



CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MEETING

STUDY SESSION MINUTES

TUESDAY, AUGUST 23, 2022, 1:00 PM

201 S. Cortez Street
Prescott, AZ 86303
Council Chambers

Phil Goode, Mayor

Cathey Rusing, Mayor Pro Tem

Brandon Montoya, Councilman

Eric Moore, Councilman

Vacant Seat

Steve Sischka, Councilman

Clark Tenney, Councilman

MINUTES OF THE STUDY SESSION OF THE PRESCOTT CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION HELD ON
AUGUST 23, 2022, IN THE 201 S. CORTEZ STREET PRESCOTT, AZ 86303 COUNCIL CHAMBERS.

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Phil Goode	Mayor
Cathey Rusing	Mayor Pro Tem
Brandon Montoya	Councilman
Eric Moore	Councilman
Steve Sischka	Councilman – participated via Zoom
Clark Tenney	Councilman

3. DISCUSSION

A. Presentation and Discussion Regarding Public Safety Retention, Recruiting & Readiness.

Police Chief Amy Bonney provided a presentation to Council regarding public safety retention, recruiting and readiness. It is her hope that as a city we are leaning into the opportunity to get ahead of the staffing issues that they will be facing.

Human Resources Director Branden Nunez continued the presentation with information regarding US workforce data:

- * Since 2019 the US is experiencing historically low national unemployment rates and is currently at 3.5%
- * Department of Labor estimates there are more jobs available today than there are job seekers
- * According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of US job openings is near 10.7 million, highest level in history
- * Average of 4 million workers per month quit their job in 2021

*The Great Resignation – these factors have led to the most complex and competitive employment market in the modern history of workforce statistics

City of Prescott Statistics:

- * In 2021 - total workforce turnover percentage was 15.4%
- * In 2022 - total workforce turnover was 13.5%
- * 6% increase compared to our five-year average turnover rate of 9%
- * Top factors for leaving since 2021
 - Pay 41%
 - Career Change or Opportunity 33%
 - Retirement 30%
- * Applicant Reduction - 21% less applications per year since 2019
- * More Recruitment Activity
 - Four times the number of positions actively recruiting per month
 - 2019 and prior: 12 positions per month on average
 - 2020 to current: 48 positions per month on average
- * Five-Year Increase Fire Department Turnover
 - 2017: 1.6%
 - 2021: 10%
 - 2022: 6.7%
- * Fire Department top 3 factors for leaving since 2020 - pay, career change and retirement
- * Fire Department applicant reduction
 - 2017: 91 qualified applicants per posting
 - 2020 to current: 55 qualified applicants per posting
- * Police Department Five-Year Increased Turnover
 - 2017: sworn officer turnover 11%
 - 2022: sworn officer turnover 14.2%
- * Police Department top 3 factors for leaving since 2020 - pay, career change and retirement
- * Police Department applicant reduction
 - 2017-2019: 46 qualified applicants per posting
 - 2020-current: 12 qualified applications per posting
- * Increased turnover in 2021 at the City of Prescott was 15.4%
- * In 2022 total workforce turnover was 13.5%

Fire Chief Holger Durre continued the presentation with an overview of the public safety survey that was distributed several weeks ago. Within three days they had 200 responses. This is a national issue not just the city of Prescott. 83.3% of respondents reported that they are currently facing recruiting and retention challenges with 81.6% of those respondents reporting that the impact was moderate, significant or severe compared to 10-years ago.

Reasons for Challenges:

- * Lack of applicants and low retention
- * Low pay – cost of living
- * Low retention only
- * Culture

- * Changes in the workforce
- * Certification challenges
- * High Retirement Rate
- * Low Pay - High Cost of Living

Overview of Initiatives from Around the Country:

- * Lateral hires
- * “Green” recruit academies
- * Enhanced benefits
- * High School summer camps
- * Increase in pay for market competition
- * Full-time recruiters
- * Pay for fuel if making under current wage
- * Speed in hiring and incentive adjustments
- * Increased outreach
- * Sign-on bonus and referral bonuses
- * Take-home cars for officers
- * Housing down-payment assistance
- * Salary compression countermeasures
- * Work schedule adjustments
- * Focus on employee relations

Take Home Points:

- * Focus on recruitment
- * Prescott is not unique
- * Regional impacts
- * Proactivity vs Reactivity

Chief Bonney continued regarding how it got to this point, the past two to three years have been extremely challenging for public safety.

