



TOWN OF JEROME

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MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE TOWN OF JEROME COUNCIL CHAMBERS, JEROME TOWN HALL 600 CLARK STREET, JEROME, ARIZONA

TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2025, AT 6:30 PM

Due to the length of this meeting, Council may recess and reconvene at the time and date announced.

6:32PM (0:28) 1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor/Chairperson to call meeting to order
Town Clerk to call and record the roll.

Present were Mayor Alex Barber, Vice Mayor Jane Moore, and Councilmembers Dr. Jack Dillenberg, Issam "Izzy" Sharif and Sonia Sheffield.

Staff present included Town Manager Brett Klein, Zoning Administrator Will Blodgett, Deputy Clerk Kristen Muenz and Accounting Clerk Michele Sharif.

6:32PM 2. NEW BUSINESS

Discussion/Possible Action

6:32PM (0:43) A. Budget Workshop: Discussion and Possible Direction Regarding Staff Wage Adjustments, Health Insurance and Other Personnel Related Items for FY 2026 Budget Formulation Along with Potential Continued Discussion on Capital Budget Items

This is a discussion only item with Council potentially providing staff direction

Mayor Barber introduced the item and asked Mr. Klein for further introduction.

Mr. Klein started his introduction, that he likes to start early with the largest budget items, the biggest being capital items and staff related budget second. He recaps that Council has gradually increased the benefits package for the employees to be as competitive as possible with other communities of our size, adding that we are now competitive with other communities with a population under 1,000. He shares that he feels good about where we are at with what the Council has granted for the past 2 years, and that we've put together a competitive package to hopefully attract a new Court Clerk, as well as someone for the open Public Works Technician position. He shared this will be the lowest cost proposal presented to the Council over the last 3 years, due to what has been approved previously. He said this should put us in a competitive place to hopefully recruit the necessary staff as well as, more importantly, maintain valued employees. He said the fiscal impact had not been prepared yet because it's early. He continued, if Council was amendable to the proposal, then we'll analyze the numbers and present it at the next budget meeting, adding it will be significantly less than the 2 years prior.

Ms. Barber thanked him and asked if there were any questions from Council. There were none.

Ms. Moore commented it sounded good, we just need to see the numbers.

Mr. Klein said last year he believed the proposal was for \$130k for the whole package, clarifying this year it will be less because of the requested wage adjustment being less as well as the benefits. He said regarding the benefits that we are now approaching our neighbors but being that we aren't as large of a tax base as they are, nor do we have as much sales tax so we can't seek to be equivalent, but we can be as close as possible.

Dr. Dillenberg thanked Mr. Klein and said good luck in finding a replacement Court Clerk.

Ms. Barber asked how long the Clerk had been with us?

Mr. Klein answered she'd been with the Town 3+ years.

Ms. Barber remarked that the Judge thought very highly of her and that we had bumped her from part-time to full-time a year or so ago, so this is very inconvenient to lose her.

Dr. Dillenberg asked if there was a way to offer her something to stay.

Mr. Klein shared we've provided all we can, and as the Mayor pointed out she was moved up to full-time status for benefits in an attempt to keep her as long as possible. He said she has a degree in legal studies and wants to work for a law firm, adding that currently she drives over the mountain every day and in the winter that can be precarious.

Ms. Barber said she's moving up and it's nice to see that she's following that so congratulations to her. She remarked that it is quite a commute and if you can find something closer, then that's just what we do, and we'll see what we can do to fill that position.

Mr. Klein shared she had provided 3+ weeks and let the Judge know she'll work with us as much as possible to make the transition as seamless as possible.

Ms. Barber asked if anyone else had anything to add.

Mr. Klein shared that his staff report was included in the packet, if everyone had a chance to review and had any questions, he'd be happy to answer them.

Ms. Barber pointed out the health plan at the end of the report. Regarding getting it more competitive, she said that's something we keep striving to do, but the 1,000 population communities are not in this area and we're not even half that right now. She said I think we would all like to see the numbers and see what the impact is. She asked if everyone else on the Council was in agreement. They were.

Ms. Moore said it sounds good to her and wants to pay people to keep them.

Ms. Barber asked if there was anything else to talk about regarding the budget or was it just this item.

Mr. Klein shared this was it for the plan today. He commented that the other presenter was supposed to be here today. He had informed her she'd likely go on around 6:45, so he felt she should arrive momentarily.

