

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The City Council may consider applicant qualifications for the Council vacancy in executive sessions which are closed to the public, and then make the appointment in a public meeting. You have the right, however, to have your application considered in a public meeting by providing a written request to the City Clerk.

**CITY OF FLAGSTAFF
APPLICATION TO SERVE ON THE CITY COUNCIL**

RETURN TO: CITY CLERK VIA EMAIL AT STACY.SALTZBURG@FLAGSTAFFAZ.GOV

DEADLINE TO SUBMIT APPLICATION: MONDAY, OCTOBER 12 AT 5:00 P.M.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS INFORMATION IS PUBLIC INFORMATION
(personal identifying information will not be released)

DATE: October 8, 2026

YOUR NAME: Aaron Cirzan

HOME ADDRESS: [REDACTED] ZIP: 86005

EMPLOYER: Northern Arizona University JOB TITLE: Director, Academic Support

E-MAIL: [REDACTED]

PHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED] LENGTH OF RESIDENCY IN FLAGSTAFF: 20 Years

Using additional pages, please answer the following questions in 250 words or less, per question:

1. What makes a good Councilmember?
2. What do you think is the biggest issue facing Flagstaff? Give specifics and ideas for addressing the issue.
3. What are your top three priorities for being a City Councilmember and why?
4. What method do you expect to use to make a decision when you believe that there is a segment of the Flagstaff population not being heard on a particular issue?
5. Please give an example of when you were in a position of responsibility and others disagreed with you on how an important matter should be handled. How did you help resolve the issue?
6. What is your leadership style, please provide an example of your style in use.
7. What is your understanding, awareness, and familiarity with the Flagstaff Zoning Code?
8. A key role of the Flagstaff City Council is to adopt the city's budget; how would you balance the seven key community priorities and the realities of the city's financial position with the Council's role of policy development?

I certify that I meet the statutory requirements of living within the corporate limits of the City of Flagstaff for at least one year, that I am over the age of 18 years, that I am a registered voter of the City of Flagstaff, ***and that I have read and understand the right to have my application considered in a public meeting by providing a written request to the City Clerk.***



Applicant Signature

Dear Members of the Flagstaff City Council,

I am writing to express my interest in serving on the Flagstaff City Council. I have called Flagstaff home for more than two decades, built my career here, raised my family here, and have spent much of my professional and public life working in institutions that serve this community. I currently serve as President of the Flagstaff Unified School District Governing Board, and I see this opportunity as a chance to continue serving Flagstaff in a different capacity.

Serving on the FUSD Governing Board has given me firsthand experience with the responsibilities of elected office. As President, I work at the intersection of policy, administration, public accountability, and community expectations. I work closely with district leadership while engaging with families, educators, government agencies, community organizations, and other elected officials. I have learned that good governance requires listening to different perspectives, asking difficult questions, making decisions when there is not consensus, and being transparent about how and why those decisions are made. I also believe disagreement and collaboration should not be opposites. We should be willing to disagree, but once a decision is made, we have a responsibility to respect the process and continue working together.

My professional experience at Northern Arizona University has given me a complementary perspective. As Director of the Academic Success Centers, I lead an operation serving more than 10,000 students annually, supervising 8 full-time staff, 1 graduate assistant, and more than 150 part-time employees within a \$1.5 million portfolio. I oversee programs, budgets, contracts, and personnel and work closely with university finance and procurement. I also coordinate student outreach efforts across more than a dozen departments. Much of that work requires building relationships, working across organizational boundaries, and finding ways to move people toward a shared goal without relying on formal authority.

These experiences have shaped how I think about Flagstaff's future. Affordability and housing would be my first priority. I want Flagstaff to remain a place where people who work here can afford to live here and where families can build a life. That means continuing to expand housing options and workforce housing while also thinking about wages, local businesses, transportation, infrastructure, and the broader cost of living. I would also prioritize supporting families through supporting a strong public school system and building a robust local workforce and economy.

I understand that pursuing these priorities requires difficult choices. My experience on the school board has taught me we must be honest with the community about what we can and cannot do.

My academic background has also prepared me for this work. I hold a PhD and MA in Political Science with a focus in Public Administration and Policy, as well as a master's degree in Educational Leadership. More importantly, I have had the opportunity to apply that education through public service, elected governance, organizational leadership, and work with people and institutions across our community.

I am interested in serving on Council because I care about Flagstaff and believe my experience can contribute to the work ahead. I would bring the perspective of an elected official, public

institution leader, educator, and longtime resident. I would also bring the same approach I have tried to bring to the school board situated in listening first, asking good questions, being honest about difficult choices, and working with people even when we disagree.

Thank you for your consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss my interest in serving on the Flagstaff City Council.