Policing in Prescott:

- * Have to remain cognizant of who we are sending to the door (quality candidates)
- * Our community expects and deserves the highest caliber police protection and partnership
- * Landscape of policing is changing before our eyes and if we lose footing the delivery of high quality services we currently provide may become unrecognizable. Need to be a leader in the region and can't just run with it anymore.

Challenges:

- * In addition to the decrease in applicants we are seeing people leave the police professions in droves
- * All police agencies are syphoning candidates from the same very shallow pool
- * When people who feel called to serve in policing have to make Prescott most attractive
- * Put Prescott on the “menu”

What Have We Done:

- * Changed officers' schedules to enable greater coverage (less time for training and PTO)
- * Pulled officers from specialty positions such as community services, traffic enforcement and investigations
- * Continuing attrition at this rate could very easily result in a reduction in service levels that could impact our community

Chief Durre continued with Fire Specific issues:

- * Daily Shift Staffing - 17 with two additional coverage positions
- * 2 vacation slots per day plus long-term injuries, wildland deployments, training leave and sick leave
- * Significant increase in mandatory overtime
- * Temporary reassignment of Alternative Response Unit to cover long term vacancies
- * Significant reduction in applicant pool and discussion of "green academies" (take someone without any certifications and training them while they are on the payroll)
- * Growth of quad city area is causing greater competition for resources
- * Current at sixty-one employees (firefighter/EMT) and eight administrative staff members

Future Staffing Needs:

- * 8 SAFER grant positions – increase base staffing to reduce overtime costs and reduce mandatory overtime
- * Immediate future – fire stations 76 and 77 would require 12 positions for station (North Prescott area)
- * Support staff for departmental management – dedicated fire marshal, wildfire mitigation coordination, training staff, administrative and logistics support
- * A total of 36 to 40 new positions needed in the next 5-10 years in addition to expected retirement of 1/3 of the department

Possible Solutions:

- * Perform a staffing needs assessment and assess the market/current employees
- * Recruitment and retention flexibility
- * Define market position based on current reality
- * Innovative work policies, benefits and programs
- * Think comprehensively – not one size fits all
- * Invest in culture, people and attitude

Councilman Montoya thanked staff for their time and for being proactive on these matters, this is not just specific to Prescott or even just safety staff. This isn't necessarily dire at the moment but seems to be trending in that direction, but things like salary changes/sign-on bonuses/academy/workforce housing would be various dials to turn but need to consider where would the most impactful for the short-term and the long-term.

Chief Bonney responded that she is concerned with retaining employees that are working so much that they are tired as well as if these employees feel supported. She feels that Prescott needs to reposition itself as the leader in the region and the most important and significant short-term change would be in

salary. Also need to recognize the importance of the other departments in the city.. Looking at regional benefits and creative solutions that Human Resources is coming up with would be very impactful.

Chief Durre added that the most responsive thing the city can do is have this conversation, next step is to focus on its current workforce. For the Fire Department a green academy is a huge component to this.

Councilman Montoya asked if the green academy could be a regional cooperation and asked about being in stage two of the workforce housing component of the Fire Department Strategic Plan which will have short, medium and long-term outputs.

Chief Durre responded that they have spoken with CAFMA about this, regional academies are tricky but Chief Frytag has similar feelings about this. Wants to maintain a Prescott focus on this but does feel it would be important.

Councilman Moore commented that this community loses a lot of the young people after they graduate high school, he asked if it would be possible to have something that is focused on them and keeping them in our community and providing wonderful jobs.

Chief Bonney responded that she is a product of that and agrees that it is important, she feels that these are wonderful programs to be expanded. Can't be a sworn officer until they are twenty-one, but could start in dispatch to get a good overview of how public safety works in the community.

