**Greater Yuma Port Authority**

Board Retreat

March 7, 2024

**Consensus Statement**

**GYPA Mission Statement**

*The Greater Yuma Port Authority will develop a gateway for global trade and facilitate, promote, and support multi-modal transportation and trade opportunities to enhance economic development in the Greater Yuma area.*

The Greater Yuma Port Authority (GYPA) Mission Statement was updated around 7 years ago and describes the greater Yuma area, which widens the parameters of the GYPA. This is a broader mission than solely a gateway. The ports have been enhanced. When the physical gateway is brought up, many people think of San Luis, Arizona, as the location, which is where many of the port activities take place.

The GYPA includes the entire Yuma County area, and includes the Cocopah tribe, San Luis, Wellton, and other areas within Yuma County.

**Accomplishments:**

The initial goal to open up a gateway has been accomplished. There is now a trend to move into a promotional direction.

There is a commercial port of entry. There is also a pedestrian port of entry at San Luis Port of Entry I.

In the past, the GYPA has moved from a position of debt into a position of having funds.

The significant housing development in San Luis, Arizona, and the San Luis Medical Mall exist due to the support of various local developers.

There were many issues with accidents in the past that has been somewhat alleviated by opening the commercial port of entry.

A significant accomplishment has been moving away from selling property, which has moved the GYPA more towards its mission statement.

Mutual understanding that growth in the San Luis, Arizona, area is good has been accomplished.

Looking towards the future for the entire region as a group and working together is a major accomplishment.

Raising funds and gifting acres through a political process are a major accomplishment.

The GYPA Port Authority changed the dialogue statewide to see the ports of entry as an asset, which has occurred by people coming together and moving ahead. This has been a model for other ports of entry in the nation and has brought investment to the state of Arizona.

**Discussion 1 – From your community’s perspective, what one to three priorities intersect with GYPA? How can consensus be achieved between your Board or Council with GYPA on these potential collaborations?**

Yuma County:

GYPA should be looked at more of a macro level, including the airport and the greater area of the county. Transportation flow is an issue that needs to be looked at. There is a solid traffic presence at the border due to daily workforce transportation needs. There needs to be more of a self-sustaining model so that GYPA does not need to rely on other organizations for funding.

We need to become more entrepreneurial as an organization to bring in funds.

City of Yuma:

Revenue flows go into the City of Yuma area due to stores and casinos that are present in those locations. Enabling potential consumers to cross the border both ways as rapidly as possible provides more opportunities to spend money.

The City of Yuma is interested in economic development, which also adds to economic development throughout the Yuma County region.

City of San Luis:

The City of San Luis would like to see a timeframe to move in a positive direction. Having a plan on paper that is agreed upon is something we can work on together. Traffic for regular cars needs to be opened so that it can have an easier flow. There could be a tool to charge people to cross the border. Every commercial truck In Mexico currently pays a toll. The San Luis City Council wants to continue efforts to open the port for pedestrians and advocate for the act to allow for hiring more employees at the port, in particular officers. There are currently means for funding, and having a toll is a possibility. San Luis needs to decide if there should be a C6 classification rather than the current C3 classification in the area. San Luis wants to move forward on its future as a city. There should be focus on advocacy on policies and how the mission should be restructured.

GYPA should complement the efforts of the Greater Yuma Economic Development Corporation to advocate for economic development in Yuma County,

Cocopah Nation:

There is concern that Yuma County’s young people leave the area and don’t return. There is concern with the Cocopah Tribute that this talent is being lost.

The GYPA exists to bring people together and work together as a group. A well thought out plan with benchmarks needs to exist to achieve consensus since this can bring together various organizations to work together. Direction needs to be provided along with support.

A permanent funding source should be identified. Both border crossings should be looked at. The commercial port of entry should be looked at as possibly transitioning to a different funding model.

**Discussion 2 – As a Board member, what top one to three issues and/or projects should GYPA pursue that bring the greatest collaboration and highest degree of success in the next:**

12-18 months: Have a self-sustaining model. Focus on promotion of both ports and make these ports competitive with ports (times open, etc.) Advocate for making these ports competitive. A level playing field will bring more traffic. Define the goals of the next steps needed. Focus on commercial port of entry becoming a full-service port of entry, which includes commercial and non-commercial vehicles. Follow what other ports of entry are doing so that the GYPA is more inclusive and include people from the private sector as a funding source. Create and agree on a short-term plan with benchmarks for GYPA, which could include starting a feasibility study of charging tolls to provide funding. Apply for a 501c6 designation. There could be an outreach to Southwestern Port Users that could contribute to sustaining the GYPA office. The GYPA board should be broadened to include the private sector. Review GYPA ex-officio members to invite them to meetings.

