

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: 10/11/2026

YOUR NAME: Sara Wagner

HOME ADDRESS: [REDACTED] ZIP: 86001

EMPLOYER: Grants that Go the Distance LLC JOB TITLE: Principal/Member

E-MAIL: [REDACTED]

PHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED] LENGTH OF RESIDENCY IN FLAGSTAFF: 20 years, 2 mo.

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.***

Sara Wagner
Applicant Signature

SARA WAGNER, MPH, GPC

Flagstaff, AZ 86001 | 1

City of Flagstaff
211 West Aspen Avenue
Flagstaff, Arizona 86001

October 12, 2026

Dear Mayor Daggett, Vice Mayor Sweet, and Councilmembers,

I love Flagstaff! I am elated to apply for your City Council vacancy. Flagstaff has been my home for the past two decades.

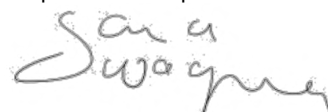
I have resided in the Flagstaff Townsite Neighborhood for the past 18.5 years. I'd be so honored to serve in this capacity, helping realize the City of Flagstaff's vision of being a safe, diverse, just, vibrant, and innovative community with a unique character and quality of life for all. My energy would be a catalyst in advancing economic, environmental, educational, and cultural opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

My strengths align with your mission to protect and enhance the quality of life for all. I genuinely strive to do this wherever I am. My affinity for learning and embracing ways of living different from my own began in the Himalayan foothills of Nepal, where I served as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Upon discovering the richness of cross-cultural immersion, I moved to northern Arizona for my first career position, a federal tenure with the Indian Health Service amidst the Diné. I lived in the heart of the Navajo Nation (Chinle and Inscription House) for over 7.5 years, working closely with community partners (primarily rural chapters) to establish the first hospital-based wellness center, a one-mile walking trail, and array of community-based fitness initiatives.

After relocating to Flagstaff, I was employed by Coconino County for 8.4 years, first as their senior health planner (attaining grants while leading quality improvement efforts), then as the County's first grant writer (securing significant new grant awards from County Manager's Office). It's now been nearly a decade since I launched my woman-owned consulting business, Grants that Go the Distance LLC, to help grassroots organizations bring ideas to life with competitive grant funding. Throughout my career, I have cultivated strong relationships with diverse stakeholders—partnerships that drive impactful initiatives. Technology of Participation® facilitation and strategic planning techniques (through the Institute of Cultural Affairs in the USA) have been vital to my success.

Thank you for considering me for this vacancy. This role would be incredibly meaningful to me. I look forward to my presentation to Council and welcome an interview.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Sara Wagner', written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sara Wagner, MPH, GPC

1) What makes a good councilmember?

A good councilmember listens to constituents and represents their best interests, while balancing City of Flagstaff policies, priorities, and plans. They are passionate, patient, and humble. They value constituent contributions, comments, and concerns—proactively bringing citizen voices to City staff, and vice-versa, helping citizens understand how local government works.

This person is familiar with Flagstaff neighborhoods and nuances existing therein. They have a heart for service and immerse themselves in the community. The councilmember regularly attends gatherings, celebrating community strengths and unique gifts diverse residents bring. They tune in, learning what is most important to the public.

An ideal councilmember serves on City committees and consistently dedicates time to working closely with staff (particularly those who report directly to Council), reading reports (generated by staff from several City divisions and numerous departments), and asking questions. An effective councilmember also understands local, state, regional, and national trends.

They are responsive to community needs (both in-person and digitally, via a wide array of community outreach) and translate complex protocol in easy-to-understand terms for residents. This person is kind, considerate, and approachable—toward the public, private partners, City staff, and visitors alike.

Optimally, councilmembers lead with integrity, dignity, and respect. They conduct themselves professionally, enhancing meetings and other engagement opportunities. They energetically represent City interests, while inspiring citizens to become involved in local government—thereby elevating community aspirations, energizing City initiatives, and advancing goals for all.

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

I feel the biggest issue facing Flagstaff is the high cost of living (roughly 13% to 19% greater than the national average and higher than our state average). A huge contributor is that housing is incredibly expensive for many (running approximately 47% to 53% higher than the national average and among the least affordable housing markets in the state). I would tackle

this issue by building on the City's stellar efforts thus far (from declaring a housing emergency in 2020 to adopting its Ten-Year Housing Plan and passing Proposition 442).

