

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Vice Mayor Sweet called the Work Session of the Flagstaff City Council held January 27, 2026, to order at 3:00 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

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

Present: Miranda Sweet, Vice Mayor
Austin Aslan, Councilmember
Anthony Garcia, Councilmember
Khara House, Councilmember
Lori Matthews, Councilmember
David Spence, Councilmember

Absent: Becky Daggett, Mayor

Staff Present: City Manager Joanne Keene; City Attorney Sterling Solomon

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

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

Dennis Givens stated that he was requesting several items to be discussed including revising the noise ordinance to fairly resolve conflicts between a bar and nearby homes, finding middle ground on the city's carbon-neutrality efforts, opposing a new hospital near Fort Tuthill County Park, expanding bus service to Kachina Village, and developing an affordable senior living complex with workforce housing, childcare, and a greenhouse.

Nadine Hart raised safety concerns about motorized vehicles and gas bikes on trails. She reported crashes involving juveniles, near-misses with her daughter and dog, and aggressive behavior in parks. She urged the city to increase awareness, enforce penalties, hold parents accountable, and consider speed limits or fines, citing examples from Las Vegas and Phoenix.

Gwen Groth emphasized valuing local history, particularly the Babbitt House, and stressed that growth involves more than money. She highlighted the tension between city codes and community interests, advocating for compromise, and noted recent support online for preserving the property.

Duffie Westheimer provided a brief history of the Babbitt family and highlighted their contributions to Flagstaff. She advocates for preserving the Babbitt House and provided other educational resources to learn more about the family,

Karen Malis-Clark stated her support for the city purchasing the downtown parcel, seeing it as a win-win that could preserve the Babbitt House. She emphasized learning from past decisions, shared her support with the Heritage Preservation Commission and company AllThrive, and urged the city not to demolish the house, noting the Babbitts' history of donating land for the community.

Nicholas Jones, with deep Flagstaff roots, highlighted the balance between development and preservation. He noted that while early FUTS system projects faced criticism, they are now valued, and warned that removing historic sites for short-term gain undermines the city's uniqueness and long-term sustainable economy.

Charlie Silver urged finding a creative solution to save the Babbitt House.

Alycia Hayes submitted a public comment in support of preserving the Babbitt House.

5. Review of Draft Agenda for the February 3, 2026 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. January Work Anniversaries

Assistant City Manager Shannon Anderson highlighted those employees who have work anniversaries in January.

City Manager Joanne Keene highlighted Assistant City Manager Shannon Anderson for 20 years of service.

Chief Galliard highlighted Firefighter Engineer Paramedic Corey Coplea for 25 years of service.

7. Recognition of work completed by Water Distribution Crew

Water Services Division Director Lee Williams and Field Operations Water Services Section Director Patrick O'Connor provided a PowerPoint presentation that covered the following:

WATER MAIN BREAK -- JANUARY 2026

Vice Mayor Sweet thanked staff for bringing the issue forward and completing the repair quickly.

Councilmember Garcia expressed appreciation for all the work and noted a desire to personally thank the contractor. He also inquired about funding for emergencies and emphasized the importance of ensuring the community knows funds are available for future incidents. Mr. O'Connor stated that funds are set aside for emergencies, including contingencies in the Capital Improvements Program, for situations like this.

Councilmember Spence asked whether the cause of the break had been determined. Mr. O'Connor explained that the water line pull had a different standard, and over time, the push-style joint came apart without evidence of a restraining device. When asked about the material, he confirmed it was asbestos cement, which is no longer used.

Councilmember House thanked the team for the rapid repair and frequent updates, noting appreciation from those impacted.

Councilmember Aslan asked about the frequency of breaks of this magnitude. Mr. O'Connor stated that breaks of this size are rare, with smaller breaks occurring about once a month, and anticipates fewer incidents as improvements continue.

Councilmember Matthews noted the opportunity to observe the repair work firsthand and praised the team for completing it quickly and effectively.

Karen Malis-Clark provided a written comment thanking City departments for their communications to residents.

8. Courtesy Snow Berm Relocation and Snow Hero Program Information

Sustainability Manager Steven Thompson and Parks Manager Gino Leoni provided a PowerPoint presentation that covered the following:

COURTESY BERM RELOCATION AND SNOW HERO PROGRAM DISCUSSION
COURTESY BERM RELOCATION PROGRAM -- OVERVIEW
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
HOW DOES PROSE MANAGE THIS PROCESS?
PROSE SNOW ASSIGNMENTS
PARKS SNOW ASSIGNMENTS
PARKS COURTESY BERM RELOCATION ASSIGNMENTS
SNOW HERO PROGRAM
TO REQUEST A SNOW HERO

TO BE A SNOW HERO
SNOW HERO PROGRAM
RECAP OF PROGRAMS
PROGRAM CONTACTS

Councilmember Matthews expressed appreciation for the programs, noting the positive impact on neighbors and children helping each other.

