

**ARIZONA SPACE COMMISSION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, January 14, 2026, at 10:00 A.M.
Yuma Proving Ground
301 C. Street Yuma, AZ 85365-9498**

I. Pledge of Allegiance

Brett Mecum, Chairman, Arizona Space Commission, led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairman Brett Mecum called the meeting of the Arizona Space Commission to order at 10:03 A.M.

Marisa Walker, Executive Vice President and Administrator, Arizona Commerce Authority, proceeded with the roll call. A quorum of voting members confirmed present.

Board Members Present:

- Grant A. Anderson - in person
- James F. Bell – online
- Jim Cantrell – online
- Megan Fitzgerald – online
- Erika Hamden – online
- Shawn Linam – online
- Brett Mecum – in person
- Len Munsil – online
- Lisa Morris - online
- Douglas J. Nichols – in person
- Michael P. Vargas – in person
- Steve Zylstra – in person

Board Members Not Present:

- Michael McGuire

III. Consent Agenda

Chairman Mecum began the meeting by introducing the first agenda item: approval of the December 9, 2025 meeting minutes. Commissioner Zylstra moved to approve the minutes, and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Vargas. The minutes were approved without objection.

IV. Welcome Remarks

Commissioner & Mayor of Yuma Douglas Nicholls gave welcoming remarks expressing gratitude to the Yuma Proving Ground for hosting the discussion and highlighting the military facility as a state jewel. Along with its small businesses, its downtown, thriving ag industry and military assets, the City of Yuma



is a welcoming community and always eager to host. It was underscored that YPG offers a unique testing opportunity for public-private partnerships. The Mayor recognized his Chief of Staff Kathy Moon for the tremendous work organizing this event.

V. Yuma Space Port

Jay Simonton, Acting City Administrator and Isaiah Kirk, Chief Information Officer for the City of Yuma provided an overview of the city's strengths, compelling past accomplishments and their efforts to advance the development of the Yuma Space Port. The city with a population of approximately 110K resides in a county of nearly a ¼ million people. The region includes key sectors such as the military (\$1B) and agriculture (\$5B) with tremendous economic impact. The aerospace industry is deeply embedded in the region and reflected in several tactical and strategic milestones:

- First flight in 1911
- First UAS operations in 1950
- Moon rover testing in 1966
- GPS testing starting in 1974 through the early 90s
- Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One (MAWTS-1) commissioned in 1978
- The Orion capsules tested in 2012
- Air to Air refueling mission lasting 46 continuous days

The Space Foundation estimates that the economic impact of the commercial satellite industry to reach \$1.8T by 2035. In recent years commercial launches have increased nearly 60%. A key challenge is that commercial communication satellites have the lowest priority at many of the existing launch facilities and underscores a demand for these services.

Of the 14 commercial spaceports nationally, only 5 provide vertical launch. Yuma stands to benefit from developing its capabilities to provide low earth orbit from a southerly polar trajectory. Key needs include making the Yuma port a statewide effort, designing a business development strategy to target companies, identifying key incentives, supporting space tech startups and more effective utilization of the R&D capacity of the three universities which are all located in the region.

Although space launches is often the headline, the story and impact is the emerging concentration of innovators and suppliers that will gravitate to Arizona. The region is in discussions with both Sonora and the federal government of Mexico to secure an MOU. A representative is traveling to Mexico to finalize the agreement shortly. Initial estimates per launch are \$50K - \$100K with the first operation occurring in the 3rd quarter of 2029.

Commissioner Zylstra sought clarification if the estimated \$50-100K cost per launch was a fee and what were the investment cost to build the port. Commissioner Nicholls estimated that it will be \$3-4M to develop the port, with the proposed cost structure the Port could generate upwards of **\$2M annually with multiple launches a year**.

Commissioner Vargas inquired about the timeline. It was noted that FAA requires site control before license can be granted. Projections suggest it could be 12 to 24 months to get control of the site. The region is seeking letters of support and would welcome ones from the Commission and individual organizations. Commissioner Morris queried about the value of letters from companies. Obtaining letters of commitment to utilize the facility were emphasized as a key objective.



Commissioner Bell asked about strategic partnerships to bolster the port's application including with Space Force and the Space Foundation. He went on to question if Vandenberg is the biggest competitor to the proposed port. Vandenberg is not seen as a competitor since most of its launches are with the federal government. Yuma Space Port is targeting the commercial market. The region is in discussions with the Space Foundation, the Space Force and welcomes any assistance with other strategic alliances.

Commissioner Cantrell followed with a question about FAA opinion or receptivity to flights over Mexico. Based on discussions to date the FAA has not indicated this component of the flight plan is a non-starter or issue, particularly if Mexico agrees. Discussions with the Sonoran Governor and Mexican federal officials are underway, indeed MX requested the MOU emphasizing their intent to utilize the space port for their satellite launches.

