

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, May 5, 2026, in the Council Chambers, 1255 Marina Blvd., Bullhead City, Arizona.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Dallman called the special meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Council Present

Alfonzo, Dallman, Newlin, O'Neill, Ring, Smith

Council Absent

None

Staff Present:

CITY MANAGER: Toby Cotter

CITY ATTORNEY: Garnet Emery

CITY CLERK: Debie Ogden

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER: Edigar Kajirwa

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTOR: Saritti Chooniyom

PLANNING MANAGER: Johnny Loera

**DISCUSSION ITEM(S)**

Discussion regarding a General Plan Amendment to areas east of the Bullhead Parkway and encompassing Laughlin Ranch and south to the Fox Creek development.

Planning Manager Loera said this item has the potential to be a major general plan amendment to the Laughlin Ranch area. He said the master plan for Laughlin Ranch included thousands of acres, and said it stretched from the eastern boundary of the city and to the east almost to Fox Creek. He said the area they will be discussing today is south of Laughlin Ranch Boulevard heading towards Fox Creek.

Shelby Duplessis of Diversified Future gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding the proposed General Plan Amendment and a market-aligned development strategy. She said the proposal would be incorporated into the General Plan Update scheduled for voter consideration in the 2026 General Election. She explained the proposal would redistribute approximately 4,400 acres within the existing Laughlin Ranch due to limited residential absorption over the past 20 years. She said a shift toward employment uses, while still maintaining significant commercial and residential areas. She said the plan envisioned the creation of a mixed-use downtown area within Laughlin Ranch that would integrate shopping, dining, entertainment, and residential uses in a walkable environment, including the potential for a grocery store and higher-paying employment opportunities intended to attract higher-end businesses and users. She said the proposal included reducing residential land use by approximately 1,500 acres, resulting in a reduction of about 13,260 residential units and an estimated population reduction of 25,832 people. She said the addition of approximately 2,614 acres designated for light industrial and employment district uses would significantly reduce overall water consumption. She said the plan included five public schools to serve projected residential demand, while additional school areas would remain in the northern portion of the development. She said the proposal included a future fire and police station, as well as open space areas along washes, parks, and trail systems.

Ms. Duplessis said the proposed land use changes were projected to reduce daily traffic trips by more than 100,000 trips per day due to reductions in residential development and golf course uses. She said the proposal was projected to reduce annual water consumption by approximately 493.6 million gallons, based on reductions in residential, commercial, and golf course water demand.

Ms. Duplessis discussed the projected costs and fiscal impacts of development. She said reduced residential demand would lessen the need for high-cost municipal services, including police, fire, schools, and park maintenance, due to a smaller projected population and reduced associated uses. She said the proposal would increase stable tax revenue through employment-generating uses, which would also support additional housing demand and related secondary economic activity such as schools, healthcare, shopping, entertainment, dining, and grocery services. She said the proposed employment uses would strengthen the city's fiscal position and were projected to generate approximately \$10 million to \$20 million in tax revenue from employment-related taxes alone, based on baseline estimates without identified end users.

Ms. Duplessis addressed environmental and open space considerations and said the proposal would reduce land disturbance because industrial and employment uses typically require a smaller development footprint than large residential subdivisions. She said the plan would expand and enhance trail systems, eliminate the second golf course to further reduce water consumption, and preserve approximately 3,597 acres of open space and trails, equating to roughly 58 acres of open space per 1,000 residents. She said the area currently experiences significant ATV use along existing trail systems and said the proposal also contemplated a future shooting range intended to provide a safer and more suitable environment for recreational shooting activities.

Ms. Duplessis said the proposal would also reduce sewer demand due to lower residential density and the reduced water usage associated with industrial development, particularly closed-loop industrial systems, which generally generate less sewer demand than residential uses. She said the proposal would increase the city's tax base, reduce public service costs, and improve the jobs-to-housing balance by creating additional employment opportunities that would generate demand for housing. She estimated the industrial uses could create approximately 10,000 jobs, in addition to secondary employment opportunities related to shopping, dining, grocery services, construction, and other supporting services. She said the proposal would still retain approximately 4,379 acres designated for residential use and 565 acres designated for commercial use.

Council Member O'Neill asked when Laughlin Ranch was originally developed. Ms. Duplessis said the major general plan for the area was completed in 2005. Council Member O'Neill asked if there were currently any schools within the first phase of the development. Ms. Duplessis said there were not. Council Member O'Neill said there was a fire station that had opened the previous year and observed that the presentation identified several future school facility locations. Ms. Duplessis said staff would work with the city to identify future facility needs and locations.

Council Member O'Neill asked if the proposed industrial and commercial areas would be gated. Ms. Duplessis said the commercial areas and trail systems would remain open to the public. Council Member O'Neill asked if the trail system would be extended to Silver Creek and remain publicly accessible. Ms. Duplessis confirmed that it would.

