

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Mayor Daggett called the Joint Meeting of the Flagstaff City Council and Coconino County Board of Supervisors held September 23, 2024, to order at 3:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

NOTE: One or more Councilmembers or Board Members may be in attendance through other technological means.

Present: Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Judy Begay
Board of Supervisors Vice-Chairwoman Patrice Horstman
Supervisor Lena Fowler
Supervisor Adam Hess
Supervisor Geronimo Vasquez
Mayor Becky Daggett
Vice Mayor Miranda Sweet
Councilmember Austin Aslan (arrived at 3:21 p.m.)
Councilmember Anthony Garcia
Councilmember Khara House
Councilmember Lori Matthews
Councilmember David Spence

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

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

Economic Vitality Director Heidi Hansen addressed the Council and Board of Supervisors and provided an overview of Proposition 487, which concerns the continuation of the Bed, Board, and Beverage (BBB) tax. She shared background information on the tax's history and invited the public to attend an upcoming informational session at the Flagstaff Aquaplex.

CEO and General Manager of Mountain Line Heather Dalmolin addressed Council and presented information on Proposition 488. She discussed the history and development of the transit program and highlighted its significance to the community.

5. Preview of the Flagstaff Regional Land Use Plan 2045 60-day Public Review and County Comprehensive Plan Update

Comprehensive Planning Manager Sara Dechter and Coconino County Long-Range Planner Melissa Shaw provided a PowerPoint presentation that covered the following:

PROCESS FOR UPDATING THE PLAN
LEVELS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR THE NEW PLAN
REGIONAL PLAN COMMITTEE
REGIONAL PLAN WRITING AND REVIEWING TIMELINE
HOW CAN PEOPLE PARTICIPATE?
PLAN COMMENTS HOSTED ON KONVEIO
FOCUS OF THE PLAN -- 5 PRIORITIES
REGIONAL PLAN CHAPTERS
POLICY SECTION
IMPLEMENTATION SECTION
MAPS
THEMES
PLAN AMENDMENTS

Mayor Daggett noted the city has its own strategies for addressing affordable housing and asked how differing city and county approaches are being reconciled. Ms. Dechter explained that when the committee encountered areas where the city and county had either shared or slightly nuanced goals, they worked to reflect those distinctions appropriately within the plan. Ms. Shaw added that the decision to identify dual goals, where the city and county may have aligned but distinct priorities, was made early in the process and approved by the committee. This approach has guided policy development throughout. Mayor Daggett confirmed that the committee is developing policies intended for both the city and county, which Ms. Shaw affirmed.

Vice-Chairwoman Horstman referenced a recent Friends of Flagstaff's Future meeting and inquired about the process for aligning Planning and Zoning ordinances with the regional plan once approved. Ms. Dechter responded that city and county staff will begin reviewing related policies, codes, and ordinances to determine what updates may be needed, which typically occurs after voter approval. Ms. Shaw added that this has been an ongoing part of the process, with the committee regularly identifying where city and county codes may be misaligned and calling out areas that will require updates moving forward.

ENVISION 2045: UPDATING THE 2015 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
COCONINO COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DETAILS
ENVISION 2045 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE SCHEDULE WITH ADOPTION TIMELINE
AMENDMENT
REACHING COUNTY COMMUNITIES

6. Discussion with City of Flagstaff and Coconino County Staff Regarding Wildfire Risk and Insurance Challenges

Jay Smith, Coconino County Forest Restoration Director and Coconino County Government Affairs Director Gregory Nelson provided a PowerPoint presentation that covered the following:

HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE CRISIS
NATIONWIDE WILDFIRE STRUCTURE LOSS STATISTICS
INTEGRATING WILDFIRE RISK WITH BUILDING SPECIFIC PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS
AVERAGE ANNUAL STRUCTURES DESTROYED (AASD)
AVERAGE ANNUAL LOSS
CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN AVERAGE HO-3 PREMIUMS FROM 2018-2021
COST INDICATORS: HOME INSURANCE
COCONINO COUNTY ENGAGEMENT
DIFI CONVERSATION RECAP
HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE CRISIS
DEVELOPING POLICY SOLUTIONS
COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN
FEDERAL ADVOCACY ON WILDFIRE COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS
STRATEGY TO STOP THE BLEEDING
MOVING FORWARD

Councilmember Matthews raised a question regarding the city's resource protection overlay policy, which requires the preservation of a certain percentage of trees on development sites. She inquired whether recent efforts to revisit that policy through code review could support better outcomes in wildfire mitigation and development planning.