Aaron Cirzan, PhD

1. What makes a good Councilmember?

To me, a good councilmember is someone who is willing to listen, willing to learn, and willing to be transparent with both the community and their fellow councilmembers. Local government works best when people understand not only what decisions are being made, but why.

I also believe good councilmembers need to be comfortable disagreeing with one another. We should each be willing to vote based on what we believe is best for Flagstaff, even when that means being in the minority. But once a decision is made, we have a responsibility to respect the process and work together to move the community forward. I have learned through my time on the school board that disagreement and collaboration should not be opposites.

Most importantly, a good councilmember needs to remember who they represent. Flagstaff is a community with different neighborhoods, perspectives, needs, and priorities. No one person or group has all the answers. The job is to listen to those different perspectives, ask good questions, make difficult decisions when necessary, and be honest with the community about those decisions.

Public service is ultimately about building trust. That trust is earned by showing up, listening, being transparent, and doing the work even when the answers are not easy.

2. What do you think is the biggest issue facing Flagstaff? Give specifics and ideas for addressing the issue.

Affordability. Housing is at the center of that challenge. A Housing Solutions of Northern Arizona assessment released this summer found that monthly expenses for a two-parent, two-child household in Flagstaff are \$663 higher than for the same household in Phoenix. That difference matters for working families trying to make ends meet and remain part of our community.

Flagstaff has made meaningful progress through its 10-Year Housing Plan. As of March 31, 2,351 low- to moderate-income residents had been impacted or supported by the plan. That is real progress, but there is more work to do.

We need to continue expanding incentives for affordable housing, increase the diversity of housing options, and reduce unnecessary barriers that increase building costs. As a school board member, I have advocated for workforce housing while also focusing on increasing wages. FUSD wages remain below the state average despite Flagstaff's high cost of living. Affordability requires addressing both sides of that equation: reducing costs while creating an economy where wages can keep pace.

Affordability also extends beyond housing. Rising costs for groceries, gas, and other necessities are putting pressure on families and individuals. We should look for revenue and investment strategies that do not disproportionately burden those least able to afford them.

Finally, we should find ways to help local residents compete in our housing market and remain part of the community we all call home.

3. What are your top three priorities for being a City Councilmember and why?

My top three priorities would be affordability and housing, supporting families and building a strong local workforce and economy, and responsible growth and infrastructure.

Affordability and housing would be my first priority. As I discussed above, the cost of living is putting real pressure on individuals and we need to continue finding ways to expand housing options, support workforce housing, and make it possible for people who work in Flagstaff to afford to live here.

Families, education, and our local economy are closely connected. I want Flagstaff to be a community where families can build a life, children have opportunities to thrive, and young people can see a future for themselves here. That means supporting strong partnerships between the City, FUSD, NAU, businesses, and community organizations. It also means creating an economy that provides good jobs, supports local businesses, and gives people a reason and an opportunity to stay in Flagstaff.

Finally, responsible growth and infrastructure would be a priority. Flagstaff is growing, and we need to make sure that growth is matched by the infrastructure and services our community needs, including transportation, water, public safety, and climate resilience. I want us to plan for the future without losing the character and quality of life that make Flagstaff such a special place to live.

4. What method do you expect to use to make a decision when you believe that there is a segment of the Flagstaff population not being heard on a particular issue?

When I believe a segment of the community is not being heard, I think my first responsibility is to seek them out rather than expect them to come to me. Public meetings and emails are important, but they do not always capture the voices of people who are working, raising families, or otherwise unable to participate in traditional ways.

I would look for opportunities to engage directly with the people who may be affected by a decision, whether that means meeting with community organizations, neighborhood groups, businesses, schools, or simply talking with residents. I would also want to understand why those voices are not being heard. Sometimes the barrier is a lack of

information, and sometimes people may feel that their participation will not make a difference.

I have tried to take this approach on the FUSD Governing Board by intentionally seeking out perspectives beyond those who regularly come to board meetings or contact board members. That has helped me better understand how decisions affect people differently and, in some cases, has changed how I think about an issue.

Ultimately, listening to an underrepresented perspective does not necessarily mean agreeing with it. It means making sure people know their experiences were considered before I make a decision. My responsibility is to make the best decision I can with a full understanding of the community I represent.

5. Please give an example of when you were in a position of responsibility and others disagreed with you on how an important matter should be handled. How did you help resolve the issue?

One example was the recent renewal of our superintendent's contract while I was serving as President of the FUSD Governing Board. Board members had different opinions about how long the contract should be, and it was important to me that everyone had an opportunity to be heard before we made a decision.

As President, I provided multiple opportunities for board members to respond and discuss their perspectives, including a couple of executive sessions where we could have more candid conversations. My role was not to make sure everyone reached the same conclusion, but to make sure we had a thoughtful process and that each board member had the opportunity to express their position and understand the perspectives of others.

