

PRESCOTT CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 2017
PRESCOTT, ARIZONA

MINUTES OF THE STUDY SESSION MEETING OF THE PRESCOTT CITY COUNCIL
HELD ON APRIL 11, 2017, in the COUNCIL CHAMBERS located at CITY HALL, 201
SOUTH CORTEZ STREET, Prescott, Arizona.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Oberg called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present:

Mayor Oberg
Councilman Blair
Councilman Lazzell
Councilwoman Orr
Councilman Sischka
Councilwoman Wilcox

Absent/Excused:

Mayor Pro Tem Lamerson

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Annual US Forest Service Fire Threat Briefing

Dennis Light, Prescott Fire Chief, introduced Sarah Tomsy, District Ranger, Pete Gordon, Staff Officer, and Jeff Andrew, of the U.S. Forest Service. He said they would provide the Council with a general overview of the wildfire season.

Pete Gordon showed a PowerPoint presentation on the following slides:

- Prescott National Forest Integrated Wildfire Risk

Mr. Gordon showed a map used to show the probability of where a fire might occur.

- Fuels Treatments = 1st Step in initial attack.

Mr. Gordon said this would be used for firefighter's safety and the safety of communities.

Ms. Tomsy said they reminded the firefighters and especially the new firefighters they were Federal land managers and did the best they could to manage the natural resources. That would come into play when they were put in difficult positions when they responded. She talked about the Indian Fire and the fuels treatment. She thanked the City and the surrounding communities for their collaboration and continued support

for the fuels treatment.

Mr. Gordon spoke about the collaboration it took to provide safety to the firefighters so they could protect the communities.

- Prescott National Forest – Conditional Net Value Change

Mr. Gordon explained the trade off and the net effect was in benefits and risk of assessment when investing in the fuels treatments.

Ms. Tomsy talked about the areas that had fuels treatments and the added benefit to have the fire back on the ground, she said it had a beneficial effect on the eco-system.

Councilman Sischka asked for clarification on the “fire back on the ground”.

Ms. Tomsy said the Forest Service had been operating under the idea of, put the fire out as quickly as possible. They were trying to protect the timber, but after years of putting every fire out as quickly as possible they were actually destroying the rejuvenating process of nature.

- Lighting Fire: Let it Burn fire.

Mr. Gordon said regardless of the ignition source of a fire the first and foremost concern was for the safety and protection of the firefighters and the community.

Councilman Lazzell asked about lighting strikes in remote areas and who made the decision to let it burn.

Mr. Gordon said there were many variables that went into it. He said Ms. Tomsy and the officers had the authority to make those kinds of decisions. The officers were trained for this and the communication efforts from all involved.

Ms. Tomsy said it was a collaborative effort and dialogue.

Councilman Lazzell asked if it was more organic than what was written in a book.

Ms. Tomsy responded yes; it depended on the conditions, resources, and other different factors.

Mr. Gordon shared that his worse fear would be a fire five to eight miles outside of Prescott on the worst day, where they did not have fuel treatments in place.

Ms. Tomsy mentioned they were doing landscaping management and forest restoration across the forest, which helped keep the forest healthy.

- PNF Weather State Precipitation

Mr. Gordon said the precipitation had been good this year.

- Drought

Mr. Gordon said the only area with moderate drought was in the southeast.

- PNF Fire Activity – 2016

Mr. Gordon said it should be greening up and the grass growth was going to show. He said the 30 plus years of collaboration had been great and hoped it would continue.

- National Aviation Resources

Mr. Gordon said the priorities were nationally contracted and they have a great network in place.

- Prescott national Forest Resources

Mr. Gordon said they were part of national resources. He said all the resources would be up and running and now they were able to accommodate a jetted fleet.

Councilwoman Orr said she was involved in the clean-up effort and one of the items they found more than anything was cigarette butts.

Councilwoman Wilcox said one of the most serious problems that Prescott had was sediment in the creeks. She asked if the Forest Service was studying that process and the effects of the erosion and sediments in the creeks.

Ms. Tomsy said before they could do anything like that they would have to do an analysis of those types of effects in the creek. Once they made their determination and did any kind of treatment they would continue to study and ensure what they thought was happening was happening, and if there were having detrimental effects they would make the necessary changes. They would continue to expand their analysis which would include the watershed health in the water quality and the quantity.

Councilwoman Wilcox said they really needed their collaboration on the water quality issues.

Mr. Gordon talked about the alternative of not doing anything in the watershed.

Councilman Sischka asked if there was an ideal number for the number of pines per acre.

Ms. Tomsy responded yes, that they were overstocked in the Prescott area. They were doing restoration in the area to keep the forest healthy.

Councilman Sischka asked if there was fire in the ladder fuels, and how resistant were the pines.

Ms. Tomsy said it depended on the health of the forest at the time of the fire.

Councilman Blair asked if they ever went back to look at past fires like the one from 1972 when the Big Bug fire occurred and how often did they go back and evaluate them.

Ms. Tomsy said that any time they had a particularly large fire they would take a look at what they needed to do differently and how to restore the eco system.

Mayor Oberg asked if they had worked quite a bit with National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) on the south and the west side of the forests.

Ms. Tomsy responded, most of it was currently under NEPA, the areas were the Verde Ranger, the east end of the forest and the Prescott Basin area, and by 2018 they would be done with the Chino Valley Ranger District area. They were looking into new technology to be able to bring up items from hard to reach locations in order to log them in. This would also be helpful when they did the biomass utilization as they would be able to get to the product easier. She said that almost all the forest area would be under NEPA.

