

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Mayor Daggett called the meeting of the Flagstaff City Council held June 25, 2024, to order at 3:01 p.m.

NOTICE OF OPTION TO RECESS INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to A.R.S. §38-431.02, notice is hereby given to the members of the City Council and to the general public that, at this work session, the City Council may vote to go into executive session, which will not be open to the public, for discussion and consultation with the City's attorneys for legal advice on any item listed on the following agenda, pursuant to A.R.S. §38-431.03(A)(3).

2. Roll Call

Present: Becky Daggett, Mayor
Austin Aslan, Vice Mayor
Deborah Harris, Councilmember
Khara House, Councilmember
Lori Matthews, Councilmember
Jim McCarthy, Councilmember
Miranda Sweet, Councilmember

Staff Present: City Manager Greg Clifton; City Attorney Sterling Solomon

3. Pledge of Allegiance, Mission Statement, and Land Acknowledgement

The Council and audience recited the pledge of allegiance, Councilmember Sweet read the Mission Statement of the City of Flagstaff, and Councilmember House read the Land Acknowledgement.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the City of Flagstaff is to protect and enhance the quality of life for all.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Flagstaff City Council humbly acknowledges the ancestral homelands of this area's Indigenous nations and original stewards. These lands, still inhabited by Native descendants, border mountains sacred to Indigenous peoples. We honor them, their legacies, their traditions, and their continued contributions. We celebrate their past, present, and future generations who will forever know this place as home.

4. Open Call to the Public

Open Call to the Public enables the public to address the Council about an item that is not on the prepared agenda. Comments relating to items that are on the agenda will be taken at the time that the item is discussed. Open Call to the Public appears on the agenda twice, at the beginning and at the end. The total time allotted for the first Open Call to the Public is 30 minutes; any additional comments will be held until the second Open Call to the Public.

If you wish to address the Council in person at today's meeting, please complete a comment card and submit it to the recording clerk as soon as possible. Your name will be called when it is your turn to speak. You may address the Council up to three times throughout the meeting, including comments made during Open Call to the Public and Public Comment. Please limit your remarks to three minutes per item to allow everyone an opportunity to speak. At the discretion of the Chair, ten or more persons present at the meeting and wishing to speak may appoint a representative who may have no more than fifteen minutes to speak.

Dr. Emily Davalos addressed Council regarding concerns on the enforcement of city codes in the La Plaza Vieja neighborhood. She highlighted ongoing construction activity that she believes violates existing codes and the conditions outlined in the building permit, expressing frustration over the City's lack of enforcement.

Matthew Dyer, owner of Southside Tavern, addressed Council and shared ongoing challenges related to the relocation of a dumpster near his business. Originally moved due to a mural installation, the new location has raised safety concerns for his staff, who report feeling threatened and followed. Mr. Dyer also discussed an increase in noise complaints since the reopening of the nearby Mission, despite his efforts to mitigate sound levels by lowering the bass and modifying how the Tavern's doors close. He noted that while his business is growing, the rising foot traffic contributes to noise levels, and despite his proactive communication with residents and frequent calls to law enforcement, the situation remains unresolved. He expressed feeling harassed and questioned whether there is a defined decibel-level ordinance for noise.

Jacob Raatz, Energy Specialist with the City's Sustainability Office, addressed Council and shared information about an upcoming opportunity to learn more about transitioning to rooftop solar. He invited the community to attend a statewide webinar that will cover how to evaluate solar providers, understand best practices, and apply for tax credits and incentives.

Dennis Givens addressed Council and spoke in honor of Health Awareness Day, encouraging residents to live in pursuit of happiness and wellness. He praised the City's growing support for community gardens and emphasized the importance of reconnecting with nature. He also advocated for promoting small businesses and the practice of martial arts, stating that communities become safer when individuals learn self-defense. He closed by encouraging continued efforts toward justice and well-being for all.