The board ultimately voted 3–2 to renew the superintendent's contract. While the vote resolved the immediate question, some of the contention continued afterward. I worked with board members to remind us of the commitments we made when we first came together as a board, particularly our commitment to respect one another and support the decisions of the board once they were made.

I think that is an important part of leadership. Disagreement is a healthy part of governing, and elected officials should be willing to have honest differences. But we also have a responsibility to the institution and the community we serve. My goal was to help the board work through the disagreement, make a decision through a fair process, and then find a way to continue working together afterward.

6. What is your leadership style, please provide an example of your style in use.

My leadership style is built on trust and transparency with an emphasis on understanding what different people and teams need to be successful. I have learned that effective

leadership does not look the same in every environment. Working with elected officials is different from working with teachers, just as leading direct reports is different from working with colleagues or partners across organizations.

Sometimes leadership means providing clear direction and structure. Other times it means giving people the space and autonomy to lead. When working across organizational boundaries, it often means building relationships, listening first, and finding ways to bring people together around a shared goal. In my current work at NAU, much of my leadership is based less on formal authority and more on building relationships and credibility.

One example is my work with student outreach efforts through my role at NAU. I have worked across advising, academic support, student affairs, information technology, and other areas to improve how we identify and connect with students who may need additional support. I do not have direct authority over many of the people involved, so the work depends on listening, understanding different perspectives, building trust, and helping people see how their individual work contributes to a larger goal.

While my approach changes based on the people and situation, the foundation remains the same. People need to feel respected, informed, and supported. When they do, they are more willing to engage, take ownership, and work together to accomplish difficult things.

7. What is your understanding, awareness, and familiarity with the Flagstaff Zoning Code?

I have an informed understanding of the Flagstaff Zoning Code and the role it plays in how our community develops. I understand that zoning affects how land can be used and developed, including housing density, building types, setbacks, parking, and the relationship between new development and surrounding neighborhoods.

My experience on the FUSD Governing Board has also given me direct experience with zoning and development as the district has worked through the process of building two new schools. That experience has helped me understand how zoning, land use, infrastructure, transportation, and community needs intersect when developing public facilities. I have also followed discussions around housing, development, and growth in Flagstaff, particularly as they relate to affordability and the ability to build workforce housing.

I recognize that there is always more to learn, and I would rely on city staff for technical expertise while asking questions about how proposed changes or decisions align with the City's broader goals. I would want to understand not only what the code allows, but why a provision exists, who is affected by it, and whether it is helping us achieve the community we want to build.

I see zoning as an important tool for balancing growth, neighborhood character, housing affordability, infrastructure, and the long-term needs of Flagstaff.

8. A key role of the Flagstaff City Council is to adopt the city's budget; how would you balance the seven key community priorities.

I believe balancing the City's seven community priorities starts with recognizing that they are all important and that they are also interconnected. Safe and healthy communities, livable neighborhoods, sustainable infrastructure, environmental stewardship, economic development, inclusive community engagement, and effective governance all contribute to the kind of Flagstaff we want to be. At the same time, we cannot give every priority the same level of funding every year.

I would begin by understanding the needs behind each priority, the data available, and what residents are telling us. I would want to understand both the immediate impact of a budget decision and its long-term consequences. I would also look for opportunities to improve efficiency and work across departments and community partners before assuming that additional funding is the only solution.

My experience on the FUSD Governing Board has taught me that difficult budget decisions require being honest about tradeoffs. Sometimes maintaining a core service means delaying another investment. Other times, an investment today can prevent greater costs in the future. I think those decisions should be guided by the City's long-term goals rather than simply responding to the most immediate pressure.

Most importantly, I believe Council has a responsibility to be transparent about those choices. If we cannot fund everything the community wants, residents deserve to understand what we prioritized, why we made that choice, and what we may need to reconsider in the future.

Aaron Cirzan

██████████ Flagstaff, AZ 86005

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public-sector leader with experience in organizational management, public administration, strategic planning, and cross-government collaboration. As Director of the Academic Success Centers at Northern Arizona University, I oversee a complex operation with a \$1.5 million-plus portfolio and more than 150 part-time employees, while advising executive leadership and coordinating initiatives across 12+ departments. As President of the Flagstaff Unified School District Governing Board, I work at the intersection of public policy, administration, fiscal priorities, and community accountability, collaborating with government agencies, Tribal partners, and elected officials. I bring doctoral training in public administration and policy, experience leading complex organizations, and a longstanding commitment to public service across Flagstaff

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Northern Arizona University – Flagstaff, AZ
Director, Academic Success Centers | 2020–Present
Assistant Director | 2017–2020
Coordinator | 2016–2017

- Lead operations serving 10,000+ students annually, supervising 10 full-time staff, 2 graduate assistants, and 150+ part-time employees within a \$1.5M+ portfolio.
- Oversee program delivery across multiple units; establish performance expectations; and guide managers and teams through planning, implementation, and improvement initiatives.
- Implement data-driven practices and evaluation systems to expand access and improve student outcomes.
- Partner with financial team to review quarterly financial statements, reconcile program accounts, and ensure accuracy across state-funded and university-funded budgets.
- Oversee department procurement, ensuring compliance with institutional policy, state requirements, and audit standards.
- Manage 8+ university contracts, collaborating with procurement and legal counsel on contract development, vendor negotiations, and compliance with state-aligned policies.

