

City of Prescott

City Council - Study Session



April 21, 2026 | 1:00 PM
201 N Montezuma Street
Council Chambers, 1st Floor
Prescott, AZ 86301

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rusing called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

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

3. DISCUSSION

- A. Presentation & Discussion Regarding the City of Prescott Hillside Development Standards & Overall Land Development Code Updates.

City Planner Alex Bramlette provided a presentation to the Council regarding the Land Development Code general updates and hillside development code standards.

General Updates:

- * Last major update completed in 2005
- * Minor updates made over the years
- * Staff have identified several areas for improvement and clarification within the LDC
- * Budgeted for a consultant to help with the updates of the LDC

Hillside Development Standards:

- * Request to look at standards and apply them to all single site developments as well as larger
- * Prescott is surrounded by rolling hills and mesas, steep slopes that may contain unstable rock; development on this rock can be hazardous to life and property
- * Maximum Disturbable Area - percentages cannot be exceeded
- * Minimum Lot Area - applies to what percentage of the lot area size has to be based on slope categories

Councilman Garing asked about applicability related to slopes and specific acreage.

Ms. Bramlette confirmed that on lots of 2 acres or less these regulations would not apply, Prescott has a good amount of steep topography and making sure that targeting the larger lots was staff's intention while being mindful of not being impactful of someone trying to build a single-family home.

City Attorney Joseph Young added that applying these standards to a lot of less than 2 acres the city is decreasing the usability and therefore, value of the property, which is a violation of state law, opening a big door to the city ultimately having to pay partial takings.

Councilman Gambogi commented that he hasn't received a single call or text message about this issue and asked staff how this discussion got started.

Ms. Bramlette responded that a request was issued for a determination on the interpretation on hillside development, which was appealed to the Board of Adjustment, who upheld the interpretation. Following that, the Mayor and a few other Council members asked to have it looked at. She continued with a review of some examples for single-site development (commercial/multi-family), single-family developments and Planned Area Developments (PADs) where different percentages would apply and how. She also reviewed options for density transfer bonuses.

Mayor Pro Tem Fruhwirth commented that she is pleased with staff taking a look at this to make sure that some of the concerns are addressed in a meaningful way, while also making sure that property values are not impacted and development can still occur. Also, the overall review of the land development code is helpful because it will address some of the other public concerns as well.

Mayor Rusing discussed the importance of erosion mitigation and making sure that is addressed.

Member of the public Tom Rusing addressed the Council reading from the Land Development Code, as well as other locations who have preserved and protected hillsides and visual open space. He has heard from many people in the community about the developments with mass grading in Prescott and the Council needs to act with vision to protect what makes Prescott special.

Councilwoman Frederickson asked when some of these changes will be coming back to the Council.

Ms. Bramlett responded that text amendments to code start with the Planning & Zoning Commission, then to Council and once an Ordinance is adopted, it will go into effect 30-days after adoption.

Mr. Young added that it would apply to any applications made after the date of adoption.

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

- B. Presentation & Discussion Regarding Proposed Updates to and Future Adoption of the 2024 Wildland Urban Interface Code Amendments.

Wildfire Risk Manager Conrad Jackson began the presentation with a background on wildfire issues in the community.

Why are we in this Situation:

- * We live in a fire adapted ecosystem
- * A century of suppression
- * A century of increasing population
- * Buildings without defensible space
- * Hot and dry climate

Differences:

- * Wildfire versus urban conflagration - once it has hit about three houses and the trees/brush are no longer the fuels
- * Hazard map versus risk map - hazard maps are general identification of areas where hazards occur, while a risk map allows you to adjust how much risk an area could be exposed to
- * IWUIC's Role - look at structural and vegetative elements to create change

Three Pillars of Urban Conflagrations:

- * Structure Separation - at least 60 ft spacing
- * Connective Fuels (not just vegetation) - first 5 feet are most important
- * Building Materials - Class A roof (ember resistant), noncombustible siding, double-pane windows, enclosed eaves, 1/8" vent screens

Insurance Conundrum:

- * Non-renewal is a problem - have increased three-fold in 200 counties across the USA
- * Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS) - looks at what protections are in place and makes recommendations to insurance companies

What Should Be Done:

- * Vegetation Management - moats in the landscape are not the answer
- * Parcel Hardening - WUI code use, home hardening and defensible space
- * Ember Cast Issues - Class A roof and assembly, retrofit attic screens, Zone 1 with zero combustibles
- * Scale-level neighborhood hardening - one home improved is not enough to change the course

Mr. Jackson highlighted that the Fire Department is currently in talks with a few companies to look at risk mapping for the City of Prescott.

City of Prescott Does:

- * Prevention - WUI building codes, wildfire risk manager, public outreach, defensible space inspections, chipping services, may brush on-site pickup, mitigation grants, roll-off dumpsters, Yavapai Firewise (PAWUIC) relationship, forestry crew
- * Suppression - Prescott Fire Wildland Firefighters, automatic aid agreements, basin drill, co-housing at Station 71
- * On the Horizon - Community Wildfire Protection Plan, grant funding

Councilman Ruby asked what some of the resistances are to neighborhood hardening, and what are some solutions to that.

Mr. Jackson responded that there are people who don't know what they are supposed to do, there are also people who simply can't afford it.

Councilman Grady discussed the mobile home communities that are particularly at risk in the community and asked what is being done for that.

Mr. Jackson stated that services offered by the city to address these issues are not neighborhood specific, they are applied equally to all.

Division Chief/Fire Marshal Anthony Valdez continued the presentation regarding the proposed amendments related to the adoption of the 2024 IWUIC. He began with a review of the timeline for adoption of the IWUIC which began in early 2025.

Timeline:

- * November 2025 - internal fire department meetings and meetings with YCCA Director
- * December 2025 - solidified outreach strategy for public input, Fire Board of Appeals, and Council orientation
- * January 2026 - advertised through YCCA mailer, social media, radio interview/mailer
- * February 2026 - hosted public engagement meetings, focused meetings with Comm Dev and conducted radio interview
- * March 2026 - held meetings with YCCA board, contractors and designer, Council orientation and Fire Board of Appeals
- * April 2026 - Council Study Session, amendments drafted and sent to stakeholders
- * May 2026 - adoption

Collaboration in Action:

- * Public Engagement Meetings - seven different meetings
- * Stakeholder Input & Internal Advisory Group Meetings - eight meetings
- * Advertising & Community Feedback - multiple advertisements and feedback opportunities in person/via email/phone/QR survey and end of presentation Q&As

Councilman Gambogi asked about individuals that live in Prescott but not within city limits and how they would be impacted.

Mr. Valdez responded that the Department is working with CAFMA to make sure everyone is on the same page.

Mayor Pro Tem Fruhwirth asked about negative comments or feedback received.

Mr. Valdez responded that he did not receive any.

Overview of the IWUIC:

- * Scope - applies to all buildings and structures constructed in the designated WUI area
- * Purpose - establishes minimum regulations for the safeguarding of life and property protection, intended to mitigate risk to life and structures from intrusion of fire from wildland fire exposure, fire exposures from adjacent structures, and mitigate fires originating in structures spreading to wildland fuels, intended to be commensurately tiered to the relative level of risk present, and supplements other locally adopted codes and standards

Historic View:

- * 1990 - created the Prescott Area Wildland/Urban Interface Commission to advise local government in the identification and prioritization of Wildland/Urban Interface issues
- * 2002 - city adopted the first version of the International Code Council's Wildland Urban Interface Code and created the first version of the Wildland Urban Interface designated area that is used today
- * In 2006 and 2012 updated editions of the IWUIC

Current Experience Enforcing the IWUIC:

- * Has not been consistently enforced since it's inception
- * Many facets of the locally amended code create confusion with interpretation and understanding
- * Existing structures present complexity with new additions or alterations to existing structure
- * Industry challenges in adapting to code requirements
- * Many design professionals and contractors are not familiar with provisions of the IWUIC
- * Resulted in significant progress in reducing risk across the community by improving structure hardening and strengthening our vegetation management efforts

Goals of Adopting the 2024 IWUIC:

- * Develop a collaborative solution that fosters an effective strategy for ongoing efforts to minimize wildfire risks and cultivate a fire-adaptive community
- * Utilize data-driven decisions for local code amendments
- * Align initiatives with industry best practices
- * Promote community resilience and assist homeowners in acquiring and maintaining their insurance policies

Proposed Changes:

- * Redesignating WUI to encompass the entire city limits
- * Data and science informed risk assessment to determine ignition-resistant construction and materials
- * Updating vegetation management requirements to incorporate modern best practices
- * Creating a base standard construction requirement to include Class A roofs, enclosed eaves and protected vents
- * Existing structures that undergo minor modifications are exempt from the IWUIC construction regulations and must still adhere to the vegetation management provisions

- * Building department will be assuming authority having jurisdiction over the construction provision
- * Historical building exemption for complying with the construction provisions but vegetation management requirements may be applicable

Mayor Rusing asked if there is going to be a new agency formed within the fire department for this. She added that she would like to discuss having exemptions for sprinklers being required versus not.

Mr. Valdez stated there will not be, the language she referenced is standard code language. Prescott is governed a bit by Arizona Revised Statute (ARS) with regard to the city's ability to enforce residential sprinklers, and it cannot be amended.

Councilman Ruby asked if there would be any type of return with the community taking on IWUIC.

Mr. Valdez responded that the city is adopting the most restrictive provisions of the code, costs can be reduced where applicable with reductions to that. He would imagine that insurance companies would take these restrictions into consideration when applying their costs, but he doesn't have any specific figures related to that.

Councilwoman Frederickson stated that she doesn't have any hesitation in adopting this, but asked what CAFMA's process will be to get the same standards adopted.

Mr. Valdez responded that he is unsure where they are at in their process, but their Marshal is planning to move it forward in the coming months and their process is a bit more complex than ours.

Mayor Pro Tem Fruhwirth commented that she loves what the Department is doing and how they have done it and communicated it to the public. Her only issue is Point 8 and Point 10 on page of proposed changes that looks nearly identical and she asked why.

Mr. Valdez responded that it was an error which has been caught and removed.

Councilman Garing said he is in favor of the changes.

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 3:22 p.m.



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 April 21, 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