Paul Beier submitted written comments asking Council to re-think water rate increases that would effect the Inner Basin Waterline project.

5. Review of Draft Agenda for the July 2, 2024 City Council Meeting

Citizens wishing to speak on agenda items not specifically called out by the City Council may submit a speaker card for their items of interest to the recording clerk.

None

6. Swearing in of Police Chief Sean Connolly

City Manager Greg Clifton introduced the highlight of the evening, welcoming Sean Connolly as the new Police Chief for the City of Flagstaff. Mr. Clifton expressed enthusiasm about Connolly's appointment, noting his extensive career spanning over 30 years in law enforcement with the City of Phoenix before joining Flagstaff. He provided a brief overview of Chief Connolly's background and experience.

Presiding Magistrate Tom Chotena administered the Oath of Office, officially swearing in Chief Sean Connolly.

Chief Connolly then offered brief remarks, expressing his gratitude for the opportunity, reflecting on the

significance of public service, and sharing his appreciation for the support he has received.

7. Proclamation: 2SLGBTQ Month

Mayor Daggett read and presented the proclamation.

8. Proclamation: Parks and Recreation Month

Mayor Daggett read and presented the proclamation.

9. June Work Anniversaries

Mr. Clifton introduced Kori Vogt as the new Human Resources and Risk Management Director for the City of Flagstaff. Ms. Vogt took a brief moment to introduce herself and share her enthusiasm for joining the organization.

Deputy City Manager Joanne Keene highlighted those who celebrated work anniversaries in June.

10. City Manager Report

Mr. Clifton briefly reviewed his report.

Sustainability Director Nicole Antonopoulos briefly reviewed the Sustainability monthly report.

Economic Vitality Director Heidi Hansen briefly reviewed the Economic Vitality monthly report.

Councilmember Harris expressed appreciation for the efforts being made across the city, noting how beautiful the flowers downtown are. She inquired about the possibility of implementing similar beautification efforts along the Fourth Street corridor, particularly on the north side of Route 66.

Economic Vitality Director Heidi Hansen responded that the team had explored the idea of hanging flowers, but unfortunately, the poles on Fourth Street are not structurally capable of supporting the weight. However, she committed to revisiting the idea with the beautification team to explore alternative options.

Councilmember House shared her excitement about the upcoming Green Book tour and raised a question regarding black, indigenous, and people of color representation and programming. She asked whether any related activities or content were incorporated into the city's Summer Reading Challenge, particularly those that reflect diverse histories and communities. Ms. Hansen replied that it does not appear to be included in the current program but she committed to looking into the matter further and providing a follow-up.

11. 2024-2025 Implementation Plan for the 10-Year Housing Plan

Housing Program Manager Adriana Fisher provided a PowerPoint presentation that covered the following:

10-YEAR HOUSING PLAN 2024-2025 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
PRESENTATION OUTLINE
HOUSING PLAN CREATION TIMELINE
10-YEAR HOUSING PLAN OVERVIEW
A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION
OVERARCHING GOAL & ELEMENTS
10-YEAR HOUSING PLAN REPORTING & IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE
FACTORS INFLUENCING STRATEGY SELECTION
2024-2025 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 STRATEGIES

Mayor Daggett inquired about how strategies from related plans, particularly those supporting

increased housing density, will be reflected in the updated regional plan. She asked whether this would be addressed through a standalone section or through integrated language emphasizing density as a strategy to support affordable housing.

Ms. Fisher responded that her team has been working closely with Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Manager Sara Dechter to ensure that these strategies are thoughtfully incorporated throughout the regional plan chapters. Rather than a single section, the intention is to embed these concepts more broadly within the document.

Community Development Director Dan Folke added that the Regional Plan primarily consists of goals and policies, which are implemented through tools such as the zoning code. Each area type within the plan includes a range of recommended densities. Adjustments may be made to those ranges, and implementation of any changes would occur through future zoning code amendments. The regional plan serves as the foundation and guiding document for those zoning updates.

