

**MINUTES**  
**CITY COUNCIL CITIZEN'S FORUM**  
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF YUMA, ARIZONA  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS – YUMA CITY HALL  
ONE CITY PLAZA, YUMA, ARIZONA  
**January 6, 2015**  
**5:30 p.m.**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**Mayor Nicholls** called the City Council Citizen's Forum to order at 5:32 p.m.

Councilmembers Present: Knight, Thomas, McClendon, Wright, Craft, and Mayor Nicholls  
Councilmembers Absent: Beeson  
Staffmembers Present: City Administrator, Gregory K. Wilkinson  
Various department heads or their representatives  
City Attorney, Steven W. Moore  
City Clerk, Lynda Bushong

**I. TEXTING WHILE DRIVING**

**Lance Wright**, 2950 W. 10<sup>th</sup> Lane, a local high school teacher, stated that one of his students had a car accident from texting while driving that resulted in the death of a local man. That event sparked his desire to address this issue. He spoke about the hazards and personal tragedies that texting while driving poses, stating that teens are especially prone to the activity. He backed up his comments with data from national sources that indicated texting significantly raises the risk of accidents that lead to injuries and death. It causes more teen deaths than drunk driving. There are strict laws about driving while under the influence of alcohol. Why aren't there laws against driving while texting? It affects the proper flow of traffic and, of course, affects the lives of those who are injured and/or the families of those who are killed. At one time, the Arizona state legislature was considering a bill about texting and driving, but it was not successful. He would like to see the behavior made illegal or, at least, have deterrents put in place. Fines could even bring money into the City. He noted that there is community support for the measure.

**Mayor Nicholls** stated that yesterday he discussed the previously proposed State law with legislators. It has been proposed in almost every session of the State legislature for the last couple of years and it hasn't been successful. The latest revision, however, is specific to distracted driving rather than texting while driving. The Arizona Department of Public Safety did a study of accidents and, while texting was a major cause of accidents, roadside distractions caused even more. Thus, legislators feel they should work toward a solution that encompasses all of the causes. **Mayor Nicholls** stated he would be getting a copy of the upcoming state proposal soon. Though there's no way to know if the State legislature will pass this version, it would be better for Yuma to follow suit with provisions that conform to the State's legislation, if and when a bill does pass.

**Thomas** noted that there is stringent legislation against drunk while under the influence, but it hasn't curtailed drunk driving. Cell phone usage while driving is a very real problem; he sees it all the time. But once the government gets involved in policing an activity, it erodes personal responsibility. **Lance Wright** agreed, but noted that the frequency of this behavior is increasing. Deterrents aimed specifically at teenagers might be more appropriate. **Thomas** and **Lance Wright** agreed that parents should be more involved. **Lance Wright** noted that, as a motorcycle rider, the issue has more relevance to him.

**Mayor Nicholls** discussed the effectiveness of an educational awareness program for teens. Creating a law doesn't mean kids will understand the reasons behind it. Communities turn to legislation when education isn't working, but education might be a middle ground approach.

**Thomas** asked if the issue is taught in Driver's Education classes. **Lance Wright** stated that, though he has no firsthand knowledge of the curriculum, he feels sure it is included in Driver's Ed. Education on the problem is ongoing; there are television warning ads. But it doesn't seem to be gaining traction. His students continue to text because there's no penalty in place. Personally, he doesn't speed because he doesn't want to get a ticket.

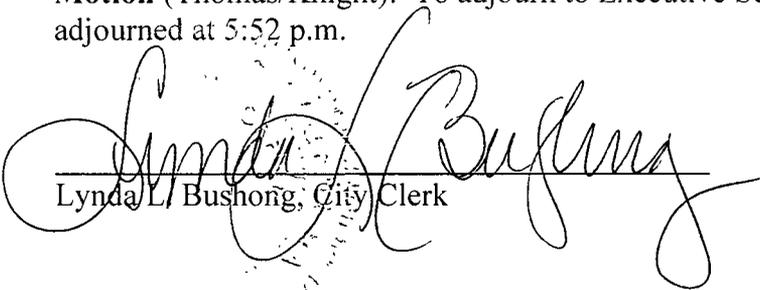
**Gary Wright** appreciated Lance Wright's bringing the matter to Council. The issue, though, isn't big government, but driver accountability. Anything that diminishes your reaction time behind the wheel can cause accidents. Perhaps this could be a topic at the Council's Retreat.

**Thomas** also suggested that those telephoned refuse to talk to someone who is calling them while driving. **Lance Wright** added that people shouldn't text someone when they know the person they are calling is on the road. He asked for a contact person.

**Mayor Nicholls** stated he would get Lance Wright in touch with local legislators and he could also talk to anyone on Council for an update on the issue.

## II. EXECUTIVE SESSION/ADJOURNMENT

**Motion** (Thomas/Knight): To adjourn to Executive Session. Voice vote: **approved** 6-0; the meeting adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

  
Lynda L. Bushong, City Clerk

APPROVED:

  
Douglas J. Nicholls, Mayor

Approved at the City Council Meeting of:  
November 18, 2015  
City Clerk: 