Ms. Barber commented that we had about 5 more minutes and introduced item B.

6:39PM (6:39) B. Melissa Garcia from the Community Health Center of Yavapai County Will Provide a Brief Presentation on Their Services Offered

There was some general discussion during the time between introduction and the presenter's arrival.

Presenter, Melissa Garcia, arrived 6:41pm (9:04) to give a presentation on behalf of the Community Health Center of Yavapai County and the services they provide and offer to the community. There was some discussion regarding her presentation; after which she decided to email the PowerPoint to Mr. Klein afterwards, to make it available to everyone. (9:49) Ms. Garcia started her presentation thanking the Town of Jerome. She introduced herself and said they are a part of Yavapai County Government, adding they are the public health department for the county as well as the medical examiner's office. She said they are cooperatively managed by Yavapai County Government and a nonprofit called Prescott Free Clinic. She said despite being around for over 30 years, for 2025 they want to be out in the community much more, so everyone is aware of their services. She shared that the Free Clinic was founded back in 1993 and started out with only 1 office in Prescott. In 2002 they received federal funding to open as a community health center and is one of 1400 in the nation and only one of a handful that is a public entity. She shared that framework is set to provide best practices by the federal government, to ensure access to care for everyone, regardless of what potential barriers may be present for an individual seeking care, be it they are uninsured, underinsured, have a need for an interpreter, etc. They are trying to do a better job in the community, as the only community health center in Yavapai County, to better communicate what a community health center is. She shared that they provide integrated care, which means the whole continuum of care is being addressed. They offer Primary Care, Behavioral Health and Dentistry, which means the whole care team is connected, communicating and there is no disjointed care. She then gave an example of someone visiting the dental clinic with high blood pressure. She continued, the Dentist can speak with the Primary Care provider, who is in the same location, regarding the issue to get that patient into the Primary Care schedule quicker, so that the dental care needed can be taken care of in a timelier manner. She shared that they do have same day appointments, it's a quality measure they have so that there is a decrease in ER utilization and hospital admittance. She shared that at each clinic there is Primary care for both adults and pediatric patients, adding that there is a full time Pediatrician at their Cottonwood office. She said all providers are also cross trained as women's health providers, noting that Yavapai county has the highest rate of breast cancer in the state, and that they actively try to screen as many women as they can, between the ages of 40-74, in an effort to reduce instances of late stage diagnosis. She then shared that they are the only well women health check funded in Yavapai County which provides free breast and cervical cancer screenings for low income women. She continued, they also provide counseling and psychiatric services, with same-day appointments also available, and that last year they received federal funding to expand their mental health services and will increase from 1 part time provider to 4 as of March of this year. She continued to expand on their services, sharing that they provide case management for substance use, and mental health services, as well as dental services in the Cottonwood office. She highlighted that they are the only dental clinic in Yavapai County that accepts Access (AHCCCS) for adults, which is a substantial need they are trying to meet. She shared all services are offered on a sliding fee discount, so if someone is at a certain income threshold there is a formula used to reduce fees for services, and they are the only practice in Yavapai County that provides that service for dental. Another service they provide is medication assistance in several ways. For the manufacturer's discount program they assist patients to apply and are sometimes able to receive front line medications for free. She then shared that one of the medical providers is board certified in advanced diabetes management, this provider has about 50 patients in the Cottonwood practice, and they all receive frontline medications from this program. She shared that they are also a 340b Drug Pricing Program enrollee. It is something available for community health centers nationwide, where patients are able to get medications at a reduced rate, for example

anywhere from \$8-\$16 for a month's supply of medications. They provide free Access (AHCCCS) and marketplace enrollment and have a Medicaid Assister on staff who has been helping people apply for Access for over 12 years. She said this is a great resource provided to both patients and the community.

Dr. Dillenberg asked who that individual was.

