



City of Prescott

City Council - Study Session

September 9, 2025 | 1:00 PM
201 N Montezuma Street
City Council Chambers, 1st Floor
Prescott, AZ 86301

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Phil Goode - Mayor
Connie Cantelme - Mayor Pro Tem
Lois Fruhwirth - Councilwoman
Ted Gambogi - Councilman
Patrick Grady - Councilman (Excused)
Brandon Montoya - Councilman (Excused)
Eric Moore - Councilman

3. DISCUSSION

- A. Presentation & Discussion Regarding Possible Updates to the Prescott City Charter for Approval at a Future Election.

City Clerk Sarah Thornhill provided a brief presentation to the Council regarding the existing Charter language which calculates the majority in the city's Primary Election by total number of valid ballots cast. This process has been used by the city since the 2011 city election, but does differ from the manner in which the state calculates majorities. Ms. Thornhill informed the Council that since this charter language was adopted, eight elections have been conducted with two runoffs being required due to zero candidates receiving a majority of valid ballots cast. Similarly, she reviewed the Charter language that existed from 1983-2010, and said that during that time thirteen elections were conducted with three runoffs being required due to zero candidates receiving a majority of votes. Since 1985, five elections have been conducted without the need for a runoff. Two under the former Charter language and three under the current language. She also reviewed information provided by Laurin Custis, the Yavapai County Elections Director, regarding tabulation of ballots and votes. Before the Council at this time is whether to direct staff to work on amending the Charter language, and if they choose to provide direction to revise the language, how they would like to see that done.

Mayor Goode commented that he wondered if the County can tabulate votes versus ballots.

City Attorney Joseph Young responded that they can tabulate votes and ballots but cannot give a specific number on the undervotes.

Councilman Moore commented that part of the problem with the current system is that all of the debates, forums, campaigning, etc. is done prior to the Primary Election, and nothing is done between the Primary and the General Election. This is not a city issue, it is a community issue, but makes it to seem to him that there needs to be an adjustment to the Charter to make it so there isn't a runoff.

Mayor Pro Tem Cantelme stated that some people voted for none of the Council seats, and therefore are applying "blank" ballots to the Council. She added that the language "for that office" appears as a problem to her.

Mr. Young responded that it does add ambiguity. Staff needs to know if the Council wants to change "ballots" to "votes" and if so, whether or not they want the "for that office" included. Would it be possible to have the language updated to something that makes it so that the highest vote getters are duly elected in the Primary.

Councilman Gambogi commented that the focus in elections is on the candidates and the ballot measures. We are here because there are candidates gaming the system with single or double shooting votes. He would like to keep it the way it is but clean up the language a bit.

Councilwoman Fruhwirth stated that she believes the Primary exists to to whittle things down, it serves a purpose. She doesn't think that the candidates got to the voters enough this year, if a majority of the community doesn't determine a winner they should go to a runoff. She doesn't want to change the Charter in a major way but does want to clarify the language. Prescott is a microcosm of everything that is going on across the nation, most people don't want to put themselves through being a candidate or being on Council.

Mr. Young commented that if the language is changed to a "vote cast" it would still require 50%, the Council calculation is different than the Mayoral because you are dividing by the number of seats. A change would reduce the amount of runoffs the city would have and would give more value to an undervote.

Councilman Moore stated that is exactly what we don't want to do is increase the value of an undervote, it reduces the overall numbers for everyone and skews the numbers.

Mayor Goode commented that he looked at elections going back 25 years and when there are a lot of candidates taking the top three it doesn't make sense.

Councilman Gambogi discussed a runoff between Ken Bennett and Perry, and one was the fourth highest vote getter, the other the fifth but then both were elected in the runoff. There is definitely a downturn after the Primary Election in forums, but the RWOP group is having one coming up. Would like to see more candidates be involved, can learn a lot between the Primary and General Election.

Member of the public Jay Ruby addressed the Council and stated that he urges the Council to amend the Charter and stop repeat elections. The Charter needs

clear language regarding multiseat elections. In 2015 the state legislature approved calculation language and it effectively tallies the votes for multiseat elections, the Biggs-Fann formula would've given the same results to elections but saved money on the repeat elections. The Council could propose a Charter amendment and put it forward to the voters, or the citizens can do so through an initiative.

Member of the public Jim Garing addressed the Council stating that the Charter language is plain and unambiguous, he discussed with Laurin Custis and she asked how many ballots were cast for Council specifically so the Charter cannot be complied with. State statute is also plain and unambiguous but does have a very specific calculation.

Member of the public Cathey Rusing addressed the Council and agreed that the Charter should be changed. As a voter, this is frustrating and it costs the city time/money, the Charter should reflect state language. Need to bring in the word "plurality" method, choice with the most voice wins for Council seats. Top three vote getters should be elected in the Primary.