Wildland Fire Captain Neil Chapman responded that the city hopes to achieve more alignment with science-based tree retention practices rather than relying solely on cultural perceptions. He noted that emerging technology may help support those efforts.

Vice Mayor Aslan expressed concern about overcorrecting or being prematurely prescriptive when revisiting the resource protection overlays. He emphasized that such changes could become a major issue for both housing affordability and environmental sustainability. He cautioned against creating a short-term fix that does not address the larger systemic issues. He stressed the importance of continuing current firewise practices and thoughtful mitigation efforts but warned against allowing external forces, such as insurance companies, to dictate the appearance and ecological health of the community. He asked whether any insurance providers had confirmed that reducing trees on private lots would lower homeowners' premiums.

Vice-Chairwoman Horstman explained that there are two primary approaches being discussed: reducing catastrophic wildfire risk and addressing insurance challenges. However, she noted that insurance companies may not yet recognize or reward forest restoration and Community Wildfire Protection Plan, which complicates efforts.

Captain Chapman added that aligning wildfire mitigation practices with insurance industry expectations could reduce costs for both developers and homeowners. However, he acknowledged the lack of clarity around what insurance providers are looking for in terms of data. He stressed the need to build parcel-level data systems to support long-term resilience and homeowner incentives.

Mr. Smith noted that insurance markets are influenced by factors well beyond local control, such as hurricanes in the Southeast, and that it was not currently possible to promise property owners that taking certain actions will guarantee insurability, especially in the absence of clear data from insurers. Mr.

Nelson expanded on that point, saying the federal government has initiated efforts to better understand how insurance data is being collected and evaluated. He emphasized the need for collaborative, cross-sector environments to develop shared datasets and strategies for risk mitigation.

Captain Chapman reiterated that current resource protection regulations are not fully aligned with the best available science, nor are insurance practices. He clarified that the goal is not widespread tree removal, but rather retaining the right trees in the right places based on scientific assessment.

Supervisor Fowler stated that wildfire insurance and risk management is a national issue. As chair of the National Association of Counties Rural Caucus, she identified this as one of their top federal advocacy priorities. She noted that similar concerns are being raised across the country and will be presented to the congressional delegation.

Councilmember House reflected on the surprising lack of federal regulation over the insurance industry, especially given its outsized influence on housing affordability and risk. She emphasized the need to shift federal and legislative focus toward the insurance sector's impact on land use and wildfire policy.

Supervisor Vasquez requested more detail on the claim that current practices are not grounded in best science. Captain Chapman responded that without a standardized framework outlining specific homeowner actions, insurance providers are unable to score or reward those efforts. This limits incentives for homeowners to implement firewise strategies that could reduce risk.

Mayor Daggett expressed frustration that many homeowners have paid into insurance policies for decades without filing claims, only to now find themselves denied coverage or priced out due to increasing wildfire risks. She asked whether insurance companies are actively lobbying for climate action, given the financial risks they face from large-scale climate disasters.

Mr. Nelson confirmed that many insurance companies--and increasingly, banks--are lobbying on behalf of climate-related policy efforts because their financial assets are at stake. He added that while mortgage lenders have not yet entered this conversation in a major way, they are being closely monitored for future engagement.

Wildland Fire Captain Neil Chapman provided a PowerPoint presentation that covered the following:

WILDFIRE RISK AND ARIZONA COMMUNITIES
THE NECESSITY OF STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT
TASK, PURPOSE, END STATE
FIRE RETURN INTERVALS ARE WELL KNOWN IN THE SOUTHWEST
CHANGE IN HOUSING UNITS IN THE WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE, 1990-2020
WHERE IS THE WILDFIRE RISK?
BEST AVAILABLE SCIENCE
NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION
FIREWISE USA
IBHS WILDFIRE PREPARED HOME DESIGNATIONS
VEGETATION TO VEGETATION: SPEED BASED FIRE PATHWAYS
VULNERABILITY -- RELATIVE VULNERABILITY
DAMAGE ASSESSMENT -- 2018 CAMP FIRE
THE KEY QUESTIONS
ON FIRE: THE REPORT OF THE WILDLAND FIRE MITIGATION AND MANAGEMENT COMMISSION
WORKING GROUP TASK
RECOMMENDED WORKING GROUP REPRESENTATIVES
NEXT STEPS
TURNING A BILLION-DOLLAR CHALLENGE INTO SAFE COMMUNITIES

Vice Mayor Aslan expressed full support for the wildfire risk mitigation strategies presented, particularly the use of modeling to guide decision-making. He endorsed moving forward with that process and emphasized the importance of developing a systematic, long-term strategy to lobby the insurance industry at the federal level to recognize and support local mitigation efforts.

