a resident of the subdivision to have access. He said it also has a restricted area, and said the city now owns the entire island on the river located in front of the red condominiums. He said the island will create another access point for the community.

City Manager Cotter said the Nature Center has some of the nicest beaches in the community, but the terrain to access the beaches is rugged.

City Manager Cotter said he wanted to talk about Chapter 15.38 Public Access to Colorado River in the Bullhead City Municipal Code Book. He read 15.38.010 Policy, 15.38.020 Access Point Defined, and 15.38.030 Restrictions and Penalties and briefly spoke about each one. He asked Recreation Superintendent Heath if he wanted to make any comments. Recreation Superintendent Heath said he has taken a lot of calls and visited a lot of homes over the years regarding access points. He said some of the access points are dearly loved by some of the neighbors and some people that live on either side of some of the access points regret purchasing their homes. He said one of the problems with access points is that someone who is using an access point will not be on someone's private property, but they will be in the water or riverbed directly in front or behind their property. He said the property owner cannot do anything about it because they are not trespassing onto private property. He said park rangers do patrol several access points on a regular basis, especially Park Lane, Trane Road, and Colorado Rio Vista. He said the park rangers are always ensuring that people are not parking illegally. He said of those locations, one neighborhood likes to use the area on Saturdays, and said it is generally accepted by all the neighbors. He said there are a couple of other locations that are in a constant battle with people making too much noise, acting rude, and blocking the boat launch. He said staff also has to work with them on a regular basis. He said there is a lot to consider, and said he would be happy to speak about any specific location if the Council desired.

City Manager Cotter discussed photos that were submitted by residents on Lakeside Drive. He said their photos showed signs stating no river access that were posted before they purchased their property and a fence that was already on their property. He said the fence has since been improved. He said they also included photos of a vehicle that was parked illegally and a photo that shows different signage the city installed after they purchased the home. He said the property owner took out their wrought iron fence and put in a wall because of the undesirable activity in the neighborhood.

He said if they are going to allow the public to use this access point, they should put more time into the current maintenance issues. He showed additional photos that were submitted by the property owner on Lakeside Drive that showed a discarded mattress, syringes, damage to their home, and homeless people. City Manager Cotter said he promised the property owner he would bring this to the council's attention. He said this is an ongoing problem, and summer is just around the corner. He said this issue requires a lot of the park ranger's time and a lot of rapid responses by the police department. He said the last thing the police officers need to do is constantly patrol Park Lane when they are already very busy responding to calls throughout the community.

Mayor D'Amico said he did not want to paint a broad brush on this issue and include all street ends as one. He said some of the residents do want their street ends open and some are very large and safe. He said there are also some street ends that are very narrow, dangerous, and have been nothing but problems. He said he felt that what the neighbors want is more important than having the council decide what they want, and said this issue should be looked at on a case-by-case basis. He said if a community wants their street end to remain open, then the council should keep it open. He said if there is another community that has a narrow street end and they are having nothing but problems, perhaps the council should look at closing them.

Council Member Newlin asked if the city maintained trash at any of the locations. Recreation Superintendent Heath said the city maintains trash at Colorado Rio Vista, Trane, Park Lane, and all city parks. He said the city does not maintain trash service at Second Street, Third Street, Fourth Street, Riverview, and private access points. Council Member Newlin said it is his experience when properties are taken care of, people tend to treat the property better and said when properties are neglected, they attract less desirable behavior. He said he visited some of the sites and reported the following: Fourth Street looked really nice and the neighbors did some beautification to the area, there is a trash can that looked like it probably belonged to a private property owner, and the signage was very good; Third Street could use some beautification or better maintenance, and there is no rules and regulations signage; Second Street could use some maintenance or beautification, the no parking sign was very hard to see, there was a trash can but was not sure who owned it; Colorado River Vista had dog waste bags at the Colorado River and asked if the city provided them. City Manager Cotter answered affirmative. Council Member Newlin said he did not see any needed improvements; Trane Road looked good and he did not have any changes to recommend. He said he used Park Lane a lot as a kid and said it was not landscaped when he used it, and said it was just a hill. He said there is new landscaping and a new streetlight and said the area looked nice. He said there was a trash can at the location and there are no trailer parking signs that should be strongly enforced. He said Lakeside Drive is the least maintained. He said there are overgrown trees and brush, and said that is the type of thing that offers hiding places for people. He said there was a lot of trash and beer cans amongst the brush and recommended Lakeside to be cleared of the brush and have it more open. He said the overgrown trees should be removed and add a trash can. He said perhaps some landscaping could be done similar to the landscape at Park Lane because it may eliminate some problems they are having at the location. He said Landford Drive had a three foot drop and then is very rocky. He said there was a trash can at River Gardens that was full to the top with beer cans. He said he did not see a trash can at the Yale Drive location. He said there is some brush, but it did not seem to be a problem. He said he did not want to recommend any changes to the existing ordinance. He asked City Attorney Emery if a restriction could be made about playing loud music because it may be an issue for the neighbors. City Manager Cotter said it is definitely an issue for the neighbors and said it is one the reasons why the time was changed to 9:00 p.m. He said it is one of the primary concerns for the neighbors along with trespassers, graffiti, noise, and lewd activities. He said there is already a noise

