

GENERAL INFORMATION

March 2024

Notable Items:

- **City Pool and Spray Park Construction Update:**

The anticipated completion of the city pool is scheduled for mid to late August 2024. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. Like you, we are excited to see this project completed. City staff are actively collaborating with the pool contractor to expedite the construction process if and where possible. Should construction conclude soon enough, efforts will be made to secure lifeguards for shifts in August. Please note that the splash pad will remain closed until the pool's completion, as it operates in tandem with pool water circulation.



[Official Website for the City of Willcox, Arizona - Swimming Pool \(az.gov\)](https://www.az.gov)

- **Water Fill Station:**

City staff have been working on refurbishing the water fill station located on Ft. Grant next to Love's Truck Stop. The project was approximately \$24,000 and involved installing bollards, new piping, and electronics. Water haulers have become more numerous in recent years and this location provides ease of access without damaging roads in the downtown area. The new system also allows water haulers to use credit cards. The water fill station is expected to be operational at the beginning of April.



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- Water Infrastructure Finance Authority (WIFA) Grants

With ongoing water issues in the Willcox Basin, the City Council established Water Conservation goals as part of their Strategic Plan. Last fiscal year, the state legislature programmed funds through WIFA for water conservation. City staff have applied for three grants with the Water Conservation Grant Fund: 1) Cemetery Turf Removal – Awarded \$118,000, 2) Installation of a SCADA System and Refurbishment of City Wells – Awarded \$75,000, and 3) Smart Irrigation Systems at City Parks and Meter Replacement – Pending \$2.4 Million. These projects will allow the city to lead by example in conserving water in the Willcox Basin, keep water rates low for customers, and upgrade water utility systems.

1. Cemetery Turf Removal (\$118,715) - In 2022, the City Council formed a Cemetery Advisory Committee to create a long-term strategy to improve maintenance, reduce tripping hazards, and improve the appearance of the Willcox Cemetery. A decision that came from the Committee was to remove the grass, relevel the headstones, and install drought-tolerant plants and hardscape. The City Council budgeted \$50,000 as a match for potential grants. City staff were able to successfully apply for and receive funding from WIFA. Staff will be working with landscape engineers to create a design that will be shared with the City Council prior to going out to bid for turf removal.
2. Installation of a SCADA System and Refurbishment of City Wells (\$311,250) - The new SCADA system allows staff to remotely control and monitor water levels in storage tanks in addition to logging and reporting data and emergency alarms 24 hours a day. This will allow staff to better monitor the water system for efficiency and ensure a safe and secure water supply to residents and businesses. The Water Conservation Grant Fund Committee voted 4/3; however, the WIFA Board only approved \$75,000 for the SCADA System.



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3. **Smart Irrigation Systems at City Parks and Meter Replacement to Water Users (\$3,200,000)** - The existing sprinkler irrigation systems at Keiller, Quail, and Railroad Parks are over 20 years old and inefficient in conserving water. Staff have manually turned on and off park sprinkler systems for the last five years. This often results in parks being overwatered and flooded. Smart irrigation technology uses weather data or soil moisture data to determine the irrigation needs of the parks. A smart sprinkler system will be able to be remotely monitored by staff and will ensure overwatering does not occur. New smart meters will monitor and notify staff of any line breaks and water leaks to help the city improve its water conservation. The Water Conservation Grant Fund Committee voted unanimously in support of the \$3.2 Million project. The project will now go before the WIFA Board for approval.



- **Fire Subscription Service (See Attachment)**

The City Council has established a fire district outside city limits, initiating a Fire Subscription Program by the town's fire department to enhance fire protection and emergency services for residents and businesses in these extended areas. This vital service provides peace of mind by offering fire response and suppression services through an annual subscription. Subscribers may see potential savings on insurance premiums and no costs from the City in the event of a fire. The program will be promoted via social media and informational flyers mailed directly to homes to ensure widespread awareness and facilitate sign-ups. The attached flyer outlines specific pricing for residential subscribers.

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- **Meeting with State Legislature (See Attachment)**

Mayor Laws and City Manager Caleb Blaschke recently visited with state representatives including Senator Gowan, Representative Griffin, and Representative Diaz to discuss legislative priorities of the City of Willcox. They also met with the Governor's Office staff to discuss water issues in the Willcox basin and solutions. Both the Mayor and City Manager testified against Senate Bill 1221 and its effects on the Willcox Community. A letter written to state legislative members opposing Senate Bill 1221 is attached.

- **Haskell Avenue and Rex Allen Drive**

The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), which owns and maintains Haskell Avenue and Rex Allen Drive, replaced concrete aprons and sidewalks in November 2023. The concrete aprons allow water to drain correctly and preserve roadways as vehicles turn. This April, ADOT will pave both Haskell Avenue and Rex Allen Drive in City limits. ADOT recently paved Haskell Avenue to both exits in FY 2024-2025.

After learning that repaving Willcox roadways was not in the immediate or long-term plans of ADOT, City representatives and staff approached the State and Senator Gowan who passed a bill to fund the project. We are grateful to Senator Gowan for making Willcox a priority and look forward to the project being completed.

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- **Scott Street Improvements**

In collaboration with SEAGO, ADOH, and Rock House Construction, we're enhancing Scott Street from Flagstaff Ave to Willcox Senior Housing for better safety and accessibility. Traffic controls will ensure smooth transit and home access.



Community Events:

- **West Fest Rodeo and Chuck Wagon Cook Off** – April 12
 - o visitwillcox.az.gov/willcox-west-fest/
- **Earth Day Community Clean Up** – April 19th
 - o [Official Website for the City of Willcox, Arizona - 2024 Earth Day Trash Clean Up \(az.gov\)](https://www.az.gov/official-website-for-the-city-of-willcox-arizona-2024-earth-day-trash-clean-up)
- **Willcox Wine Festival** – 3rd Weekend in May
 - o visitwillcox.az.gov/willcox-wine-country-spring-festival/

Upcoming Meetings and Agenda Items:

- April 3: City Council Special Meeting – Agenda items will include a Resolution Accepting Land Donation and the Animal Shelter Intergovernmental Agreement with Cochise County.
- April 17: City Council Meeting – Agenda items may include award of Bird Blinds, Budget Presentations, WIFA Grant Acceptance, WIFA Loan.

Willcox City Manager, Caleb Blaschke

