

City of Prescott

City Council - Study Session



February 24, 2026 | 1:00 PM
201 N Montezuma Street
City Council Chambers, 1st Floor
Prescott, AZ 86301

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rusing called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Cathey Rusing - Mayor
Lois Fruhwirth - Mayor Pro Tem
Mary Frederickson - Councilwoman
Ted Gambogi - Councilman
Jim Garing - Councilman (Excused)
Patrick Grady - Councilman
Jay Ruby - Councilman

3. DISCUSSION

- A. Presentation & Discussion Regarding the City of Prescott Historic Preservation Master Plan Update.

Planning Manager Alex Bramlette provided a presentation to the Council regarding the existing Historic Preservation Master Plan (HPMP) and upcoming updates on the plan. She began with a review of the local historic preservation districts, of which there are thirteen, including: 1) The Courthouse Plaza; 2) Edmund Wells Residence; 3) Elks Opera House/Theater; 4) Ft. Necessity; 5) Hassayampa; 6) Pine Crest; 7) Prescott Armory; 8) Rev. E. Meany Residence; 9) Sam Hill Warehouse; 10) Santa Fe Depot; 11) Southeast Prescott; 12) Union Street; and 13) Historic Homes at Hassayampa. In addition to the local historic preservation districts there are national historic preservation districts.

Purpose of the HPMP:

- * State clearly the goals of historic preservation in Prescott
- * Clarify the meaning and content of the Historic Preservation Ordinance
- * Establish criteria to avoid arbitrary decisions by government
- * Let current and future property owners and residents know in advance how Prescott intends to grow and what the community wants to protect
- * Address issues related to zoning, traffic patterns, tourism, design and pressures that may impact existing historic and potential historic districts

Goals:

- * Preserve and maintain sites and structures that serve as significant visible reminders of Prescott's past
- * Preserve the character and livability of Prescott's neighborhoods

- * Integrate historic preservation more fully into Prescott's planning system
- * Contribute to the economic development and vitality of Prescott by encouraging restoration work, adaptively reusing buildings to improve their viability and economic contribution and promoting tourism related to historic resources

Next Steps:

- * March 2026 - complete RFP
- * April-June 2026 - send out RFP, interview consultants and make selection
- * June-August 2026 - consultant onboarding, finalize public participation plan and timeline, finalize public participation plan/timeline, review the updated draft HPMP to ensure consistency, maintain quality of information and reformat
- * Update the ordinances and design guidelines
- * September-December 2026 - public outreach, open houses and community events
- * Plan for three open houses in different geographic areas because of the significant number of historic districts
- * January-May 2027 - public hearing process through Prescott Preservation Commission (PPC) and Council
- * June 2027 - adoption of the new HPMP by Council

Mayor Rusing thanked staff for working on this update after 30-years without updates. There are some loopholes that need to be closed particularly with the area around the Courthouse Plaza area, half the properties around the area are considered "non-contributors" but this area needs to be protected. She added that parking issues and height also need to be addressed with these updates.

Councilman Gambogi concurred that there should be very specific guidelines to avoid the emotional arguments that have come with project proposals.

Councilwoman Frederickson asked about the difference between guidelines and requirements in the plan as it exists now. She would like to make sure that the HPMP and the guidelines are all in agreement.

Mayor Pro Tem Fruhwirth commented that this has been a long-time coming, and so she wants to make sure that this stays on track and get this done. Also, she would like to make sure that legal reviews all the documents along the way through this project so things are not ambiguous. She added that if any area in particular needs to be prioritized, she would like to see it be the Courthouse Plaza area.

Councilman Grady asked about the entertainment district and the historic district around the Courthouse and whether that is local or national. He also asked about updates to the LDC.

Ms. Bramlette responded that it is both local and national. The General Plan and this plan are the priority right now and the neighborhood plans will be a different project. The LDC will be later in 2027.

Mayor Rusing asked if it is possible to make amendments to parking requirements before this is completed. She also asked if there could be a

uniform zoning ordinance around the Plaza.

City Attorney Joseph Young responded that it is possible and added that the Council has an item coming before them in March related to that topic already. He added that the definition of a contributing property can be looked at as well to make sure that it is clear in the requirements.

Ms. Bramlette added that the baseline zoning district height is 50 ft maximum, and 48 ft in historic districts, so there are some ambiguities regarding that issue that will be addressed. Everything surrounding the plaza is downtown business district zoning.

Councilman Ruby asked for clarification of "contributor" versus "non-contributor".

Ms. Bramlette responded that they have gone through the application process through the state and then granted, not all buildings in a district are contributors. Whether you are a contributor or not, you still have to go through the PPC process.

Mayor Pro Tem Fruhwirth added that she likes the facet of the plan that calls for restoration work, and she would like to see the ability of there to be clear standards but still some flexibility so that it is workable for people. There is a fine line between the Courthouse area and the rest of the Downtown Business District overall.

Ms. Bramlette confirmed and added that this is something staff will have the consultant look at.

Councilman Gambogi commented that this is a good overall plan and the timeline is appropriate. The Council doesn't need to micromanage this and allow staff to do the work and return with a plan.

Councilwoman Frederickson asked about the zoning versus the overlay of the Master Plan and which standard runs the day.

Ms. Bramlette commented that it will be the more restrictive requirement.

Mayor Rusing asked if this HPMP would replace the old plan.

Ms. Bramlette responded that it will be tied in because it is using the existing plan as a base.

Member of the public Rick Sprain addressed the Council as PPC Chair stating that this is very overdue for an update. He likes the idea of having a consultant work with staff and the PPC on the HPMP.

Member of the public Michael King addressed the Council as a member of the PPC and stated that he is in full support of the goals associated with updating the HPMP and going with a consultant to go through the plan as well. The members of the PPC love what they are doing and want to be engaged and help

move these plan updates forward.

Member of the public Connie Cantelme addressed the Council and discussed her background in working with the Community Development department over the years in working on updating properties that are historic. This is a discipline, and it is important that the city works with an outside expert to make sure the history and integrity is maintained so they remain conforming. The Council has to be careful of adaptive reuse and not copying historic buildings.

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

4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Mayor Rusing adjourned the meeting at 1:42 p.m.

Cathey Rusing

CATHEY RUSING, Mayor

ATTEST:

Sarah M. Thornhill

SARAH M. THORNHILL, City Clerk

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 February 24, 2026. I further certify the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Sarah M. Thornhill

Sarah M. Thornhill, City Clerk