Councilmember House asked whether, in addition to the action guide focused on denser neighborhoods and affordable housing, there are plans to create similar tools specifically for multi-family housing. She noted that these types of developments have different needs, and their residents also need guidance on how to contribute to wildfire preparedness and risk reduction.

Captain Chapman responded that mapping tools and data analysis are helping inform which areas in dense communities are appropriate for tree retention. He referenced the "Neighborwoods" approach, which helps identify and preserve trees in specific areas while allowing for customized wildfire mitigation strategies. He also mentioned the "Wildfire Prepared Home" program in California, where homeowners can earn a formal designation for fire preparedness, overseen by the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS). Similar standards could apply at the HOA or neighborhood level, but these efforts require reliable parcel and neighborhood-level data.

Supervisor Hess asked whether there would be a certification or training program available for homeowners who want to protect their homes individually.

Captain Chapman confirmed that such opportunities are open to the public and encouraged participation. He noted that some tree service companies already carry certifications and that efforts are being made to increase participation. He also referenced the Firewise USA program, which recognizes neighborhoods that organize and invest in fire mitigation, although the designation itself does not guarantee fire safety--it demonstrates a commitment to risk reduction aligned with science-based practices.

Vice-Chairwoman Horstman commended the working group's progress but raised concerns about the cost of certifications and the need for financial incentives and compatible building codes. Without those elements in place at scale, she expressed uncertainty about the long-term effectiveness of the certification programs. She stressed the importance of city--county collaboration and the need to find solutions that keep the region affordable for residents. She also expressed enthusiasm for the use of LIDAR technology in development planning and tree resource mapping.

Captain Chapman added that the use of LIDAR and comprehensive planning can result in cost savings for developers by allowing for coordinated efforts around vegetation thinning and removal, rather than piecemeal approaches.

7. Informational Items To/From Chairman, Supervisors and County Manager, Mayor, Council and City Manager

Supervisor Vasquez spoke about Proposition 482 and encouraged community support for raising the county's expenditure limitation in order to maintain essential services.

Chairwoman Begay also addressed the expenditure limitation and expressed appreciation for the ongoing collaboration between the city and county. She emphasized the importance of working collectively and sharing information on regional issues. She also thanked Mayor Daggett for participating in the blessing of a hogan at Flagstaff High School, noting the value of traditional foods and cultural diversity.

Vice-Chairwoman Horstman thanked the City for their hospitality and expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to come together and discuss shared priorities.

Supervisor Hess echoed appreciation for the meeting, expressing how impressed she was by the strong working relationship between the County and City.

Councilmember Matthews also thanked the Board of Supervisors for the joint session, emphasizing that it is always a pleasure to work together on important regional issues.

Supervisor Fowler agreed and shared gratitude for the meeting, noting that these are valuable conversations and a good opportunity to understand the City's approach to key initiatives.

Councilmember Harris thanked City and County staff for the significant amount of work that went into preparing for the meeting.

Vice Mayor Aslan also expressed appreciation to everyone involved and shared how moving it was to attend the hogan blessing ceremony. He expressed excitement for the development of the Indigenous Cultural Center. He then raised the topic of election and ballot security, stating that the City has an obligation to be well-prepared heading into the upcoming election cycle. He requested an update or report from the Police Chief on preparations in this area.

Deputy County Manager Andy Bertelsen shared that several community events are planned leading up to the election, including a Public Works Open House, an All Ballot Measures Open House at the Aquaplex, and a Health and Human Services Open House in October.

Coconino County Elections Director Eslir Musta spoke about the operational planning for the election. He explained that the Elections Office is working closely with the County Attorney's Office and the Sheriff's Office, which coordinates with local law enforcement to ensure a safe and seamless Election Day.

8. Open Call to the Public

None

9. Adjournment

The Joint City/County Work Session held September 23, 2024, adjourned at 5:09 p.m.

MAYOR

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK