



MINUTES

WICKENBURG COMMON COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

**Monday, September 15, 2025 - 3:00 P.M.
155 N. TEGNER - COUNCIL CHAMBERS
WICKENBURG, ARIZONA 85390**

A. CALL TO ORDER – Mayor Bratcher called the meeting to order at 3:07 PM

B. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor BG Bratcher
Vice Mayor Brian Jones
Councilmember Shawn Clark
Councilmember Margaret Nyberg
Councilmember Rebecca Rovey
Councilmember Art Rubash
Absent: Councilmember Kristy Bedoian
Staff Present: Troy Smith, Town Manager
Jon Paladini and Justin Pierce, Town Attorney
Tim Suan, Deputy Town Manager/Economic Development
Steve Boyle, Community Development Director
Amy Brown, Town Clerk
Les Brown, Police Chief
Robert Martinez, Finance Director
Tarah Mayerhofer, Human Resources Director
Ed Temerowski, Fire Chief
Herschel Workman, Public Works Director

C. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Discussion and Direction to Staff Regarding Release Dates for Council Packets

Amy Brown, Town Clerk, reported that she is here to discuss the release date for the Council packets. The current process is as follows:

- Council receives draft packet 13 days prior to the meeting
- Final packet released 6 days prior to the meeting (Tuesday before Monday meeting)
- Staff deadline is 19 days prior to the meeting
- Attorney has the weekend to review
- Town Manager reviews packet with Council between draft and final packet

- Mayor included in weekly Executive Team meeting to review items and presentations

She surveyed other clerks in Arizona with 30 responses stating the following:

- No one has a draft and final packet – Started in September 2022
- All release the final packet to the Council and public at the same time
- Average deadline for staff submittal is 13 days prior to the meeting
- Average release of packet is 6 days prior to the meeting
- Some meet with the Mayor to review the agenda prior to release

The proposed new process includes:

- Discontinue the release of the draft packet to the Council
- Move the deadline for agenda items to be 14 days prior to the meeting
- Give the attorney all week to review instead of only over the weekend
- Town Manager will have a week to meet with Council to review prior to release
- Review with the Mayor will still be on the same date, 13 days prior to the meeting
- Final packet will still be released 6 days prior to the meeting, usually on Tuesday prior to the Monday meeting

Mayor Bratcher preferred the packet to be out on Monday to give more time for review.

Councilmember Clark preferred the shorter timeframe as outside entities must have their information submitted about 30 days prior to the meeting to make the deadline.

Town Manager Smith stated that if we take out the draft packet, this will reduce the deadline timeline. In addition, it is a burden to have two packets that are usually edited between. The Mayor is now attending the agenda setting meetings and sees the presentations to provide feedback as the Council representative. Council should be able to read the staff report to find out the history of the item, why this is coming and the result of a decision. If we move the date up to Monday for the release, there is more chance of having to amend the agenda before the true state deadline of 24 hours prior to the meeting. Town Clerk Brown added that usually the final details are ironed out on Monday, with the release on Tuesday.

Consensus of Council was to not have a draft packet and to keep the release date on Tuesday if that is the most efficient for staff.

2. Discussion and Direction to Staff Regarding Scheduling Council Study Sessions

Amy Brown, Town Clerk, stated that there are several topics that require a thorough discussion with Council which means more study sessions. Study

sessions give Council time to learn about the item, ask questions of staff, and then seek public input. This also allows Council time for research prior to a formal vote. The goal is to set a schedule for the study sessions for 2026 so everyone can put them on their calendar. Council set the dates of September 15, October 20, and November 17 for study sessions for the remainder of 2025. Staff recommend continuing the schedule for 2026 on the third Monday, starting at 3:00 pm, prior to the regular meeting. The plan will be to skip January, July, August and December.

Consensus of Council was to follow the recommendation of Council for the third Monday of the month at 3:00 PM for the study sessions.

3. Discussion and Update on the Proposed Annexation Strategy for the Town of Wickenburg

Steve Boyle, Community Development Director, stated that the Council currently doesn't have an annexation strategy and it would be a good idea to have one. Annexation is the process of expanding the town's boundaries. It also supports growth through increased public revenues such as sales tax, bed tax, property tax, and state-shared revenues. Those increases in revenue can partially fund essential town services, but usually annexing an area costs the town money.

The purpose of an annexation strategy is that it:

- Establishes clear framework & priorities
- Aligns with Section 2-7 of the Town Code
- Fulfills an objective in the strategic plan for the Town Council
- Ensures strategic, beneficial annexations
- Reinforces 2045 General Plan Goal LU-12

The legal requirements for annexation include:

- Area must be contiguous to town boundary (min. 300 ft)
- Minimum width: 200 ft (excluding right of ways)
- Length less than 2x width of boundary (shape)
- Petitions: ≤50% property owners & ≤ 50% assessed value
- State Trust Land needs Selection Board approval (not regular meetings)
- Federal land annexation allowed without federal consent

The town should evaluate each annexation including the following criteria:

- Ability to provide service within 10 years - Road and utility infrastructure
- Fiscal impact analysis (cost vs revenue)
- Consistency with the 2045 General Plan & Strategic Plan
- Zoning compatibility
- Community support & engagement
- Road upgraded to town standards
- Subdivision infrastructure improvement before annexation

- Square off Town limits; reduce peninsulas
- Target areas with tax revenue potential
- Prioritize large, contiguous areas
- Opportunities for Town gateway signage
- Include revenue-generating commercial properties

The town's size doubled since 2005 to 27.23 square miles or 17,400 acres. The municipal planning area (MPA) is 434 square miles and is regulated by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG). There are a few areas that staff have identified as possible priority areas, but an annexation strategy will help with determining what is best for the town. The areas are:

- Southeast along US-60 – There are code enforcement and police concerns with this area, but it would provide some commercial and square off an area.
- Southwest including Rancho de los Caballeros – This area is mostly built out with their own water company and private roads. There is sewer to the high school, and this would be potential revenue.
- Flying E Ranch & I-11/US-60 Intersection – This is a potential growth area. State land is in that area also, which takes time, and they always want the highest zoning and development with infrastructure.

Usually in a large annexation there is a pre-annexation and development agreement that is set up as was done for Wickenburg Ranch. This would be used for commercial or large residential projects. Pre-annexation agreements aren't recommended for individual residential parcels.

For each annexation, the staff needs to look at the fiscal impact including:

- Project growth & land use
- Assess demand for services
- Estimate revenues (sales, property tax, etc.)
- Calculate infrastructure & service delivery costs – The town should have a plan for infrastructure with it supposed to be to the area in ten years. That is primarily for new development, so if it is existing homes, you don't have to have a plan for infrastructure.

Vice Mayor Jones asked if annexing more areas would help with receiving more water rights. Town Attorney Paladini stated that annexation doesn't give you more water rights but means more residents that you are required to provide with water. The town is not in the Active Management Area (AMA) for water, so since the town's water comes from an aquifer, it is a matter of who has the deepest well and who is up steam. It would be hard for the City of Surprise to annex toward Wickenburg to get water from the aquifer to transport into the AMA. The Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADEQ) regulates the water in Arizona.

Vice Mayor Jones asked if anyone could annex to our town limits. Director Boyle stated that it is unlikely that anyone would annex beyond the AZ-74 due to the terrain.

Mayor Bratcher asked if the town could increase the MPA to have more notice of what is going on close to us, so can our MPA cross over Buckeye and Surprise's MPAs. Town Attorney Paladini stated that you can't cross into someone else's MPA, so they would have to cede the area to take it into our MPA.

Director Boyle stated that in the past there was no strategy for annexation, so if someone came to the town, it was brought to the Council, and they were annexed without looking at the benefit to the town. If an area is within the town limits, the town controls what happens. If it is in the MPA, then it is the county that controls and votes on what is happening, the town just gets notified.

Mayor Bratcher stated that Councilmember Bedomian could not make the meeting but wondered about town code 2-7-2 that says that annexed areas need to be included in the town's CIP. Town Attorney Paladini stated that if an area is annexed, it needs to be considered with all the other parts of town in the CIP budget. It doesn't mean that they get water, wastewater, or new roads, it depends on the money that is in the budget. Usually, you want to get development to pay for the infrastructure. The town should analyze if there is a return on investment that meets the needs of the town.