REGIONAL PLAN-RELATED STRATEGIES ONGOING STRATEGIES

Mayor Daggett asked whether the term "net zero" referred specifically to energy, to which Housing Director Sarah Darr confirmed it is related to sustainability goals.

Councilmember Harris emphasized the importance of prevention when it comes to homelessness, suggesting that more focus is needed on identifying and supporting individuals before they reach crisis points. She pointed out that many at-risk individuals are victims of domestic violence or facing other serious vulnerabilities. She urged staff to consider how to make people feel more secure and reduce the cost of recovery by investing in proactive strategies.

Mayor Daggett asked about current eviction prevention programs, and Councilmember Harris followed up by asking how the city is identifying residents before they reach the stage of eviction. Ms. Fisher acknowledged the importance of these points and noted that collaboration with nonprofit partners will be essential for success.

Councilmember Matthews expressed concern that while the housing plan was approved about two and a half years ago, there appears to be limited visible progress. She noted the language in the plan often includes exploratory or planning terms like "develop," "explore," or "identify," but lacks clear action or completion markers. She pushed for quicker implementation, especially of ideas like the Employer Assisted Housing fund and suggested incorporating employer incentives into existing frameworks. She advocated for focusing on fewer priorities each year to ensure actual results, warning that the city is falling behind on housing solutions.

Ms. Fisher clarified that the current document outlines only what staff are working on in this fiscal year, and updates will be provided in September. Ms. Darr added that much of the foundational work is underway behind the scenes. She acknowledged that in the early stages, there was discomfort around committing to actions without funding, but with the housing bond now approved, they are beginning to integrate more actionable steps.

Councilmember Matthews encouraged staff to bring forward clear, funded proposals when the next budget process begins in January, promising her support and championing for sufficient housing investment.

Councilmember House asked whether there are opportunities to reform existing prevention programs to help residents before they reach a crisis point. She expressed concern that many services only engage once someone is already experiencing homelessness or eviction and asked for systemic changes to shift toward early intervention. She also asked why the city cannot simply build more public housing. Ms. Darr explained that the federal Faircloth Amendment, passed in 1997, prohibits the creation of additional public housing units beyond those that existed at that time. Flagstaff's most recent public housing project narrowly made the cut. Since then, the city has focused on supporting non-profit housing developers and leveraging partnerships.

Councilmember House further asked what could be done to improve access to housing choice (Section 8) vouchers. Ms. Darr explained that new vouchers were occasionally made available by Congress, but they require cooperation with the Veterans Affairs, which has staffing issues. Even with available vouchers, it is hard to place tenants due to bureaucratic and market constraints. Regarding fair market rent calculations, she noted the system reverted to outdated methods post-pandemic, which makes it harder to reflect Flagstaff's actual market. Staff continue to advocate for updated metrics.

Councilmember Sweet expressed hope that the city can help bridge the gap between businesses and housing needs to better understand what is working and what is not.

The discussion ended with Mayor Daggett reaffirming support for the Housing team and encouraging continued collaboration and advocacy.

12. Proposed Amendment to Observatory Mesa Right-of-Way Easement

Open Space Supervisor Robert Wallace and Deputy City Attorney Kevin Fincel provided a PowerPoint presentation that covered the following:

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO OBSERVATORY MESA ACCESS ROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY EASEMENT
OBSERVATORY MESA NATURAL AREA
OBSERVATORY MESA NATURAL AREA SECTION 6
OBSERVATORY MESA NATURAL AREA & PROPOSED ROW AMENDMENT
COMING FROM HIDDEN HOLLOW, PROPOSED TO ALIGN WITH THE CURRENT ROAD OUTSIDE THE CURRENT ROW
TERRAIN ALONG ALIGNMENT
STEEP GRAD PROPOSED FOR NEW ALIGNMENT
APPROACHING PRIVATE PROPERTY BOUNDARY
PRIVATE PROPERTY BOUNDARY. ALIGNMENT PROPOSED TO BE MOVED TO PRIVATE PROPERTY
CHANGES IN LAND PROTECTION AND USE
CITY AND STATE ROLE
DEED OF CONSERVATION EASEMENT
CONSIDERATIONS
OPEN SPACES COMMISSION CONCERNS
OPEN SPACES COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION
NEXT STEPS