Executive Appointment – Vice President of Student Affairs Collaboration | 2024–Present

- Permanently appointed to lead Student Affairs outreach strategy for 12+ departments, aligning communication, engagement, and service pathways.
- Facilitate director-level coordination to reduce silos, streamline processes, and meet institutional retention and enrollment goals.
- Advise executive leadership on shifting trends, resource allocation, department capacity, and service innovations supporting diverse and first-generation student populations.

Peer Jacks Mentoring Interim Director | 2022–2024

- Spearheaded major expansion, increasing staff capacity by 150% and growing budgets to over \$500,000.
- Built culturally responsive success initiatives with Indigenous Student Services and DEI partners, improving belonging (+7%) and retention (+5%).
- Established mission alignment, work plans, and reporting frameworks to strengthen accountability.
- Develop training programs, onboarding systems, and performance expectations for professional staff, graduate assistants, and student employees.
- Provide coaching, evaluation, and corrective guidance to ensure accountability, skill development, and continuous improvement.

Gateway Student Success Center Academic Advisor Senior | 2015–2016

- Provided policy-aligned advising and coordinated academic preparation pathways for diverse student populations.

Northland Preparatory Academy – Flagstaff, AZ Department Chair & History Teacher | 2011–2015

- Led faculty collaboration and curriculum redesigns that resulted in a 95% AP pass rate.
- Strengthened school–family–community partnerships and implemented policies improving student engagement.

Flagstaff Family YMCA – Flagstaff, AZ Sports Director | 2009–2011

- Expanded community youth programs tenfold and secured more than \$250,000 in funding annually.
- Developed partnerships with city, nonprofit, and community entities to broaden access to youth services.

Arizona State Parks – Flagstaff, AZ Park Ranger I | 2008–2010

- Interpretive tour guide for the Riordan Mansion; provided public interpretation and created community relations.
- Completed routine maintenance and landscaping work.
- Helped enhance tour guide curriculum to provide broader Flagstaff historical context.

ELECTED GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP

President, Governing Board, Flagstaff Unified School District | 2026–Present

Clerk, Governing Board, Flagstaff Unified School District 2025-2026

Board Member | 2024–Present

- Provide governance and policy oversight to a district serving 8,000+ students.
- Lead board operations and collaboration, advise superintendent accountability, and shape policy affecting curriculum, culture, resource distribution, and student supports.
- Coordinate with state and federal policymakers, Tribal governments, city/county partners, and regional entities to align resources and advocate for public education needs.
- Serve as board representative and spokesperson, fostering transparency and stakeholder trust.
- Leadership role in calling for current override election
- Served on the FUSD bond committee, collaborating with district finance staff on capital planning, voter alignment, and long-range financial strategy.

EDUCATION

PhD, Political Science - Public Administration & Policy — Northern Arizona University

MA, Political Science - Public Administration & Policy — Northern Arizona University

M.Ed., Educational Leadership — Northern Arizona University

B.S.Ed., History & Social Studies Education — Northern Arizona University

CONFERENCE PAPER PRESENTATIONS

- Chirwa, J., Cirzan, A, Su, M., and Macguire, R. (2023). Effecting the Adoption and integration of AI-Based Applications in Public Administration Education. Panelist at the 2023 NASPAA National Conference
- Cirzan, Aaron. (2021). Recapitulation of the America First Agenda with Reference to COVID-19 and the CARES Act. Presented at the 78th annual Midwest Political Science Association Conference.
- Cirzan, Aaron. (2021). Implications of America First Policy on United States Immigration. Presented at NAU PIA Brownbag.

UNIVERSITY COURSES TAUGHT

- FYS 141 - Policy, People and Power (F25, F26) Northern Arizona University
- HON 303 – Honors Advanced Scholarship (F23) Northern Arizona University
- HON 190 – Honors Colloquium (F19) Northern Arizona University
- NAU 120a – Study Skills and College Success (F16) Northern Arizona University

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Arizona School Board Association Legislative Committee Member
- NAU University Leadership Program
- ADE Certified Educator
- NAI Certified Interpretive Guide

REFERECNES

Margot Saltonstall

Vice President of Student Affairs, Northern Arizona University

[REDACTED]

Michale Penca

Superintendent, Flagstaff Unified School District

[REDACTED]

Wendy Bruun

Associate Vice President, Northern Arizona University

[REDACTED]