Town Manager Smith stated that an annexation strategy sets up guardrails to be able to screen applicants. The town needs to be able to have a strategy to engage with a person to see if it is in the town's best interest to add that area to the town.

Consensus of Council was to work on the policy and take it through the process of the Planning and Zoning Commission and then finally Council for approval.

Council took a break from 4:24 PM and returned at 4:31 PM.

4. Discussion and Update on Short-term Rental Registration and Regulation Methods

Steve Boyle, Community Development Director, reported that Senate Bill 1168 allows cities and towns to regulate short-term rentals (STRs) in Title 9-500.39 but cannot prohibit STRs. The town can require them to have permits and there can be regulations to balance neighborhood impact. Currently the town doesn't regulate them, but Wickenburg doesn't have the issues that places like Sedona have with party houses and police calls in neighborhoods. If the town wants to regulate them, there is a lot of work that goes into setting up the internal processes. Short-term rentals (STRs) are defined as rentals for less than 30 days in a house where they pay sales tax, such as with Airbnb or Vrbo.

The regulation of STRs includes:

- STR permitting
- Compliance with zoning, safety & nuisance standards
- Owner/emergency contact disclosure - This is on a website so the police have access but also the public can contact an owner if there are problems.
- Neighbor notification of STR use – usually for adjacent properties
- Prohibition of illegal/harmful uses
- Suspension of permits & civil penalties for misuse

Wickenburg would look at the following regulations:

- Annual STR registration fee \$250 (standard)
- Fines: starting at \$500 for non-compliance
- Licensing: valid TPT + local business licenses required
- Regulations regarding individuals with criminal history
- Owners maintain renter background records (1 year)

There are approximately 80 STRs in Wickenburg, which could mean a potential revenue of \$17,000 annually at the full fee, however there will be a cost of about \$11,000 annually for software to track the STRs. There could be a net positive revenue but there will be more workload on staff to monitor and issue the permits. To put it in perspective, Sedona has 1,200 STRs versus Wickenburg's 80. As far as staff were able to tell, there have been no complaints regarding STRs in the past few years.

The software will do the following:

- Property identification
- Emergency contact tracking
- Online registration & notifications
- Fee collection & compliance notices
- Compliant management
- Liability insurance verification
- Background check tracking

If the Council wants to move forward with STR tracking and regulations, it will involve the following departments:

- Community Development- zoning and permit review, code compliance
- Finance – fee collection, licensing
- Police- enforcement, incident response

Staff will bring a STR registration process to the Council through the adoption of an ordinance, possibly in December. If approved by the Council, staff would then start the process of setting up the systems and software. This will mean that the town is being proactive in getting ahead of any problems. Most of the communities have been reactive in coming up with the regulations after they have problems. Many communities have STR specialists.

Vice Mayor Jones asked if this is necessary and why it was brought up. Town Manager Smith stated that this was due to a policy conversation with the Mayor. The question is whether the rest of the Council wishes to have staff work on this process to develop the regulations. The revenue that was stated would be at the maximum cost for a license of \$250. If the Council decide to only charge \$100 annually, then it would not be a revenue generator.

Many of the Council didn't want more government regulations and fees, but it would be good to get ahead of any problems. Consensus of the Council was to move forward with the ordinance, which will give the Council time to get input from the public.

D. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** - (Council May Vote to Go Into Executive Session Pursuant to A.R.S §38-431.03(A)(3) to Receive Legal Advice from the Town Attorney on Any of the Above Agenda Items.)

E. **ADJOURNMENT**

MOVED BY Councilmember Rebecca Rovey to adjourn at approximately 5:26 PM

SECONDED BY Councilmember Kristy Bedian

VOTE: 7 – 0 (Yes – Mayor Bratcher, Vice Mayor Jones, Councilmembers Bedoian, Clark, Nyberg, Rovey, and Rubash)

BG Bratcher, Mayor

ATTEST:

Amy Brown, Town Clerk

CERTIFICATION

I, Amy Brown, the duly appointed and qualified Town Clerk of the Town of Wickenburg, do hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the study session of the Town Council of Wickenburg, Arizona held on September 15, 2025. I further certify the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Amy Brown, MMC
Town Clerk