Council Member O'Neill said the discussion regarding recycled water suggested the possibility of data center development and asked if that type of use was being considered for the area. Ms. Duplessis

said it was one potential consideration and said there was currently significant national demand for such development. She said prospective users had already visited the property and identified potential targeted industries including aerospace and defense electronics, AI hardware and edge computing, high-tech and advanced manufacturing, semiconductor packaging and testing, and medical device and biotechnology manufacturing.

Council Member O'Neill said he believed the proposal was an overall good plan, provided the area remained accessible for public use and recreation. He said a shooting range on that side of town would be beneficial and said many residents in the McCormick area had expressed a desire for a grocery store.

Council Member Newlin asked if the proposed open space and trail systems would remain open to the public. Ms. Duplessis confirmed they would and said there would be no restriction limiting access to residents only.

Council Member Newlin asked if the estimate of 58 acres of open space per 1,000 residents was based on the total population of Bullhead City. Ms. Duplessis said the estimate was based only on the projected population within the proposed development area, estimated at approximately 11,200 residents. She explained the figures were projections that could vary depending on future zoning densities and said higher population estimates were used to avoid underestimating the need for open space. She added the proposal would provide nearly seven times the required amount of open space. Council Member Newlin stated he was supportive of the proposed land use plan.

Vice Mayor Alfonzo asked if a traffic study had been completed to evaluate potential impacts on traffic and road infrastructure, particularly in relation to proposed light industrial and aerospace uses. Ms. Duplessis said a traffic study had not yet been completed, but a traffic engineer had been consulted regarding traffic volumes, roadway layouts, and proposed land uses. She said a formal traffic study would be conducted once a preferred plan was identified and said the study would be completed prior to future meetings on the proposal. Vice Mayor Alfonzo said it would be difficult to fully evaluate the proposal without understanding the overall traffic impact. He said the type of light industrial uses could significantly affect roadway conditions due to heavy truck traffic and associated wear on existing roads. Ms. Duplessis said future analyses would include pavement recommendations based on anticipated industrial traffic and roadway demands.

Council Member Ring said she appreciated the effort to preserve open spaces keeping the area as natural as possible. She expressed support for the proposed commercial development and said she believed the overall proposal was a good idea.

Council Member Smith asked if residents of Laughlin Ranch had been informed about the meeting. Ms. Duplessis said they had not and said the item was only a workshop discussion and that no formal application had been submitted. Council Member Smith said she would like to hear feedback from residents and asked if the presentation slides could be emailed to the Council because she was unclear about the proposed location of the downtown area. Ms. Duplessis answered affirmative.

Council Member Smith asked if the projected traffic reduction was approximately 100,000 fewer vehicle trips. Ms. Duplessis clarified the projection was approximately 128,000 fewer trips and confirmed the estimate was based on a comparison between the previous General Plan and the newly proposed land use plan.

Mayor Dallman thanked Ms. Duplessis for the presentation and said several of her questions had already been addressed by other Council Members. She emphasized the importance of notifying residents in the area so they could provide input on the proposal. She expressed support for the projected \$10 million to \$20 million in tax revenue generation and the proposed reduction in water usage. Ms. Duplessis said additional details would be provided to explain how the projected tax revenue estimates were calculated. Mayor Dallman said she looked forward to reviewing the proposal further in the future.

Assistant City Manager Kajirwa said the city was currently updating its General Plan and the proposal aligned with the project timeline. He said the city was still in the community engagement and public outreach phase and said the item would return to the Council for approval at the end of June before being submitted to voters. He said developments of this type were becoming more common in communities throughout Arizona and Nevada due to changing market conditions and economic trends. He said socioeconomic factors also played a significant role in the proposal. He said city staff had been working closely with the consultant regarding water issues and said the Arizona Governor's Office had issued a press release concerning an agreement among Arizona, California, and Nevada related to Colorado River water reductions in the Lower Basin. He said Arizona was proposing reductions of approximately 700,000 acre-feet, California approximately 450,000 acre-feet, and Nevada approximately 50,000 acre-feet. He said Utilities Director Clark had recently participated in productive discussions with the Arizona Department of Water Resources (AWDR) which would allow the city to utilize certain previously established water assets. He said communities such as Phoenix Metro were experiencing similar development trends focused on balancing quality of life with employment growth and economic development.

Planning Manager Loera said it was important to remember the Council could only consider the application when it formally came forward, which was anticipated to occur in October. He said the Planning and Zoning Commission would likely review the item in August or September. He explained approval of a General Plan amendment would not automatically change zoning classifications, and the existing underlying zoning would remain in place. He said the applicant would later need to submit a Planned Area Development (PAD) request and pursue rezoning of individual parcels from their current residential or open space zoning designations to proposed light industrial, commercial, and residential uses consistent with the plan.