ordinance in place, and said the public has the right to play music in a public area as long as it meets the noise ordinance. He said if someone is visiting the area and has their music playing at a reasonable level, they are fine, but it may be disturbing to the neighbor who is sitting on their boat dock or on their back deck. He said policing is a significant issue and it is not just the neighbors that are using the street ends right now. He said the problems are sometimes severe on the weekends. He said most of the people using the street ends during the summer months are not locals, they are people who are avoiding paying to park at city parks, county parks, and the lake. He said everyone is looking for their spot on the river during the summer months and it becomes a significant issue for the city. He said the public does have the right to use the facilities, but it can cause significant problems especially during the busy holidays and weekends.

Council Member Newlin said his recommendations are to remove the overgrown trees on Lakeside and see if that helps with the issues and also encouraged strict law enforcement.

Council Member O'Neill said he rides his bicycle past every access point almost daily. He said this morning he went to Veterans Memorial and there was a homeless person sleeping with trash all over the place. He said the closest access points to him are Rio Colorado, Trane, and Park Lane. He said people from the neighborhood do use those access points to hangout on the river on the weekends. He said there are a significant number of Airbnb's in the area, and said he sees a lot of visitors using the access points because that is where the party is. He said he sees traffic going up and down the streets, and said vehicles and trailers are parked along Park Lane even though there are no parking signs posted. He said the no parking signs are ignored 100 percent of the time and nobody does anything about it. He said he lives very close to Dean Hackett Park and said he does see park rangers patrolling his neighborhood daily. He said the trash cans are full within a matter of minutes, and said the trash is dumped occasionally. He said the only people using the Lakeside Drive access are the unhoused people who are trying to hide because it is overgrown and nobody uses it. He said there is a lot of construction going on at Yale so some of the beer cans may be from construction workers that are hanging out after work. He said the one thing the city did that made him mad was when the access points were blocked off during the Covid pandemic. He said he does not want to block access to the river for local residents. He said people who purchased homes that are next to an access point should not be surprised that people are using them. He said he does not visit Community Park during the summer months, instead he walks to the end of his street or visits Rotary Park when he wants to enjoy the river. He said he is in favor of cleaning up the brush at Lakeside Drive and possibly installing a fence similar to the one at River Gardens.

Council Member Head said he lives on Rio Vista. He said he hated the thought of telling someone two doors down that they could not use the boat launch to launch their jet skis. He said he also hated sitting in his living room and listening to the parties and said there must be a happy medium somewhere. He said parking is definitely a problem, and said the no parking signs do not mean anything to the people who do not live in the neighborhood. He said his mother in law lives two doors down from him on the other side of the intersection and some of the things she has seen would make most people cringe. He said she has been on her patio and saw a naked man bathing himself in the river right in front of her house and by the time the police are able to respond to the location, the person was gone. He said this is unacceptable, but he did not know if closing the access point was the answer. He said he remembers when the city closed Park Lane and all the neighbors wanted to lynch most people that worked for the city over it. He said he is glad they are discussing this issue, but he was not sure what the answer was. He said he would like to have discussions with the residents of the communities before any decisions are made. He said perhaps a mailer could be sent to all the

residents asking for their opinion. He said he was in favor of closing access on Lakeside Drive because it is an accident waiting to happen and a liability to the city.