I would be committed to expanding housing opportunities through local programs and policies that create long-term affordability, reduce displacement, and overcome barriers to inclusive development, standing in solidarity with vulnerable community members by supporting housing-first approaches grounded in compassion, dignity, and evidence-based practice—while continuing to work with local housing providers, case managers, nonprofit partners, and advocates who support residents across the housing continuum and help move Flagstaff toward greater resilience, with housing as a foundation of equity and opportunity for all.

The City is doing everything it can to address this issue that is paramount to many. Perhaps collecting community stories, about how individuals and families have experienced adversity in this time of sobering fiscal constraints, would be very powerful. These stories could then be analyzed for common themes, shared, and leveraged to tell the story of our community, toward generating new ideas for tapping existing resources and pursuing fresh opportunities.

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

One priority is leading with integrity while upholding the mission of the City of Flagstaff, to protect and enhance the quality of life for all, because I feel others cannot put their trust in me unless I walk the talk. Another priority is developing positive relationships with the public, staff, community partners, statewide colleagues, and fellow Councilmembers, as relationships are vital to solving problems collaboratively and harnessing resources more impactfully. A final priority is becoming a student of Flagstaff's three neighborhood associations (La Plaza Vieja and Sunnyside Neighborhood Associations, and Southside Community Association), its neighborhoods, and City staff, divisions, departments, committees, boards, and commissions, because one must fully understand all facets of this work—including history—in order to be most effective in this role.

In all endeavors, I would abide by Arizona State Law and the City Code of Conduct. I will attend regular semi-monthly City Council meetings, work sessions, executive sessions, special meetings, and public hearings. I will embody optimal communication, transparency, accountability, teamwork, and excellence in leadership as I support economic, environmental, educational, cultural opportunities, and other community-wide priorities.

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?

I intend to host listening sessions. These may be as informal as meeting at a local coffee shop or taking a walk with a resident to hear someone's perspective. They could be as formal as applying facilitation techniques (I am a trained Technology of Participation® facilitator) to help locals feel heard. I will take their reflections back to Council for deliberation. I will also be responsive to emails, telephone calls, and social media posts, and virtual meeting invitations, compiling perspectives to share with my colleagues. I hope to highlight more expansive ways of thinking about issues during our meetings, should the need arise. In such cases, I would welcome public hearings and special meetings to address specific issues, neighborhood concerns, and so on.

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 resolve the issue?

I was elected to the Grant Professionals Association (GPA) Board of Directors in 2022, with my first three-year term beginning January 2023 and my second three-year term beginning in January 2026. This association represents 4,322 grant professionals (across the United States and in a handful of other countries). Board members are volunteers.

In February 2025, federal Executive Orders disrupted the way we typically conducted business across the grant lifecycle. During this time, those relying upon us (our members) expected the board to advocate for their best interests. However, our Chief Executive Officer had trouble pivoting from business as usual.

A few other board members and I spoke up on behalf of our members. I suggested we (as GPA) host "Friday Forums," via Zoom, to interface directly with our members—as an opportunity to rebuild trust and help them feel heard. This was adapted as our standard practice. It also became a touchpoint from which those of us who felt GPA should be "doing more" built a case (our members shared personal stories, which helped our paid staff understand the challenges those in the field were facing daily).

6) What is your leadership style? Please provide an example of your style in use.

I lead by example. I feel it is important to demonstrate awareness of the responsibility that one signs up for as a leader, and to deliver on expectations of those being served. I am prepared, kind, assertive, reliable, and tenacious. I observe (something I learned as a Peace Corps Volunteer), research, check assumptions, and recommend proactive changes.

An example of my leadership style in use occurred on October 8–9, 2026 when I joined Arizona Center for Rural Leadership Project CENTRL (a program I graduated from in 2022) alumni on the Hopi Mesas for a CENTRL Regional Connection. This opportunity to interface with Flagstaff friends and neighbors, in a deeply-enriching cultural immersion experience, broadened my horizons. I feel that as leaders, we must always tune in to those around us, to understand how they see the world and gain a clearer understanding of what is most important to them. Only then we can we serve in meaningful ways that truly uplift everyone and enhance lives.

I also take advantage of opportunities to attain the highest level of credibility within my field. In my current role as a grant professional, I became Grant Professional Certified in December 2015, via the accredited Grant Professionals Certification Institute—one just six in Flagstaff, 25 in Arizona, and 729 internationally who hold this credential that demonstrates proficiency in nine validated competencies and an array of related skills. Every three years, I renew this credential with evidence of community involvement, continued learning, and service.

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

The Flagstaff Zoning Code was adopted in 2011 to replace a former Land Development Code. It reinforces the unique character of Flagstaff, rather than a “one size fits all” approach used in conventional zoning codes. The Zoning Code also ensures effective implementation of the *Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030 – Place Matters* (General Plan), thereby establishing a foundation for long-term sustainable development within the City.

Throughout the process of rewriting and updating it, residents, City staff, elected officials, and other stakeholders were engaged. The Zoning Code was created for and by Flagstaff residents and reflects the desired future for those who live, work, and recreate in their cherished Flagstaff. The General Plan and Zoning Code are closely linked.

The General Plan establishes the vision for the future growth and development of Flagstaff and its surrounding area through clearly articulated goals, policies, and objectives, while the Zoning Code implements General Plan goals, policies and objectives by providing standards, regulations, and tools for land development. Land within Flagstaff has been classified into one of three types of places: natural places, walkable urban places, and drivable suburban places. This “placed-based” approach promotes the creation of new walkable urban places or encourages the revitalization and preservation of our downtown area and adjacent neighborhoods.

One of the intentions of the Zoning Code is to revitalize existing walkable urban areas and create new ones. Sustainable development principles are interwoven throughout the Code, alongside design and construction practices that encompass long-term economic, social, and environmental considerations for 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 and the realities of the city’s financial position with the Council’s role of policy development?

I would adhere to the six (and in one case, five) objectives fleshed out under each of these seven key community priorities: *Livable Community*, *Environmental Stewardship*, *High Performing Governance*, *Safe and Healthy Community*, *Inclusive and Engaged Community*, *Sustainable and Innovative Infrastructure*, and *Robust and Resilient Economy*. This form of priority-based budgeting is akin to the annual strategic budget process we applied during my 8.4-year tenure with Coconino County.

Regarding policy development as it pertains to fiscal realities, I would rely upon staff reports (that articulate pros and cons of various options) and consider the interplay of the following facets in our decision-making: alternative response model, active transportation, community partners, environmental justice, infrastructure, multimodal transportation, resilient neighborhoods, social equity, social infrastructure, social justice, social services, and trauma-informed elements.

As a woman-owned small business owner who has provided consulting services for city and county governments, nonprofits, for-profits, and businesses nearly a decade, I have been Grant Professional Certified since 2015 and abide by regulations those working with budgets must be savvy in. I encountered my first government budget 27 years ago, when I administered

a federal grant as a Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Program Specialist for Navajo Area Indian Health Service. Likewise, these past 3.8 years serving on the Grant Professionals Association Board of Directors has shown me just how challenging balancing and approving our annual organizational budget can be. That said, I have full confidence in the City's budget team.

Sara Wagner, MPH, GPC

Professional Aspiration

Uphold the City of Flagstaff's Charter as a Councilmember who protects and enhances the quality of life for all.

Work History

Grants that Go the Distance LLC – Principal/Member
01/2017– Current

Coconino County – Grant Writer
11/2011– 06/2016

Coconino County – Senior Health Planner
02/2008–11/2011

Northern Arizona University – Adjunct Instructor
08/2009–05/2010

Kahtoola – Associate
11/2006–10/2007

Indian Health Service – Acting Health Promotion Coordinator
Inscription House Health Center, Kayenta Service Unit
05/2004– 08/2006

Indian Health Service –Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Program Specialist
Chinle Comprehensive Health Care Facility, Chinle Service Unit
02/199– 05/2004

Volunteer Work

Grant Professionals Association Board of Directors (2023–current)

Team Run Flagstaff | Flagstaff Sports Institute Founding Board of Directors

Peace Corps/Nepal Community Health Volunteer Coordinator

✉ [REDACTED]
☎ [REDACTED]
📍 Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Websites, Portfolios, Profiles

- www.linkedin.com/in/sara-wagnerflagstaff
- www.grantsthatgothedistance.com/

Education

Tulane University School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine
(New Orleans, LA)
Master of Public Health - MPH: Health Communications and Education, Maternal and Child Health

University of Michigan School of Public Health
(Ann Arbor, MI)
Graduate Summer Session: Epidemiology

University of Wisconsin-Madison
(Madison, WI)
Bachelor of Science - BS: English Language and Literature/Letters | Specialist in Gerontology Certificate: Institute on Aging

Achievements

Grant Professional Certified (GPC)

Project CENTRL Class 30 (Arizona Center for Rural Leadership)