

City of Prescott Tourism Advisory Committee



January 14, 2026 | 11:00 AM
201 N. Montezuma Street
Council Chambers, 1st Floor
Prescott, AZ 86301

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Christensen called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Margo Christensen - Chair
Matt Brassard - Vice Chair (Excused)
Tamara Burks - Member
Robert Coombs - Member
Jim Dawson - Member (Excused)
Dennis Gallagher - Member
Edd Kellerman - Member
Autumn Kline - Member
Nick Medina - Member
Michael Pantalone - Member

3. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS

A. Approval of the October 8, 2025 Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes.

MOTION BY MEMBER KELLERMAN TO APPROVE OCTOBER 8, 2025 MEETING MINUTES; SECONDED BY MEMBER GALLAGHER: PASSED (8 - 0).

B. Presentation & Discussion Regarding the Special Events Funding Policy.

Director of Economic Initiatives John Heiney introduced Deputy City Manager Michael Morris, who presented an overview of the proposed Special Events Funding Policy.

Mr. Morris explained that the policy is intended to establish a clear, consistent, and equitable process for funding events, with defined criteria and accountability. He outlined a tiered system based on attendance and impact, including Tier A events with over 5,000 attendees, Tier B with approximately 500 attendees, and Tier C events with minimal impact.

Mr. Morris further explained the three funding categories: City Events funded through the General Fund; City Marketing Sponsorship Events supported by tourism funding; and TAC Grants for Events funded by Bed Tax revenues. He clarified that City Events are community-focused and should not be funded with tourism dollars, while City Marketing Sponsorship Events are large, non-City events that help build Prescott's brand and attract visitors from outside a 90-mile radius. These events must meet defined thresholds for attendance, tourism tax generation, and marketing impressions, and must provide post-event reporting. Funding would be capped at 50% of generated taxes, up to \$80,000, with an additional in-kind services cap of \$40,000, and would require an economic impact study shared between the City and event organizer.

Mr. Morris reviewed examples including Arizona's Christmas City, Whiskey Off Road, and the World's Oldest Rodeo, and explained variations in funding and in-kind services.

Member Medina asked whether funds awarded through tourism grants must be spent specifically on marketing.

Mr. Morris confirmed that the structure remains unchanged and that tourism grant funds must continue to be used for marketing purposes.

Councilman Jay Ruby referenced the City Marketing Sponsorship Events section of the presentation, noting that Whiskey Off Road was shown as receiving \$70,000, including \$40,000 in in-kind services, while the World's Oldest Rodeo was shown as receiving \$40,000 with no in-kind services. He asked for clarification on the discrepancy.

Mr. Morris explained that the equal sign shown on the slide was a typographical error and clarified that the Rodeo does not receive in-kind services because those services are already included due to the event being held on City property.

Member Kline reconfirmed that awarded dollars must be spent on marketing and asked whether this requirement would be reflected in reporting.

Mr. Morris confirmed that both points were correct.

Member Kline then asked about the relationship between event attendance and funding contributions for the three major events presented, and why Arizona's Christmas City and Whiskey Off Road receive significantly more funding than the World's Oldest Rodeo.

Mr. Morris stated that this disparity is one of the primary reasons the Special Events Funding Policy is being proposed, noting that the goal is to establish a fair and consistent framework moving forward.

Member Kellerman asked for clarification on the criteria required to qualify for a City Marketing Sponsorship grant.

Mr. Morris restated the criteria, including a minimum of 5,000 attendees from outside the Prescott area (90+ miles), generation of at least \$100,000 in tourism and tax sales, and at least 1,000,000 social media impressions.

Member Kline asked where the Summer Concert Series would fall within the proposed framework.

Mr. Morris deferred to Mr. Heiney for clarification.

Mr. Heiney explained that the Summer Concert Series currently receives tax dollars and is grandfathered through existing contracts. He added that tourism funding supports both visitor attraction and quality of life for residents, and therefore the concert series will continue to be funded as a tourism grant.

Chair Christensen noted a typographical error in the TAC Grants and Events section of the draft policy, stating that the listed grant range of \$1,000 - \$5,000 was incorrect. She also asked whether TAC members would have the opportunity to review post-event reports.

Mr. Heiney stated that reporting is reviewed by staff and that the information can be shared with the Committee upon request.

Mr. Heiney then shared written comments from Member Dawson, who expressed support for the proposed Special Events Funding Policy and recommended it for approval by City Council. Member Dawson's comments also shared professional experience from his role as Vice President of Marketing for an urban mixed-use development in Kansas City, where a similar ABC event categorization system was used to strategically allocate resources based on economic and branding impact. He stated that the approach allowed high performing events to receive greater support while still maintaining funding for other events and offered to share that program with City staff if helpful.

Mr. Morris requested guidance from the Committee on whether there were any additional recommendations to forward to the City Council.

Chair Christensen confirmed that the item did not require formal action.

Mr. Heiney stated that no vote was necessary and that any comments or feedback from the Committee could be shared at Council.

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

C. Presentation & Discussion Regarding Mid-Year Transient Occupancy (Bed) Tax Updates.

Tourism Manager Mike Kelly presented the Mid-Year Transient Occupancy (Bed) Tax Report and explained that expenditures are currently at 52% of the budget, which aligns with being halfway through the fiscal year. He noted that several line items appear as "N/A" under tourism expenditures due to those costs being related to salaries, contracts, and other items not individually reported.

Mr. Kelly stated that this mid-year update was provided for transparency and that a final report will be presented at the end of the fiscal year.