Councilmember House asked why an HOA is being proposed. Mr. Fincel explained that since maintenance of the road, particularly snow removal, is essential, there needs to be a legal entity responsible for it. An HOA would provide that structure, allowing the city to impose conditions and ensure compliance, with all parcel owners becoming members.

Vice Mayor Aslan shared that he was undecided on the matter, calling it a values-based conversation. On one hand, he supports property owners' rights, but on the other, he's concerned about the long-term impacts of building roads in remote areas. Roads tend to expand and connect, which could lead to pressure to link with Highway 180 or I-40 and potentially impact nearby sensitive areas like Lowell Observatory. He asked about the potential for unintended connectivity and how Lowell Observatory might be involved in the conversation.

Mr. Wallace responded that this area is fairly removed from Lowell, and there is no current perceived connection. Mr. Fincel acknowledged that while things could change in the future, current conditions--such as neighboring private property and dedicated parkland--limit alternative access points. Owners to the north have not been open to access, and parcels to the east are protected land.

Mr. Wallace added that motorized traffic is not allowed on adjacent lands, and future development proposals would still need to go through a formal state review process. There is currently no desire or plan to connect the proposed road through to other sections.

Vice Mayor Aslan asked how strictly the development potential is spelled out, noting he envisioned just a few homes. Mr. Fincel explained that the parcels are zoned Rural Residential, meaning one unit per five acres without public water or roads. In theory, about 20 homes could be built if the land were one large parcel, but because of lot sizes and other limitations, the actual number would likely be much lower.

Vice Mayor Aslan also mentioned the tree density in the lower parcels. Mr. Fincel said they have discussed thinning with the owners, who have been open to access for that purpose.

Vice Mayor Aslan said he is still undecided and asked the property owners to address his concerns directly if possible.

Councilmember Harris raised questions about who would pay for the road and meet the conditions. Mr. Fincel confirmed the property owners would be responsible and would need to hire professionals as needed. He noted that much of the route follows an existing easement and that city staff, particularly Mr. Wallace, would likely be a resource to assist.

Councilmember Harris also asked if there is any adjacent state land that might come up for sale in the future. Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Amy Hagin said there is none nearby. Councilmember Harris followed up by asking whether the property owners had been informed about development limitations when they purchased their land. Mr. Fincel said that would be a question for the owners themselves.

Councilmember Matthews asked whether the city recognized these private parcels and the access easement when it acquired nearby land. Mr. Fincel confirmed they did, and Mr. Wallace added that property owners were notified at the time.

Councilmember Matthews said that the proposed road mostly follows the existing informal route and could reduce unauthorized off-road paths currently forming due to the lack of an official trails map. She supported the road upgrade, saying it would provide a stable, defined route without significant environmental disruption.

Councilmember McCarthy asked if the seven property owners had an agreement to allow access across each other's land. Mr. Fincel said he had not seen a formal document but believed that such an agreement exists.

Alexis Stack, one of the owners of a smaller parcel in the discussed area, addressed the Council and shared that her family is from Flagstaff and that the city is her home. She emphasized her understanding of the importance of preservation and said that she and the other property owners have spent over a year meeting with city staff and the Open Spaces Commission to ensure their approach is respectful and thoughtful. She explained that the group is simply requesting a legal description of the existing easement that accounts for topographical constraints. She added that the proposed adjustment would actually be beneficial to the conservation easement. Her parcel, in particular, has an encumbrance on the title that grants access to a neighboring property.