Ms. Garcia answered that her name is Susan Huntington and that she has same-week availability. She continued that as far as availability they are typically booked 2 weeks out for primary care, for both new and established patients, but for the psychiatric providers she reiterated that there is same day availability. They are partnered with Manzanita Outreach to provide a shelf stable food bank. She then reiterated the sliding fee schedule, saying based on income and family size they are able to use a formula to greatly reduce costs, giving the example that for primary care some patients costs are around \$60. She then went on to share that they receive Title 10 funding, which ensures access to reproductive health services especially for teens and women for STI testing and that insertable birth control devices are substantially discounted. Other services provided are for cancer screening. The community health center is partnered with Exact Sciences, which is the manufacturer of Cologuard. She said, the test is normally \$500-\$700, however for the community health center patients that are low income and/or uninsured they automatically get the test for free. Additionally they have timely hospital follow-up, which are dedicated time slots for patients who've visited an emergency room or urgent care. They are able to get back in, to see their provider for follow-up and to address any unaddressed items. She shared that they have licensed interpreters on staff and most of the clinical staff are also bilingual. She continued, there is a remote monitoring program so anyone with a high enough blood pressure, they are able to provide a free blood pressure monitor then follow-up with them as well as provide education and tools to help reduce their blood pressure. She shared there are 4 primary care providers, 4 for adults and 1 for pediatric patients. Ms. Bahm is a DNP, board certified in advanced diabetes management, provides primary care, services for productive health as well as is trained for medications for opioid use disorders. Ms. Johnston is a PA and works in the primary care team as well as women's health. She outlined the length of time the providers have been with the community health centers.

Dr. Dillenberg asked if they could have a copy of her visual aide.

Mr. Klein confirmed the information would be available after the meeting.

There was brief discussion between Ms. Garcia and Dr. Dillenberg regarding the dentistry at the community health center.

Ms. Garcia said one of their goals this year is to partner up and better engage with the community. Plans for the future include 2 mobile units that are in the state licensing phase with the health department. They want to reach underserved communities and increase awareness of their services.

Mr. Sharif remarked he was going to ask about a taxi or pickup service for community members who do not have viable transportation, so hearing about the mobile units is awesome.

Ms. Moore said they have had previous discussions regarding a possible clinic in the Town Hall building on the 3rd floor, when it was remodeled into being a public building.

Ms. Garcia said they are open to partnership.

Ms. Barber clarified that they have a Cottonwood office.

Ms. Garcia confirmed yes, adding that the Cottonwood clinic is the newest and is next to the library in Cottonwood; it's the building with the copper dome. They are also located in Prescott, Prescott Valley, and have just signed a lease to open an Ash Fork office. She mentioned they'd been in discussions to open a location in Camp Verde but that is far from set.

Ms. Barber asked if there were any other questions or comments.

Ms. Moore asked if they would have contact information, or if Ms. Garcia was who they should contact?

Ms. Garcia answered yes.

Dr. Dillenberg expressed his gratitude.

Mr. Sharif then asked if they already offered or were looking into the possibility of a telehealth option.

Ms. Garcia said they do offer some telehealth services, several psychiatric providers are entirely virtual, but they also partner with the Yavapai County free library district, so any of those locations are set up with little telehealth hubs. She said they are currently underutilized but believes this outreach will help with that.

Ms. Barber followed up on Ms. Moore's earlier statement. She shared that they had talked about doing a self-health clinic, where it could be virtual or morph into a bunch of different things. She said follow-up and seeing what could be done are the next steps we would want to take. She said there's been a Yavapai County health center in Cottonwood for years and years but it's nice to see that it's turned into what it has because this is much more than it used to be.

Ms. Garcia added they are always looking to grow and expand and are actively recruiting for a physician position at the Cottonwood location because there is such a gap in medical care in the Verde Valley.

Ms. Barber thanked her for acknowledging that and trying to be part of the solution.

Ms. Garcia reiterated they do not have a high turnover rate; their providers are vested in their communities with no intentions of leaving. She added that they have student loan repayment programs to help so that they don't have to leave and go to a for-profit model. She said they look forward to keeping communication open and welcomed everyone to come visit.

Ms. Barber shared that it is a wonderful service for the community.

6:59PM (26:42) 3. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Barber made the motion to adjourn the meeting

Mr. Sharif seconded the motion.

Ms. Barber called the question, and the meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

Motion to adjourn at 6:59 p.m.

COUNCILMEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSENT	ABSTAIN
BARBER	X		X			
DILLENBERG			X			
MOORE			X			
SHARIF		X	X			
SHEFFIELD			X			

APPROVE:

ATTEST:

Alex Barber, Mayor

Brett Klein, Town Manager

DRAFT