Mayor Oberg said one of the things he had heard in the past was they would do archeological studies and that had to be done in conjunction with NEPA. He asked if they had the money and the resources to be able to do these studies.

Ms. Tomsy responded that they did not have sufficient funding to do this, but they were going to do broader surveys in the future and they would be asking for more funding for those types of studies.

Councilman Sischka talked about the Yarnell Fire. He mentioned the communication lapse at times and asked about the level of confidence, and what would be used in order to communicate efficiently with other agencies like Prescott Fire.

Mr. Gordon said the confidence level was very high. He said there was a long rich history in the Prescott Basin of collaboration and cooperation with training. He mentioned they would be doing the Basin off trail which was a 20-year old event and encouraged everyone to attend as this would demonstrate how the communication and the cooperation of the firefighters worked.

B. Presentation on the Water and Wastewater Utility Replacement Program

Henry Hash, Public Works Director, introduced the item and turned it over to Eric Bay, Senior Infrastructure Analyst.

Mr. Bay presented a PowerPoint Presentation with the slides:

- Basis of this Presentation

Mr. Bay said they were replacing the infrastructure. There would be huge numbers on

the cost, and said not to be too alarmed as the cost would be spread over many decades.

- Why Do We Replace Our Assets

Mr. Bay said they had various ages of infrastructure, and the main concerns were focused on the health and safety of the community and the expense of an emergency situation for repairs.

- Existing Water System

Mr. Bay said there were many different project sizes. The total estimate for the whole replacement would be about \$548 million and the cost would be divided over several decades; the numbers were averages. The numbers would help them decide what infrastructure needed to be fixed. They would need to incorporate quality infrastructure for it to last for years to come. The water system would cost about \$274 million to replace and what they did was divide it up over three different plans. 50, 60, or 70 year plans. He summarized the total of water and wastewater costs over the three plans:

- 50 year plan estimated cost per year \$16.5 million
- 60 year plan estimated cost per year \$13.5 million
- 70 year plan estimated cost per year \$11.5 million

Mr. Bay said this would ensure the assets were good and usable. He said they needed to be smart about the replacement cost and needed to install quality infrastructure in order for this to last for decades.

Mayor Oberg asked if the current infrastructure would fit any of the three plans.

Mr. Hash said the short answer was no. The money was something they did not have. They did have a good system in place and all the work they were doing was paid as they went, and the cost was built into the rate. Starting in July they would have to look at the rate structure every three years. The system that was installed was the best they could do at that time.

Mayor Oberg asked if they decide to pick one of the plans, would they need additional funding.

Mr. Hash responded yes, they had borrowed \$24 million that went towards the centralization and this was from the direction of Council. The rest of the money would have to be built into the rate.

Mayor Oberg asked if the centralization project had anything to do with what the presentation was today.

Mr. Hash responded yes, the centralization project did replace various older and smaller parts of the system.

C. Legislative Update

Tyler Goodman, Management Analyst, presented on the Legislative updates.

SB1329 was regarding the fire flow requirement. He said the sponsor pulled the bill as there was not enough collaboration from the stakeholders.

SB1371 had to do with hotel ownership for cities. This would not affect the City, the sponsor said they would exclude Charter Cities from this bill.

HB2477 the Civil Asset Forfeiture. He said it would make it harder to seize assets. He said it was on the governor's desk and the governor was not sure if he would sign or veto it.

HB2410 & HB2161 dealt with cancer and workman's compensation. He said it looked like it would be going through without a problem.

Mayor Oberg said since this could increase the City's workman's compensation cost the League of Cities and Towns might be litigating some of the cost, and asked Mr. Goodman to touch on that subject.

Mr. Goodman said Senator Fann had been running a couple of bills SB1332 and SB1407. SB1332 would allow a full and final settlement on a workman's compensation claim to shorten the time it would take to settle. On SB1407 this would allow public employers to allow and direct care of workman's compensation claims as they were allowed in the private sector. The liability would still be there.

SB1063 was the PSPRS risk pooling for Tier 3 and it was moving forward, and was expected to pass.

Governor's Budget/ABOR for Universities

Mr. Goodman said there was no news yet. He said it did not appear that there was support from the Legislature on this.

Mayor Oberg asked about SB1063 and if they still had the other two tiers. Mr. Goodman responded yes.

Councilwoman Wilcox asked about SB1063 and if this one was pooling the risk for the smaller entities.

Mr. Goodman responded yes, this was for the members of PSPRS if there were 253 members or less. He said the City would fall into that category.

Councilwoman Orr asked how many members were in that category.

Mr. Goodman responded he did not know, but would look into it and get back to the Council with the information.

Sandra Smith, citizen, addressed the Council. She asked if they were asking for proof on the cancer bill that the cancer was directly associated to the job.

Mr. Goodman said it asked if it was presumed for occupational diseases if the firefighter received a physical exam aligned with the National Fire Protection Association standards and that they were not associated with smoking and tobacco product outside the scope of their duties.

Jon Paladini, City Attorney, said there were very few that were actually service related; it was an uphill battle to establish a workman's compensation cancer disease.

Mayor Oberg thought he saw something in the bill that indicated if it was presumed it was from fire inhalation then workman's compensation had to prove that it was not.

Mr. Paladini said they would have to look back at the history of the firefighter and tobacco use. Tobacco use overcomes the presumption and other factors. He said when a new firefighter came on board they would get a baseline cancer screening to determine if that person was free of cancer.

4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to be discussed, the Study Session Meeting of April 11, 2017, adjourned at 2:17 p.m.

HARRY B. OBERG, Mayor

ATTEST:

DANA R. DeLONG