Councilmember McCarthy asked for confirmation that there is access to all seven parcels, and Ms. Stack confirmed that there is. She added that her intent is to build a small home along with an accessory dwelling unit for aging family members. Their request is simply for the city to work with them to maintain their legal right of way.

Cody Routson addressed Council and thanked staff for their efforts in navigating the complex issue of property access. He expressed his intent to build a home on his parcel and emphasized that reasonable access cannot be denied. While access is complicated, he acknowledged the rights involved. He noted that the existing access is a primitive, unmaintained road that does not always align with the proposed road location. Both the easement and the road fall under the conservation easement, making it impossible to fully meet the city's access standards.

Councilmember Matthews asked how he feels about the extensive list of proposed conditions. Mr.

Routson responded that they are trying to do their best to meet everyone's concerns and gain access. He believes most conditions are achievable, though some will be more challenging.

Councilmember Matthews encouraged the property owners to evaluate the proposed conditions thoroughly and share any concerns, especially if any are impossible to meet, so the Council can address them.

Councilmember Sweet thanked the owners, staff, and commission for their efforts. While she does not have major reservations, she cautioned about potential slippery slope effects and emphasized the need for future guardrails.

Councilmember McCarthy noted the owners already have an existing legal easement, and the proposed minor changes to accommodate fire access and other safety concerns seem reasonable. He expressed support and openness to the plan, aligned with the Open Spaces Commission's recommendations.

Councilmember Harris expressed sensitivity toward individual property rights and frustration that previous landowners might not have been fully informed about restrictions before selling. She supports helping owners build homes but acknowledged the conditions are overwhelming and will require significant effort.

Vice Mayor Aslan finds the property owners' request reasonable and supports moving forward. However, he reminded them that the final decision will likely come after a new Council is seated. He emphasized respect for the Open Spaces Commission's recommendations and noted that while the land was bought with voter-approved funds, the conditions seem appropriate and relevant to the community.

Mr. Fincel shared that some conditions were adjusted based on property owner feedback at the Open Spaces Commission meetings. He praised the commission's thoughtful balancing of all interests.

Mayor Daggett appreciated the Open Spaces Commission's work and emphasized supporting owners' rights. She requested that when this returns to Council, they include any input from the Forest Service regarding road plans.

Councilmember House appreciated hearing from owners directly and asked for updates on proposals for thinning trees on the lower parcels, balancing housing development with fire safety.

Councilmember Harris asked about consensus among owners and what would happen if one owner opts out.

Mr. Fincel said all owners have been agreeable so far, but they will address any future disagreements if they arise.

13. Open Call to the Public

Sabrina addressed Council and expressed concerns about the ongoing development of forest land and its negative impact on the climate.

14. Informational Items To/From Mayor, Council, and City Manager; future agenda item requests

Councilmember Matthews shared concerns about the upcoming water rate review, noting discussions with Mr. Clifton and Water Services about adjusting rates based on CPI rather than a fixed inflation index. She hopes the proposed parameters will ease business worries and offered to share the email details.

Councilmember Harris attended the State Transportation Board meeting and the Open Spaces Commission meeting focused on the road easement. She will also attend the Mountain Line board meeting.

Councilmember McCarthy welcomed the State Transportation Board during their event in Flagstaff.

Councilmember Sweet mentioned a waterline tour and gave a shout-out to Deputy City Manager Joanne Keene for arranging a driver for the new electric vehicle for the July 4 parade, reminding participants to arrive early.

Councilmember House met with Governor Hobbs discussing local issues including housing and representation for northern and southern communities. She encouraged partnership with the Governor's office and promoted the "Back to Flagstaff Homecoming Celebration" from June 29 to July 2 noting participation from the Commission on African American Affairs.

15. Adjournment

The Work Session of the Flagstaff City Council held June 25, 2024, adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

MAYOR

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK