

City of Prescott
Council Subcommittee on Water Issues



February 3, 2026 | 9:30 AM
201 N Montezuma Street
Council Chambers, 1st Floor
Prescott, AZ 86301

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Rusing called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Chair Rusing
Member Fruhwirth
Member Garing

3. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS

A. Approval of the December 2, 2025 Council Subcommittee on Water Issues Meeting Minutes.

MOTION BY MEMBER FRUHWIRTH TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER 2, 2025 MINUTES; SECONDED BY CHAIR RUSING: PASSED (3 - 0)

B. Presentation & Discussion Regarding the 2022 Amended Water Management Policy - Current Residential & Non-Residential Water Budget Overview for January 1, 2026, through January 22, 2026.

Water Resource Manager Brian Ruiz provided an update on the water budgets. The Amended 2022 Water Policy (Guidelines 11–13) establishes a semi-annual water budget for residential and non-residential projects. For the period January 1, 2026, through June 30, 2026, the budget is 25 acre-ft/year for residential projects and 25 acre-ft/year for non-residential projects. Between January 1 and January 22, 2026, no new residential projects were approved administratively or by Council, and no residential water was allocated. The full residential budget of 25 acre-ft/year remains available. During the same period, two non-residential projects were approved administratively, allocating a total of 0.22 acre-ft/year. The remaining non-residential budget is 24.78 acre-ft/year. One project was approved under an existing contract: a new single-family home in the Forest Ridge at Hassayampa subdivision. Projects approved under existing contracts are not counted toward the water budget and are provided for reference only.

Chair Rusing asked how long it takes to get a water service application approved.

Operations Manager Will West stated that 15-days is the standard for a single-family residence project.

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

- C. **WSA25-060:** Water Service Application Submitted by Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Location: A Portion of APN 106-03-004, Comprising 240 Acres, in T14N, R02W, Section 03, SE 1/4.

Mr. Ruiz discussed a Water Service Application for a 16-unit campus housing project located on the Embry-Riddle campus west of Willow Creek Road. Under the Amended 2022 Water Management Policy, a Water Service Agreement application was submitted for review of estimated water usage and approval of water service. No formal planning application is required per the Land Development Code. The application includes a basic site plan and vicinity map identifying the project location within the campus. The project consists of four dormitory-style buildings with four residential units each, totaling 16 units. City staff prepared a demand analysis using residential multipliers from the Water Resources Management Model. Estimated indoor water use for the residential buildings is 1.92 acre-feet per year. The proposed landscaping includes approximately 5,000 square feet of turf and low-water-use plants consistent with the Prescott AMA Fifth Management Plan. Turf water use is estimated at 0.25 acre-feet per year, and low-water-use landscaping is estimated at 1.0 acre-foot per year, for a total anticipated project water demand of 3.17 acre-feet per year. Key milestones include application receipt on November 19, 2025; application deemed complete on December 9, 2025; Water Issues Subcommittee review on February 3, 2026; and City Council consideration scheduled for March 10, 2026.

Chair Rusing commented on the project and asked for clarification on the turf calculation.

Mr. Ruiz clarified the calculation.

Chair Rusing asked for more details on why so much turf is in the plan.

Embry-Riddle Representative Deena Magana spoke and advised that the plan was created by the engineer and could be adjusted if needed.

Member Fruhwirth expressed concern with the inclusion of turf in the proposal, noting that the city is investing in programs to encourage residents to remove turf and conserve water. She stated that approving ornamental turf would be inconsistent with those efforts, especially since previous dorm projects presented to the body used low-water landscaping. She indicated she had no issues with the remainder of the proposal, aside from the turf.

Member Garing agreed with other Subcommittee Members.

Member of the public Jay Ruby asked whether the project design includes stormwater catchment features, noting it could serve as a model for the community, and that Embry-Riddle may have the resources to implement such a system. He also inquired whether measuring captured stormwater could potentially reduce the project's annual water use in acre-feet.

Member Fruhwirth asked if we have a stormwater capture program.

Mr. Ruiz responded that the city does have stormwater requirements in place, which are currently based on a volumetric approach focused on mitigating increased runoff to prevent downstream flooding impacts. He noted that this differs from the concept being discussed, which would involve using stormwater more effectively to offset potable water use.

Chair Rusing suggested reviewing the city's water management policy to consider incorporating requirements for stormwater capture, such as catchment basins or measures to prevent runoff into streets and reuse it for landscaping.

MOTION BY CHAIR RUSING TO RECOMMEND FORWARDING WSA25-060 TO COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL WITHOUT WATER FOR THE TURF; SECONDED BY MEMBER FRUHWIRTH: PASSED (3 - 0)

D. Presentation & Discussion Regarding an Update on the PFAS Treatment Study.

Public Works Utilities Manager Steve Olfers provided the presentation. This item is a follow-up discussion by City staff regarding the December 2, 2025, Water Issues Subcommittee (WIS) presentation. The presentation will address Subcommittee questions, provide updated information on the status of the PFAS study, and reference background materials from the December meeting. Mr. Olfers explained that the current focus is on returning Well 5 to operation, as it is a high capacity well that would significantly reduce pressure on other wells once PFAS is treated and removed. He stated that a study is underway to evaluate solutions, with the city engaging Dibble as a consultant to help turn ideas into practical processes. He noted that a hydrogeologic evaluation and draft report have provided valuable insight into subsurface conditions, and that particle tracking modeling has improved understanding of groundwater sources, movement, and potential mitigation strategies, which will be forthcoming.

Member Fruhwirth asked why Airport Well No. 5 has higher concentrations of PFAS compared to the other wells.

Mr. Olfers responded that the consultant's report will include all those specific details, and they hope to have the report in front of council within the next six months. He continued the presentation and stated that staff are currently evaluating PFAS treatment alternatives, reviewing available technologies and considering affordability and operational feasibility, noting that each option has pros and cons. He explained that a draft treatment evaluation document has been received and is under review, with comments being returned to the vendor, after which a hydraulic analysis will be conducted. He emphasized that adding a treatment system affects system hydraulics due to head loss and must be analyzed to ensure the airport water system can continue operating under normal conditions. He added that the evaluation will also inform needed airport infrastructure upgrades. Mr. Olfers noted that a final roadmap report will compile all findings into a comprehensive document, which will be presented to the Committee upon completion.

Chair Rusing asked for more information on the treatment options available.

Mr. Olfers responded that they did a detailed evaluation of the options available

and have come to find that Ion Exchange looks like the best option with the information available today.

Member Garing commented that he is interested in the Ion Exchange but has concerns about the regeneration of the resin.

Mr. Olfers clarified that the manufacturer does not require regeneration of resin.

Member Garing commented on his experience and asked if the city is looking at exactly where the PFAS is located or what layer it might be coming from.

Mr. Olfers explained that depth sampling has not been conducted for Airport Well No. 5. He noted that depth sampling was performed at Chino Well No. 3 while it was offline to determine the source of PFAS, but results showed contamination throughout all aquifer layers. Based on those findings, staff did not pursue depth sampling for Airport Well No. 5, as there was no conclusive layer that could be isolated or blocked.

Member Garing asked if we know how much PFAS is in our wastewater effluent that is being used for recharge.

Mr. Olfers replied they have not been regularly tested, but are exploring as there is no guidance yet from the EPA and ADEQ.

Chair Rusing agreed that it is important. She added that Airport Well 5 is located near the end of the runway and recharge ponds and wondering if the location has to do with the high PFAS levels and might need to relocate Well 5 not downstream from a recharge location.

Member Garing agreed and would like to find a well without PFAS.

Mr. Olfers added that if a good treatment is found for Well 5 it will essentially be cleaning the aquifer since it is such a large well.

Mr. Olfers continued the presentation, advising that the consultant would also conduct virtual and in-person meetings, including City Council and a public meeting. The study is expected to take approximately one year and will provide data to support future policy and infrastructure decisions. In October 2025, ADEQ notified the city of available funding to assist with PFAS treatment system development. Water Operations is currently reviewing additional scope items to be funded through ADEQ for inclusion in the existing consultant contract. Chair Rusing summarized the City's actions so far and doing their best to keep water safe.

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

- E. Presentation & Discussion Regarding a Progress Report on the Long-Term Water Management Plan.

Water Resource Project Manager Leslie Graser provided a progress report on the Long-Term Water Management Plan (LTWMP) to the Council Subcommittee

on Water Issues. All consultants for the project are under contract, and a kickoff meeting with the infrastructure consultant was held on January 20, 2026. Updated project information, including the 2024 Baseline – Conservation fact sheet, is available on the city website and Participate Prescott. Council and Subcommittee meetings have been scheduled at key milestones, and interdepartmental coordination is ongoing. Ms. Graser reported on consultation meetings held with multiple City departments to align the LTWMP with the City Council Strategic Plan FY2025–2029. Coordination included meetings with Airport, Economic Development, Community Development, and Recreation Services to address public safety needs, infrastructure improvements, economic development, workforce housing, and natural environment goals. The Water Resources Management Model (WRMM) has been updated to reflect new facilities, airport-related development, housing needs, and recreation planning efforts.

Chair Rusing commented that she was asked to be a part of the County's Water Resource and Open Space Management Committee and is excited to work on regional cooperation with water.

Member Fruhwirth asked if Council could have a chance to look at all the documents before it comes down to decision-making time.

Ms. Graser agreed and will confer with the Department Director to coordinate. She continued the presentation, which included an overview of WRMM data analysis related to the City's current and future water obligations. Existing water customers are represented using color coding specifically different than additional growth associated with known contractual obligations to understand future demand potential. Examples were shown for areas within Prescott, portions of unincorporated Yavapai County, Chino Valley, state trust land, and several major development agreements and intergovernmental agreements, including Deep Well Ranch, AED North and South, and Stringfield Ranch. These analyses are being used to verify water obligations tied to existing contracts and long-term planning assumptions.

Chair Rusing asked if the city is required to supply water to the State Land.

Ms. Graser responded she will bring back more details at a future meeting.

Chair Rusing commented that Stringfield Ranch has an additional adjacent clause in their Development Agreement, as do a few others. She would like to look at not including that clause in future agreements. She also asked if some of this information be included in the General Plan including a detailed map.

Member Garing agreed that the future water commitments are very important to know.

Member Fruhwirth commented that she is happy with the amount of detail going into future water use.

Chair Rusing clarified if the LTWMP looks at just one area or multiple, including

Big Chino Water Ranch.

Ms. Graser replied that Big Chino will be initially addressed in the phase one document with other alternative supply options such as Advanced Water Purification. A more extensive evaluation including cost estimating of alternative water sources will be conducted in Phase 2 of the water planning.

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

4. GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM STAFF

Water Resources Project Manager, Tracie Beasley, provided an update on Water Conservation and introduced an ad that is now placed in the Prescott Relocation Guide. Also, the second Eye on Water event was held with 40 plus citizens in attendance.

Mr. Ruiz provided an overview of the 80th annual Colorado River Water Users Association (CRWUA) Conference, which convened water leaders, managers, tribal representatives, federal officials, and stakeholders to discuss the future of the Colorado River. The dominant theme of the conference was a negotiation deadlock, as Basin States have been unable to reach a long-term water management agreement for post-2026 operations. Discussions highlighted significant divisions between the Upper Basin and Lower Basin states regarding future water allocations and management strategies. Next steps include continued negotiations in Washington, D.C., with the goal of reaching a “deal in principle” by February 14, 2026.

Mr. Ruiz also addressed High Water User Definition. He outlined key considerations for regulating large-volume water users, including the City’s authority to limit or condition water service, existing and projected water supply constraints, and implications related to the designation of Assured Water Supply. Discussion also included how large-volume water users may be defined, such as by peak daily demand, seasonal demand, annual demand, or a combination of these measures. Potential regulatory requirements discussed included the adoption of conservation plans and “bring your own water” provisions for large-volume users. Staff noted that several Arizona municipalities have adopted Large Water User ordinances. Cities identified include Chandler, Avondale, Gilbert, Marana, Mesa, Peoria, Phoenix, Tempe, and Tucson.

Member Rusing commented she would like to add the high water user definition and questions to the water application. Do they contribute, do they provide high-paying jobs and contribute to the TPT.

5. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Chair Rusing adjourned the meeting at 11:10 a.m.

Cathey Rusing

CATHEY RUSING, Mayor

ATTEST:

Torey Dawson

TOREY DAWSON, Deputy City Clerk