Council Member Smith asked if a final approval in October would still allow sufficient time for the item to be included in the General Plan on the ballot. Assistant City Manager Kajirwa said the General Plan does not directly control zoning and instead serves as a long-range framework guiding the city's development over the next ten years. He said Council feedback would be considered in the General Plan update, which was expected for approval in June, and clarified that the proposed amendment itself would not be incorporated into that General Plan update. He said the item would return to Council in October through the normal review process and the amendment would be considered separately and would not be a component of the June General Plan update or ballot measure.

Council Member Smith asked if the proposed Laughlin Ranch changes would be included on the ballot or only the standard General Plan update would be presented. Planning Manager Loera said due to timing and the fact that the city was currently completing its 10-year General Plan Update, the intent was to incorporate at least the land use plan component of the proposal, specifically the map showing industrial, commercial, and residential areas into the General Plan document. He said there were still multiple upcoming opportunities for review, including additional Planning and Zoning

Commission meetings and three commission hearings prior to Council consideration of the 10-year General Plan update. He said if the land use plan was approved but not incorporated into the General Plan update, the resulting documents would be inconsistent, which would create issues when the General Plan is ultimately presented to voters in November.

City Attorney Emery said the inclusion of items in the General Plan is ultimately a policy decision of the City Council. He said the situation was somewhat unique because a major plan amendment was being proposed at the same time the city was preparing a ballot measure for General Plan approval. He said if the Council were to approve the conceptual plan and direct that it be incorporated into the General Plan proposal, it could be included in the version presented to voters. He said the developer should still proceed with the formal General Plan amendment process to preserve that entitlement path because there is always a possibility the General Plan could fail and would require resubmittal in a future election. He said the dual tracks available are the Council could choose to incorporate the proposal into the General Plan update for ballot consideration or allow it to proceed separately through the formal amendment process.

Council Member Smith asked for clarification on whether the land use component of the proposal could proceed through the review process in time to be included in the General Plan scheduled for the November ballot. City Attorney Emery said the land use component was already effectively in that stage of consideration. Council Member Smith summarized that if the land use changes were incorporated into the General Plan for voter consideration, and the General Plan were not approved by voters, the applicant could still proceed through an alternative approval path if residents in the project area supported it. City Attorney Emery confirmed that was possible, and clarified the city was not directing that course of action.

Planning Manager Loera explained the proposal would be presented to the Council in October, followed closely by the General Plan ballot measure in November. He stated that the two processes would occur back-to-back. He said if the Council approved the amendment in October, it could move forward independently; however, if the General Plan ballot measure were not approved by voters, the existing General Plan would remain in effect until the next election cycle.

Mayor Dallman said the clarification provided was helpful and that she understood the explanation.

City Attorney Emery clarified that if the General Plan were not approved by voters, the document would revert to the previously existing General Plan and remain in place until a future plan was approved. Council Member Smith reiterated her understanding that the amended land use plan would still come before the Council in October, prior to the November election. Planning Manager Loera said if the Council approved the amendment, it would become part of the city's existing General Plan that is currently in effect. Council Member Smith asked if it would be preferable to incorporate the land use changes into the General Plan being presented to the public. City Attorney Emery said this was one of the options available and said the process was designed to maximize public participation both through the Council review process and the General Plan election, which represents the highest level of public input.

Council Member O'Neill said the original approved plan for the Laughlin Ranch area included development consistent with another golf course. He asked if the proposal was intended to modify that existing plan by replacing the proposed additional golf course with the new mixed-use concept.

He said he supported revising the original plan in favor of the updated proposal. Planning Manager Loera confirmed Council Member O'Neill's understanding was correct.

Assistant City Manager Kajirwa said if the Council wanted the proposed amendment to be included in the General Plan for public review and input prior to the ballot, it would need to be incorporated into the current General Plan update process. He explained this would require review and approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission following a public hearing by June 4th. He said if that occurred, the item could then return to the Council on June 16th for approval as part of the General Plan Update. He said the updated General Plan, including the incorporated amendment, would be what is presented to the public for the November ballot vote.

Council Member Newlin asked if the land use plan would need to be incorporated by June 4th to be approved by June 16th. Assistant City Manager Kajirwa answered affirmative.

Council Member Smith asked if this timing requirement applied if the intent was to include the land use plan in the General Plan being presented to voters in November. Assistant City Manager Kajirwa answered affirmative. Council Member Smith asked if the proposal could alternatively proceed as an amendment to the existing General Plan instead. Assistant City Manager Kajirwa stated that this was another available option.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Dallman declared the special meeting adjourned at 4:41 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 5th day of May 2026. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this 11th day of May 2026.

  
Debie Ogden, MMC, CPM  
City Clerk