Mayor asked for a poll of Council on whether to keep language the same or change to votes

- * Councilman Gambogi stated that he wants to keep the calculation as is, but reword to make it clearer how it is done

- * Councilwoman Fruhwirth agreed

- * Councilman Moore stated that he wants the Charter to align with state statute

- * Mayor Pro Tem Cantelme agreed with Councilman Moore and added that she would like the language further revised to remove "for that office"

- * Mayor Goode stated that Charter should align with state, and it should be based on votes and not ballots.

Mr. Young stated that staff can begin working on the language and then move it forward for Council review.

This item was for discussion only. No formal action was taken.

B. Presentation & Discussion Regarding an Update on the Willow Lake Management Plan.

Environmental Project Manager Jeremy Cordova and Southwest Decision Resources Consultant Lisa Clark provided the presentation regarding the Willow Lake Management Plan.

Mr. Cordova reviewed the background of Willow Lake:

- * 1912-1914 - Willow and Watson reservoirs constructed

- * 1935 - Willow Creek dam built

- * 1935-1965 - channel connecting Watson to Willow was constructed

- * 1998 - operational plan for Watson and Willow Lakes drafted, city acquired land and water from Chino Valley Irrigation District, Watson & Willow Lake Master Plan developed

- * Unique values at Willow Lake - stores city water (5,980 acre feet capacity), provides recreation like fishing/non-motorized boating/birding/hiking/more,

supports wildlife species and riparian habitat, most visitors are local

Need for Plan:

- * Watson & Willow are on the same plan but are very different
- * Coordinate Departments - clear direction to city staff
- * Meet city goals - address low water levels, water quality, sediment, vegetation management, wildlife habitat
- * Engage the community - better meet community needs and educate visitors

Ms. Clark continued the discussion, regarding the process and approach for the Willow Lake Plan.

Southwest Decision Resources Relevant Work:

- * Verde Front Sustainable Recreation Collaborative
- * Greater Prescott Trails Planning
- * Greater Chino Valley Collaborative
- * Central Yavapai Metropolitan Planning Organization
- * Rio de Flag Watershed Planning
- * Sedona Community Plan
- * Lower Gila River Collaborative

Management Plan Approach:

- * Assessment of the lake
- * Partner and Public Engagement
- * Drafts and Revisions
- * Adoption and Continued Collaboration
- * Focus - maintaining unique values of Willow Lake, improving inter-departmental coordination, building lasting relationships with key partners, sharing information with the public and continuously creating a usable plan for city staff to reference

Mayor Goode asked about the background in working with this consulting firm.

Mr. Cordova responded that it would be highly unlikely that a RSOQ would garner any additional responses and therefore a direct contract was appropriate because of the broad and varied nature of building this plan. Don't anticipate dramatic changes in management and implementation should be rather simple.

Mayor Goode added that he wants to ensure that there are measurable phases and improvements in this implementation.

Next Steps:

- * Steering Committee standing meetings
- * Working groups kickoff site visit September 18
- * Council Engagement - next Study Session will be on the draft plan content

Councilman Gambogi commented that it would be beneficial to have some metrics on the benefits of each of the recommendations for their proposals.

Councilwoman Fruhwirth asked for confirmation that approval and implementation doesn't rest with Council.

Mr. Cordova responded that staff would seek guidance from the Council on adoption of the plan, and how the department would handle that.

City Manager Dallin Kimble stated that the Council will adopt the plan and then departments will be managed from there.

Councilman Moore stated that he has many feelings regarding this habitat. There is a lot of biomass there and much of it is very unhealthy. Staff need to look at serious issues like mowing when the water is low and different methods for handling these issues. He is pleased to see that a management plan that is separate from Watson is being developed.

Member of the public Susan Drown addressed the Council regarding the southwest canopy forest area of Willow Lake. This plan is comprehensive, and she is excited about that, but the endangered species in that area needs to be paid attention to. People come to see those birds and be in that area. It is a unique and important asset and a huge economic driver.

Councilman Moore commented that he is concerned that Recreation Services is not here for this discussion, it is a red flag to him.

Mr. Cordova commented that the team had previous engagements and were not able to attend.

Mayor Pro Tem Cantelme suggested a birding festival here in Prescott.

This item was for discussion only, no formal action was taken.

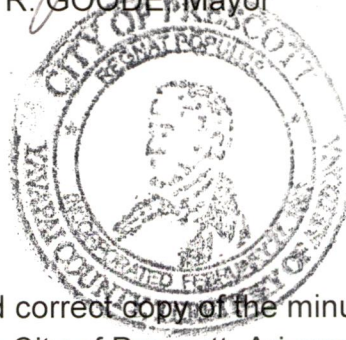
4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Mayor Goode adjourned the meeting at 2:16 p.m.

ATTEST:

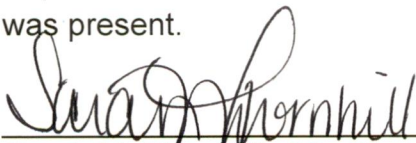


SARAH M. THORNHILL, City Clerk


PHILIP R. GOODE, Mayor

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Voting Meeting of the City Council Voting Meeting of the City of Prescott, Arizona held on September 9, 2025. I further certify the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.



Sarah M. Thornhill, City Clerk