Council Member Dallman said she agrees that all the access points needed to be looked at on a case-by-case basis. She said she felt that Lakeside Drive needed to be closed because it is dangerous. She said it is not a good access point to the river, and said someone is eventually going to get hurt at the location. She said she would still consider blocking access even if all the brush was cleared. She said she agreed that more discussions with the public needed to take place. She said police patrols needed to be increased even though the police department is sometimes shorthanded. She said she agreed that the dangerous access points needed to be closed.

Council Member Ring said she agreed with Council Members Dallman and Head. She said the unsafe access points should be closed.

Vice Mayor Alfonzo said he agreed with Council Member Head's suggestion of having a written survey done. He said perhaps a postcard could be mailed to each address near the various access points asking for the homeowners opinion of closing them and what problems, if any, they are having with the access point. He said some of the access points are located in a high risk area and are a liability to the city. He said at some of the access points there are sanitation, parking, and trash problems, and said there is unpleasant and illicit activities taking place, along with break ins and health hazards. He said there are also homeless people hanging around, people's private property is being damaged, and the used syringes lying on the ground is a health and safety hazard. He said he does not have any problems with access points that are owned by the city, but the access points located at Fourth Street, Third Street, Second Street, Park Lane, Lakeside, River Gardens, and Langford needed to be investigated further.

City Manager Cotter said regular patrol of all the access points is a big issue. He suggested having a full-time park ranger patrol each access point daily, and also pickup the trash at each location. He said the city cannot solve the restroom facility problem because there are no facilities. He said on the weekends; almost all the vehicles do not have Arizona license plates. He said there are no facilities for them to use unless they are staying at a nearby Airbnb. He said staff could also start educating visitors to visit the parks that have facilities instead of the street access points. He said they can also inform visitors that they can get into Rotary Park for free. He said staff could definitely do surveys and speak with the property owners at the various locations if the council would like them to. He said they could gather much more information over the summer, and said they could get all the police reports and photos and forward them to each council member.

City Attorney Emery suggested staff to bring a modified ordinance to the next council meeting to include River Gardens and Lakeside Drive.

Mayor D'Amico asked if anyone from the public wanted to speak on this item.

Susan Mendonca said she lives at 1001 Riverfront Drive which is on the corner of Riverfront Drive and Lakeside Drive. She said when they purchased their home there was no river access and said that has changed over the years. She said they have had to call the police multiple times, and said one time they saw a man with a gun at the access point. She said people are at the access point all day and night, and said someone has been lighting fireworks the last two nights. She said after she heard the fireworks she went to her upstairs deck and there was a man just standing in front of her deck

with a dog. She said she found out today that it was the same man that was setting off fireworks at 4:00 a.m. She said the spillway is overgrown and encroaching on their property, and said it is now a fire hazard.

Scotty McClure said the police department needs to start doing regular patrols of all the access points. He said most of the problems will probably stop once a police presence is shown. He said realtors probably told potential home buyers that there is no easement and public use of the access points is prohibited. He said people need to take their gripes to the Board of Realtors. He said he has every right to enter the access points, and said the city's ordinance prohibiting access is probably illegal.

City Manager Cotter asked the Council for direction regarding today's discussions. He said he heard some council members want to fix up some of the access points and make them look better and others say some of them are ripe for closure. He said he also heard some interest in closing Lakeside Drive and River Gardens. He said if that is the case, they could bring back the ordinance at the next council meeting to either put out trash cans, remove vegetation and make them safe for the public or block them off. He said if they were blocked off their purpose as drainage would not stop, but public access would.

Council Member Head asked how many complaints staff has received regarding the closure of River Gardens. Public Works Director Johnson said they have not received any complaints.

It was the consensus of the Council to bring an item to the next council meeting to propose a code amendment to possibly close public access to the river on Lakeside Drive and River Gardens.

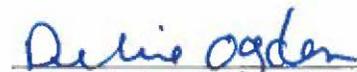
ADJOURNMENT

Mayor D'Amico declared the special meeting adjourned at 5:07 p.m.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct record of the special meeting of the City Council of the City of Bullhead City held on the 15th day of April 2025. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this 1st day of May 2025.



Debie Ogden, MMC, CPM
City Clerk