Mr. Kelly explained that the current fund balance is at the lower end, estimated at approximately \$373,610, but could be as high as \$520,000 due to the one-month lag in sales tax reporting.

Member Coombs asked whether the Visitor Center and Christmas support listed under line item two referred to Arizona's Christmas City.

Mr. Kelly confirmed that it did and invited feedback on the report format, as well as suggestions for additional information the Committee would like to see included in future reports.

Chair Christensen asked for confirmation of the fund balance.

Mr. Kelly confirmed the fund balance currently is \$373,610.

Chair Christensen then asked whether the remaining fund balance could roll over into the next fiscal year.

Mr. Kelly confirmed that it could.

Chair Christensen asked about the utility bills for Sharlot Hall and whether that topic could be discussed further at a future meeting.

Mr. Kelly confirmed that it could.

Chair Christensen also asked whether the Downtown Beautification program had been removed from the budget.

Mr. Kelly explained that it had previously been included in the Contingencies line item but is no longer reflected there.

Mr. Heiney further clarified that the Downtown Beautification program has not been eliminated, but that Bed Tax funding is not currently available to support it. He stated that Public Works will cover the program through the end of FY26 and that it is anticipated to be added back into the tourism budget in FY27.

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

4. UPDATES

A. Staff Announcements & Updates

Staff from the Tourism and Recreation Services Departments provided the following updates to the Committee:

- Mr. Heiney introduced Economic Development Manager, Tricia Lewis, highlighting her role in business retention efforts and ongoing outreach to local businesses.
- Marketing and Tourism updates were presented by Tourism Coordinator Arley McMains, including website and social media analytics, Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT) co-op updates, and marketing performance highlights.
- Website and social media analytics were reviewed, with discussion regarding elevated international traffic from China and Singapore, which Chair Christensen noted may be attributed to Arizona Office of Tourism promotions.
- Mr. Heiney shared that the New Year's Eve Boot Drop achieved the highest CNN New Year's special ratings in the past 10 years.
- Airport updates were provided, including year-end enplanement and deplanement data, proposed runway expansion pending FAA feedback in January 2026, a forthcoming benefit-cost analysis, a \$3.5 million grant for a parking ramp, and a submitted grant application for terminal improvements focused on accessibility, safety, and family travel experience.
- Upcoming TAC Board vacancies were announced, including Chair Christensen, Vice Chair Brassard, Member Kellerman, Member Medina, and Member Pantalione, with applications due January 30 at 5:00 p.m.
- An update was shared regarding City Clerk efforts to revise governing documents to allow committees to select their own Chair and Vice Chair beginning in February, pending clarification on whether this applies to all committees or TAC only.
- Chair Christensen announced her intention to step down after nine years as Chair, encouraged current members to apply, and committed to assisting for one year with STAR reports, sales tax reports, and agenda items.
- Council Liaison updates were provided by Mayor Pro Tem Fruhwirth, including new responsibilities related to committee staffing, the launch of "In Case You Missed It"

Council meeting recap videos, and the first City-sponsored State of the City address scheduled for January 15.

- Strategic Plan updates were shared, noting an upcoming off-site Council and City leadership review and emphasizing the significant role of TAC and Tourism in Phase Two focused on Economic Development.
- The Tourism Annual Meeting was confirmed to have been rescheduled to March 12, 2026.
- Sales and STR updates were presented, including confirmed bookings for the Arizona Building Officials Conference for three years, additional conferences, potential future events, and the introduction of the Datafy dashboard for tracking visitation, length of stay, and visitor spending.
- Tourism updates included FY27 TAC Grant timelines, upcoming Route 66 events hosted by the 21st Century Car Club, and America 250 planning efforts tied to Statehood Day and Liberty Bell programming.
- Grant updates were provided, noting the resolution of the TCB Whale Decompositions TAC Grant following eligibility changes due to a Council appointment.
- Recreation Services updates were shared, outlining the 2026 sporting events calendar, new tournaments, events scheduled during slower seasons, and an estimated \$5 million economic impact for 2025.

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

B. Committee Member Updates

Mayor Pro Tem Fruhwirth and Committee Members provided the following updates:

- Member Pantalione requested a future discussion regarding signage to promote City branding and increase sales, including a proposed five-year plan addressing the five major entrances into the City of Prescott, beginning with Highway 69.
- Chair Christensen confirmed the signage topic may be added as a future agenda item but could not be discussed at the current meeting.
- Member Burks shared that she is hosting the City of Prescott State of the City Address this Thursday and noted an upcoming large Bridal Expo.
- Member Gallagher announced the scholarship recipient reception scheduled for February 1 at the Hotel St. Michael Lobby Bar, noting tickets are available online and at the Center, and highlighted the diverse backgrounds of scholarship recipients.
- Member Medina provided an update on the Edison Market, stating there are several interested buyers as the business moves toward a sale.
- Chair Christensen shared that local hospitality activity was strong over the holidays, with properties selling out over New Year's and Christmas, and noted continued momentum into the New Year with the Potter's House Convention.

- Member Kline reported ongoing store updates and remodeling to introduce new offerings and features based on customer feedback, with plans to share more details at the next meeting.

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

5. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Chair Christensen adjourned the meeting at 12:11 p.m.

ATTEST:

Margo Christensen, 2/11/20
MARGO CHRISTENSEN, CHAIR

Arley McMains 2/11/2020
ARLEY MCMAINS, STAFF LIASON