5 years: There will be movement of board members. Whoever then serves on the board should have a good direction from the plan. There should be a focus on property acquisition, including federal land, although there is concern about movement back towards real estate. There should be outreach to railroad transportation as well. There should be a marketing plan that is more long-term. County 25th is a project that will need to include collaboration. The GYPA should look at areas that are conducive towards transportation.

Beyond: Advocating is an important activity for GYPA.

Road plans involve multi-year discussions. GYPA should be talking with others about roads that involves international traffic and advocacy. The Yuma Metropolitan Planning Organization (YMPO) has a contact through GYPA and could collaborate on transportation.

The GYPA cannot do everything and should focus. Roads are a supporting factor and are done by the county or another government entity.

**Discussion 3 – Besides funding, what might be the greatest barriers to accomplishing these and how can these barriers be mitigated?**

The biggest barrier to GYPA is that we have a C3 designation which means that GYPA cannot raise funds nor advocate. A C6 designation could expand membership, collect revenue and lobby for what is best for the Yuma County area. There are funds and an attorney available to apply for a C6 designation.

At GYPA, we need to work together and respect each other’s opinions without taking it personally. We have a common cause through the port and economic development. GYPA is a semi-public entity, which involves issues. Openness and transparency are necessary for us to do. The perception of closed sessions could cause misunderstandings from the public on what GYPA is and does.

Historically, all the organizations involved in economic development have worked in silos rather than collaboratively. There should be an official invitation to YMPO and other organizations to attend GYPA meetings.

There is common ground that we have. GYPA should not be secretive and should work from the same page. All need to communicate and contribute towards the betterment of the entire Yuma County area.

**Discussion 4 – What are potential funding sources and mechanisms to achieve these outcomes?**

First, GYPA needs a plan to attract funds from different entities.

Membership revenues and grants can bring in additional income for operations.

GYPA is a role model for other port authorities. Existing funds could be placed in a trust that could then fund ongoing operations. A C6 foundation could be created, and funds be placed in it that could then exist into perpetuity and fund operations.

**Discussion** **5 – what does success look like for GYPA in 2030?**

Success will mean that GYPA can bring a higher standard level of living to Yuma County residents.

GYPA will be financially successful.

GYPA will be recognized as the premier international trade organization for the state of Arizona and the go-to umbrella for international trade in Yuma County.

San Luis II will be a full-service port and will have a utility corridor.

GYPA will have grown and have more than one staff person.

GYPA will have achieved their 5-year plan.

Support the I-11 corridor through advocacy.

Advocate for the 95 corridor.

By 2030, GYPA will have double the number of truck crossings compared to crossings in 2024. An aspirational goal will be for San Luis II to meet or exceed the crossings in Mexicali/Calexico in 10 years.

Advocate and collaborate so that County 25th will connect at an interchange at Avenue B and County 25.

Commercial properties will be protected along the industrial corridor, which will be viable and sustainable.

Maintain and nurture relationships and communication with the Mexican authorities with joint promotional efforts and collaborative activities.

**Operations**

1. **Role of Executive Director:** What does transparency represent? New officials coming into office may not know where the records are kept with information. Meetings are posted at the City of Yuma, the City of San Luis, and other areas. Each entity communicates in different ways. Different members may share feelings of what is communicated or not. Quarterly reports would help. Outreach and inclusion are important and should include ex-officio board members and organizations such as YMPO and GYEDC. Ex-officio board member listings should be reviewed. The Executive Director could attend these other board meetings to share what GYPA is doing. It is crucial to abide by open meeting law. The ED will have specific tasks once the master plan is set that she can go forward on priorities and can designate who is responsible for tasks. There need to be sufficient resources for the ED to accomplish the master plan. The board needs to be supportive of the ED. Board discipline must be maintained.
2. **International and External Communications:** The official GYPA spokesperson is the Chair or the Chair’s designee. The board, as people of influence, has a vested interest in supporting the ED and the GYPA and communicating its activities and direction. GYPA minutes or a meeting summary should be rapidly available (within a week of the meeting) to supportive organizations so that organization heads know what has transpired at the GYPA and provide guidance on direction. A meeting summary should be succinct and have bullet points on major items.
3. **Board Meeting Structure**: the structure will change once it becomes a C6 designation. Consider changing the name of GYPA once it reaches a C6 designation.
4. **Frequency of Board meetings:** monthly board meetings are still an appropriate frequency of meetings.