Chair Mecum inquired about the NEPA process. The region initiated the environmental impact assessment nearly 7 months ago and will be submitting documentation to the EPA soon. Once documentation can be provided to FAA to satisfy the requirements for a license, it will take 180 days for them to conduct a full review.

City officials noted that outreach is ongoing with the Arizona Congressional Delegation and it would be useful to highlight this effort during the upcoming meeting in February with State policy makers.

Chair Mecum requested the Yuma official provide a list of support items to the Commission.

VI. Commission Updates

- February 11th Meeting. The February Commission Meeting will be a Joint Session with Arizona House Committee on AI & Innovation and the Arizona Aerospace State Association. It will be held at the State Capitol-House of Representatives. Chair Mecum and Representative Justin Wilmeth will lead the discussion, and Commissioners are encouraged to attend in person. Multiple events will take place on the 11th including an evening reception. Sponsors are being sought.
- Charter. The draft document will be discussed and voted on during the March meeting. Chairman Mecum requested that Commissioners review the language and provide initial feedback to staff. Vice Chairman Anderson drew Commissioners' attention to Articles 3 and 4.
- Strategic Planning & Working Groups. Commissioner Linam noted the need for data to advance a SWOT. She noted information on what grants are underway, commercial companies in the state and the existing supply chain ecosystem would all be helpful. Administrator Walker offered to follow up with data sources within the ACA. Commissioner Zylstra mentioned an intern which may be able to assist, and Commissioner Vargas is reaching out to Helios. Vice Chairman Anderson suggested that the Commission aim to advance a solid draft from their working groups by June and that he would be providing a detailed outline on the SWOT template for their consideration soon.
- Legislative Strategy. Chairman Mecum indicated that Senator Shamp's SB1020 the space



commission license plate legislations is scheduled for a hearing. The bill requires \$32K within 12 months of passage to activate funding for the Commission. Commissioner Vargas expressed concern on a strategy to raise the funding and the timeline. Senator Gowan has indicated an interest in a space related bill. Commissioner Zylstra underscored potential opportunity to run legislation in support of Yuma Spaceport.

- Space Marshall Designation Process. A proposed process will be developed for consideration by the Commission during the March meeting.
- Upcoming Events. Commissioner Zylstra highlighted a compelling agenda for the Aerospace Summit which will be on July 15 at the Tucson Convention Center. He noted that several space related activities are in development, including the ACA's organization of an Arizona booth at the Space Foundation Summit in Colorado April 13-16. Staff will provide Commissioners information on the booth and the Arizona Delegation.

VII. Remarks

Commissioner Zylstra mentioned competition with other states specifically mentioning Texas which allocates a substantial amount of money to its Texas Space Commission for business attraction efforts. Representative Montenegro acknowledged a challenging budget year ahead, but encouraged the Commission to bring ideas to the Arizona House of Representatives and engage in conversation around those ideas.

Commissioner Morris registered a note of thanks to the Arizona Commerce Authority (ACA) and asked for support for the ACA's and its mission.

At the conclusion of remarks and questions, Chairman Mecum presented Representative Montenegro with an honorary Arizona Space Marshall proclamation read aloud by Vice Chairman Grant Anderson.

Chairman Mecum called for a break at 11:17 A.M.

The meeting was called back to order at 11:23 A.M.

VIII. Call to the Public

The meeting was opened for public comment.

- Dr. Amanda Hendricks-CEO of the Planetary Science Institute in Tucson includes approximately 130 key experts and scientists working on federal (NSF & NASA) grants. The Institute established in 1972 works to translate their research into outreach to key stakeholders and communities to advocate for space science and stands ready to engage and support the work of the Commission. Commissioner Bell highlighted the concentration of space expertise in the state, notably the work of the Institute.
- Colleen McCloud nominated Chairman Mecum for a Space Marshall designation
- Taryn Struck with Arizona Space Labs updated the Commissioners on the Space Rising Program including the confirmation of 95% of the speakers, the capacity for the event and



supporting activities to provide critical insights into the strategic plan, the capacity of a student cohort to gather data and attracting Venture Capital to the state. The Event is scheduled for Tempe and Phoenix April 28-30.

- Desmond Wysemyux and Lisa Godzich indicated interest in the working groups.

The meeting recessed at 11:59 for a short lunch break and was reconvened to order at 12:11 p.m.

IX. Yuma A&D Regional Assets (Working Lunch)

Lt. Col. John Leone, US Marine Corps Air Station Yuma (MCAS) and Col. John Nelson, Commander, US Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) outlined the training ranges and their unique capacity to collaborate and support external engagements. Yuma's International Airport is a joint use facility with the Marines and for this reason have runways reaching 11K and 13K feet respectively. The extreme natural environment provides ideal testing conditions for both air and ground combat systems.

X. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 P.M. following a motion by Commissioner Nicholls, seconded by Commissioner Vargas, and unanimously approved.

