

Ward 5 Citizen Forum Minutes August 10, 2026

Approximately 25 people attended this meeting. Thank you for your interest, questions and feedback! It was great to see the room filled on a beautiful summer day. Thanks to Tony & Dino's for providing great pizza at my many meetings!

1) Zone change proposals-

A) RA1 to R1 was discussed in depth - it was noted that no rationale has been provided as to why R1A should be eliminated.

B) RA proposed zone change from special permit by the city council for independent living, assisted living and continuing care retirement communities to "as of right" was also addressed. This zone exists only in Wards 5 & 7. Such developments would fundamentally change the character of a neighborhood. Those present want the special permit to remain with the elected city council so that public hearings will be held, neighbors notified & able to have input on any proposed dense housing projects.

Two petitions were available for residents to review & sign if desired. There is a grassroots group working on this issue. They want transparency for the public & preservation of neighborhoods as well as protection of property rights. I am supporting this community initiative.

It was noted that the master plan has not been provided at the time of this meeting. A summary of some of the proposed changes was provided to those in attendance by David Owen, Ward 5 resident who had volunteered to look at the changes in more depth at the previous meeting.

The next public hearing at the Ordinance Committee will be held on September 17th

2) City Council Updates-

The city council did not appoint a Treasurer as voted by the people. The Mayor did appoint a CAFO (Chief Administrative Finance Officer) and a majority of the city council approved TJ Plante who had served as a consultant for Mayor Garcia for over a year at a salary of \$187,500 plus benefits.

The unqualified Treasurer continues - appointed by Mayor Garcia-we still have no free cash for 2024, 2025 & 2026 as the books are not yet reconciled for those years. In my opinion, the most important position needing to be filled is Treasurer which remains unfilled after worsening problems in the past five years.

I believe three new positions (CAFO-comptroller-director of technical assistance) for a cost of \$400,000 is too much for small city of 38,000 with an ever increasing tax burden.

3) Safety Issues:

A) Speed monitoring: only speeds exceeding 10 mph are considered concerning when the reports are summarized, so the compliance rates are quite high. Police do extra patrols in areas where the speeds are higher such as Whiting Farms Road.

B) Truck restriction Homestead Ave 8pm-6am Enforcement has been an issue for years with occasional enforcement with police being pulled to crime & accident scenes when they occur. It was noted that JB Hunt is complying after I had the law department send compliance letters.

4) Business Updates:

KMart Plaza: the new owner is making progress for next steps with the city to demolish the old KMart & build a new large retail building. They are cleaning up the property due to people illegally dumping on their property.

5) Question & Comments;

Lori Belanger new Director of the Taxpayers Association announced they will hold a political forum for State Rep facilitated by Anthony Cignoli on August 11th

She also reported that a new Dick's store will be opening at the mall.

A concern was raised about the dangerous flooding at Homestead & Mayer & the need for infrastructure repairs under the road. I will follow up.

Please let me know if you have any corrections or additions.

Thanks to all for your interest and participation in your local government!

Sent from my iPhone
City Councilor Ward 5
Linda Vacon

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