Councilmember Spence highlighted how the programs align with the City's mission statement and enhance overall quality of life.

Vice Mayor Sweet shared a personal reflection, recalling participating in the program during winter with the Mayor and acknowledging the hard work of neighbors helping neighbors.

Councilmember Garcia praised the community-focused and sustainability elements of the programs and inquired about communication methods for outreach, suggesting neighborhood associations as a potential channel. Mr. Leoni explained that communication for initiatives such as berm relocation comes through emails, mailers, and information posted on the City website.

Councilmember Garcia noted the value of word-of-mouth and expressed excitement for scaling the programs in the future. Mr. Thompson added that Code Compliance also helps with outreach, emphasizing that word-of-mouth remains highly effective, and noted plans to pursue additional contact with neighborhood associations.

9. Open Call to the Public

Tashanna Yazzie spoke in support of changing the name of Columbus Avenue, citing the historical impact on Native Americans. She noted that the current name is considered disrespectful and proposed the name Hozhóóne, meaning "beauty, harmony, and balance," reflecting her personal connection to Flagstaff.

Riley Shapia spoke in support of changing the name of Columbus Avenue, stating that the current name is inappropriate. He emphasized that, contrary to popular belief, the U.S. was already inhabited and claimed by Native Americans. He recommended the name Hozhóóne, which means "beautiful."

Anthony Watson, speaking on behalf of Flagstaff High School and the Native American Club, addressed the renaming of Columbus Avenue. He emphasized that keeping the current name perpetuates historical trauma and causes lasting harm to Indigenous people. He urged the Council to provide a letter of support for renaming and recommended choosing a name that reflects and honors the values of the Flagstaff community.

Ashlynn Arnold stated that she sits on the Indigenous People of Flagstaff Board and is in support of renaming Columbus Avenue. She requested the Council's support, including a letter to send to the state to update maps. She noted that the current name honors a figure who brought harm to the Americas and stated that the community does not stand for retaining it.

Aliyanna Esplain stated that she was also supportive about the name change.

City Manager Keene thanked the commenters and noted that the street name change is within the City's authority. She stated that the matter will be reviewed with staff and brought back to the Council for consideration.

Paige Autumn Collins, Hailey, Julia, Kenan Begay, Christine Odegaard, McKayla, Michele de la Rosa-John, and Valencia Timms provided written comment supporting the renaming of Columbus Street.

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

Councilmember Garcia shared updates on youth engagement, including teaching a motorcycle awareness class at Flagstaff High School. He noted an upcoming Community Development Block Grant community meeting to learn more about grants, a Fire Department awards ceremony later in the week, and a personal trip to the state capital to observe a bill change.

Councilmember Aslan expressed appreciation for the public comments received that afternoon. He stated that he had been contacted by members of the Latter-Day Saints community regarding the protection of dark skies and religious freedoms. He noted that he felt privileged to be part of those conversations.

Councilmember House thanked the young people who came forward to speak this evening and recommended that the topic of the street name change be expedited.

Vice Mayor Sweet attended the Coconino Center for the Arts Theatre unveiling, highlighted the new seating, and announced her appointment as Vice Chair of Mountain Line. She will also travel to Phoenix with Metro Plan Executive Director Kate Morley and Supervisor Geronimo Vazquez for a day of RTAC meetings.

Vice Mayor Sweet returned to a previously missed comment card during the second Open Call to the Public and welcomed up Brent Elmer who spoke regarding the Agassiz name change, noting that while Christopher Columbus is known for his voyages connecting the Old World with the New World, his legacy also includes the devastating impacts of disease, conquest, and the beginning of centuries of colonization. He stated his support for changing the name of Columbus Street.

City Manager Keene stated that while the City previously explored purchasing the north and south portions of the AllThrive property for sale on Humphrey's, it has since stepped back and discussions are ongoing. She wanted to clarify that the City did not propose the entirety of the site as a parking lot and intended to return for further design discussion. She reminded the Council and community that the February 5 budget retreat will provide an opportunity for staff to update Council, and the public is welcome to attend.

11. Adjournment

The meeting of the Flagstaff City Council held January 27, 2026, adjourned at 4:29 p.m.

MAYOR

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK