

MINUTES

OPEN SPACES COMMISSION
MONDAY
AUGUST 24, 2026

HYBRID MEETING
FLAGSTAFF AQUAPLEX
AND [MICROSOFT TEAMS](#)
1702 N FOURTH STREET
4:00 P.M.

1. Call to Order

Chair Thomas called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM.

2. Roll Call

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

Chair Jacqueline Thomas, present

Co-Chair Bruce Fox, present

Commissioner Mary Norton (P&Z Liaison), present

Commissioner William Kluwin, absent

Commissioner Molly Joyce, absent

Commissioner Lina Wallen, present

Commissioner Nat White, present

Councilmember Rep: David Spence, present

Staff present: Rebecca Sayers (PROSE Director), Robert Wallace (Open Space Manager) Sylvia Struss (Open Space Coordinator), Ashlee Fliney (Open Space Educator), Lori Reynolds (Administrative Specialist), Sarah Holditch (Events & Marketing Coordinator)

3. Land Acknowledgment

The Flagstaff Open Space Commission 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.

Read by Chair Thomas.

4. Approval of Minutes, [July 27, 2026](#)

Commissioner Wallen moved to approve the July 27, 2026 minutes as attached. Commissioner Fox seconded the motion. Motion carried.

5. Open Call to the Public

At this time, any member of the public may address the Commission on any subject that is not scheduled before the Commission on this day. The Arizona Open Meeting Law prohibits the Commission from discussing or taking action on an item which is not listed on the prepared agenda. Commission members may, however, respond to criticism made by those addressing the Commission, ask staff to review a matter, or ask that a matter be placed on a future agenda. To address the Commission on an item that is on the agenda, please wait for the Chair to call for Public Comment at the time the item is heard.

Read by Chair Thomas. No comments were received.

6. Business Items

A. Public Safety Propositions 404 & 405 Update

Flagstaff Fire Department Chief Mark Gillard provided an informational presentation on Propositions 404 and 405, two public safety funding measures. Chief Gillard distributed

[informational materials](#) and directed commissioners to a QR code and the [Connect Flagstaff](#) website for additional details.

Chief Gillard explained that City Council established a committee ([Public Safety Citizen's Committee](#)) to evaluate public safety service needs and identify funding options that the community may be willing to support. The process resulted in two proposed measures:

Proposition 404 would increase the City sales tax by 0.5%, from 2.486% to 2.986%. The measure is anticipated to generate an average of approximately \$18.2 million annually for 15 years to support public safety operating expenses.

Proposition 405 is a General Obligation Bond intended for eligible public safety infrastructure and equipment. Chief Gillard explained that bond proceeds cannot be used for ongoing personnel expenses or routine replacement needs, such as replacing existing fire trucks or facilities. Potential uses include fire station expansion, upgraded 911 technology and a Wildland Fire Management Facility.

Chief Gillard discussed several public safety needs that could be supported through Proposition 404, including firefighter cancer screenings related to occupational carcinogen exposure, enhanced emergency medical services, increased airport fire staffing, and additional emergency management capacity.

Commissioner Norton asked how the proposed sales tax increase would affect the overall sales tax rate. It was determined that the combined City, County, and State rate would be approximately 9.836%.

Commissioner Norton also asked whether the City had considered increasing development impact fees as an alternative funding source. Chief Gillard explained that development impact fees are subject to greater restrictions regarding how the revenue may be used and therefore do not provide the same flexibility as sales tax revenue.

Commissioner Norton further asked about future fire station planning in the JW Powell corridor, particularly in relation to development in the area and the proposed hospital. Discussion included the anticipated Station 7 and whether another fire facility in the area could affect that need. Chief Gillard explained that the City would still have responsibility for completing Station 7 because the service need for that area has already been identified.

Chair Thomas inquired whether funding would support activities involving federal agencies. Chief Gillard stated that the measures are intended for local public safety services and would not fund federal projects. He offered to connect her with Police Department staff for additional information.

Commissioner White asked about funding responsibilities associated with City-owned open spaces. Chief Gillard explained that expenditures proposed under Proposition 404 are currently supported through the City's General Fund.

Discussion also addressed wildfire prevention and community resilience. Chief Gillard noted that previous wildfire efforts leveraged approximately \$10 million in local bond funding into more than \$40 million with state and federal resources. As that effort concludes, the City is increasingly focused on wildfire risks within developed areas and urban open spaces. Chief Gillard referenced the Palisades Fire as an example of fire transitioning from vegetation to structures and emphasized hazardous-fuel reduction, home hardening, code provisions, and wildfire-conscious neighborhood design. Proposition 404 could provide resources for these efforts.

Commissioner Norton discussed her experience as a resident leader of a Firewise USA community and suggested that developers establishing new homeowners associations could be encouraged to establish their own Firewise-certified communities before transferring responsibility to residents. This could provide new homeowners with an existing structure for wildfire preparedness and expectations for continued community participation. Chief Gillard supported the concept of HOA participation in community wildfire protection and noted that Firewise has been one of the models promoted locally. He stated that staff are preparing to discuss additional tools

with City Council.

Chief Gillard concluded by encouraging Commissioners to review the informational materials and additional resources available online. He offered to provide contact information for himself and the Police Chief, Emergency Manager, and other applicable contacts at the City for those Commissioners seeking further information about the measures.

B. Observatory Mesa Field Trip Planning

Open Space Manager Robert Wallace reviewed plans for the Observatory Mesa field trip on October 26 from 4:00–6:00 p.m. Commissioners will meet at the Thorpe Park dog park parking area and travel together in the PROSE recreational van to Matson Tank on Section 7 of Observatory Mesa.

The field trip is expected to include:

- A brief overview of the Observatory Mesa trail plan, including project phases and funding for planned trails.
- A short walk to view a portion of a newly flagged trail alignment in Section 7.
- Observation and discussion of existing road conditions along the route.
- Discussion of potential partnership opportunities and possible retention or drainage improvements involving the City's Stormwater program.
- Discussion of unauthorized vehicle use, keeping vehicles on designated roads, and opportunities for coordination with the Coconino National Forest.

Robert reported that City Stormwater staff and at least one Coconino National Forest representative may participate.

Chair Thomas asked how the public would access the remote meeting location. Robert stated that the publicly posted agenda will include GPS coordinates and driving directions, and attendees may drive on roads open to public travel or potentially hike or bike to the meeting location. The meeting will be in person only, and minutes will be taken. Commissioners were asked to notify staff in advance if they cannot attend due to transportation and planning needs.

C. Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Events Division (PROSE) Master Plan Update

Open Space Manager Robert Wallace provided an update on the PROSE Master Plan. Consultant Kimley-Horn is expected to attend the Commission's September 24, 2026 meeting (4 PM at the Flagstaff Aquaplex: 1702 N. 4th St, Flagstaff, AZ 86004) for a progress update and focus-group-style discussion. Robert shared that Commissioner feedback on the project website was forwarded to the consultant, and some recommended changes have been implemented. Kimley-Horn has also begun stakeholder outreach with schools, recreation groups, and other community organizations.

Commissioners discussed participation in the online survey and opportunities to increase responses, including promotion at upcoming community events. Robert noted that Kimley-Horn has participated in events such as National Night Out and plans to attend Science in the Park, with outreach focused primarily on reaching Flagstaff residents.

Commissioner White encouraged the consultant to review historical planning and open space documents to better understand the community's long-term values. Robert explained that Kimley-Horn is already required to review adopted City plans to ensure the Master Plan aligns with existing policies and establishes PROSE priorities for the next 10–15 years. He emphasized that the project is a PROSE-wide Master Plan, rather than a stand-alone Open Space management plan, and encouraged Commissioner White to discuss additional historical resources directly with Kimley-Horn.

Events and Marketing Coordinator Sarah Holditch reported that project posters, flyers, and social media outreach are being prepared. Commissioners were encouraged to assist with distributing and sharing materials to promote community participation.

7. Reports and Updates

A. Council Representative Report, Council Representative David Spence

Council Representative Spence reported that City Council will resume its regular meeting schedule tomorrow following a six-week recess. He stated that, with Council meetings resuming, he will also continue sharing relevant Open Space Commission updates and discussion items with City Council when appropriate. No additional Council updates were provided due to the recent recess period.

B. Planning and Zoning Commission Representative Report, Representative Mary Norton

Commissioner Norton reported that the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) unanimously recommended proposed Planned Community zoning changes move forward to City Council. Commissioner Norton highlighted the proposed 20% common or preservation space requirement as a potential improvement over current master-planned communities, while noting continued concerns about the amount of flexibility provided.

She also reported on a rezoning involving an approximately three-acre parcel near Picture Canyon. The site plan identifies commercial/industrial development, while acknowledging the need for additional Picture Canyon parking and access. If the rezoning moves forward, the City may eventually need to purchase a portion of the property to establish public access or parking.

Robert reported that the City's Real Estate Division has been communicating with the property owners regarding the City's interest in a trail connection and additional parking. Shared parking associated with the planned fire training facility may also be an option.

C. Open Space Management Report, Robert Wallace and Sylvia Struss

Sylvia Struss provided several updates on upcoming Open Space programs, events, and volunteer opportunities.

- Arbor Day: Planned celebration on August 25th, planting trees and constructing protective enclosures for them at Picture Canyon, followed by an Arbor Day proclamation at the City Council meeting that afternoon.
- Upcoming full moon hike: Scheduled for Thursday, August 27 at 6:15 p.m. from Thorpe Park along the Mars Hill Trail.
- Arizona Watchable Wildlife Experience mushroom walks were fully booked with waiting lists.
- Weed Pull Wednesdays: The final one of 2026 is scheduled for Wednesday, September 2nd from 7:00–10:00 a.m. at Picture Canyon, although the location could change to McMillan Mesa.

Robert noted that a portion of the FUTS trail from the Mars Hill/Thorpe Park area toward Section 7 will temporarily close the following month to accommodate logging and forest-thinning activities.

PROSE Director Rebecca Sayers announced that Robert Wallace has been promoted to Open Space Manager for the City of Flagstaff. The position was established through the current year's budget process and completes the PROSE Division's leadership reorganization. She also announced that Ashley Flaney's Open Space Education Specialist position has transitioned from a contracted, grant-funded position to a permanent, full-time City position.

D. PROSE Monthly Newsletter ([July 2026](#))

8. Informational Items To and From Commissioners and Staff

Robert provided a follow-up to concerns raised by commissioners at a previous meeting regarding electric motorcycles, golf carts, and other motorized vehicles being used on the FUTS trail system.

Robert reported that he forwarded the Commission's concerns to the City's Engineering Division. Engineering staff are considering opportunities for a public education and marketing campaign regarding appropriate and permitted trail use on the FUTS system.

9. Potential Future Agenda Items

The Commission discussed dedicating its September meeting to the PROSE Master Plan, with Kimley-Horn attending for a focus-group-style discussion. The meeting was originally scheduled for September 28, but Chair Thomas indicated she would be unavailable. The Commission identified Thursday, September 24 as a potential alternative date.

Post Open Spaces Commission meeting: PROSE staff confirmed that the date change would work and has posted the new time for the public. Although the meeting is intended as a focused discussion between Kimley-Horn and the Commission, it remains a public meeting and members of the public are welcome to attend and participate.

10. Adjournment

Chair Thomas adjourned the meeting at 5:31 PM.