Chief Durre added that Fire does have an explorer program, and brings to mind a conversation he had last week with an 11-year old girl who wanted to be a firefighter and that is the age he'd want to target, getting them engaged early is important.

Mr. Nunez concurred with opinions about engaging the community particularly youth. Need to capture the people who are already here because of the cost of housing. This is a long-term solution. In the short-term taking a look at more testing, advertisements, simplified application process.

Mayor Pro Tem Rusing asked City Manager Michael Lamar for his insights on this.

Mr. Lamar said that he is extremely supportive of the implementation of these types of initiatives, he believes that while compensation is important public safety jobs aren't as well looked upon as they used to be. We need to find a way to communicate to people that this community is a pro-public safety community, it is a good place to be a cop or a firefighter. With regard to the supply and demand and compensation there is a neighboring agency that is down 100 people so it is a larger problem. Have to be very creative.

Chief Bonney agreed, that is why many of these solutions are long-term. Things are changing and assaults on our police officers has gone up since 2020 so we need to make sure that the people who put on the uniform feel supported.

Councilman Tenney commented that in his conversations with HR and Chief Bonney regarding compensation there is a reality that even if they are at the top of the chain the housing here is still too much for teachers, safety personnel, etc. Working with the students would be extremely beneficial. Support for the safety staff needs to go beyond just saying it and a high level of resources should go into this.

Chief Durre added that both police and fire have turned from jobs to professions, so the education component is very important as well.

Mr. Lamar commented that incentivizing with tuition reimbursement is something that the city already does but we need to make that more known.

Councilman Moore asked if there is any recruitment being done with people coming out of the military.

Mr. Nunez responded that they are an ideal candidate for law enforcement, they do attend all military career fairs.

Member of the public Patrick Kuykendall addressed Council regarding the fact that everyone is facing these issues right now. Supports police, fire and first responders as does Prescott as a whole. Shortage of police and fire is disheartening, mid-level private sector jobs pay more and have less stress. There is also the issue of smaller communities like ours having to compete with larger communities and agencies. Need to make first responders feel supported, provide additional and enhanced compensation packages, recruiting/retention need to be a focus.

Member of the public Anne Wenzel addressed Council regarding the violence and crime increasing all over the country. She believes this will begin spreading to smaller towns like ours and we need to be proactive. She applauds our staff for coming to Council with this information and supports any increase in compensation or anything that would help in this area.

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

B. Presentation and Discussion Regarding City's Portable Events Stage.

Deputy Recreation Services Director Tim Legler provided a presentation to Council regarding the city's portable events stage which was purchased in 1997 to be available for event's promoters.

The stage has been used at 500 different events, it is well past its effective life and now regularly needs repairs.

Discussion Points:

- * Portable rentals are available from the private sector (would be recommended to those planners)
- * Some of the local events are currently renting
- * Council direction on whether to purchase a new stage, staff has budgeted \$250,000 if Council would like to purchase another stage

Mr. Legler clarified that offloading the stage would then get the city out of handling that rental and recommend planners contact private rentals rather than going through the city with the exception of the signature events during which the city will cover the rentals.

City Manager Michael Lamar doesn't feel we are putting an undue burden on event organizers to do their own stage.

Mr. Legler confirmed and added that many of the organizers go to other organizations already anyway.

Councilman Moore stated that recreation and tourism are very important in our community, and looking at the amortization of the cost of the stage over the years it isn't that much. Should ditch the current stage because it is a money pit, thinks a balanced approach is appropriate.

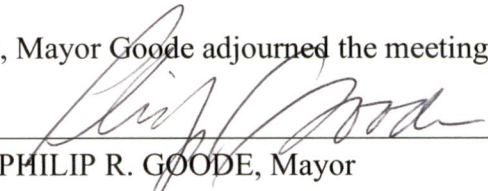
Recreation Services Director Joe Baynes added that the goal was to get the stage and help boost the events in the late 1990s which they have done. Feels it is more cost effective for the signature events to have the city cover the cost of the rental and all others do on their own.

Mr. Legler confirmed.

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 2:18 p.m.


PHILIP R. GOODE, Mayor

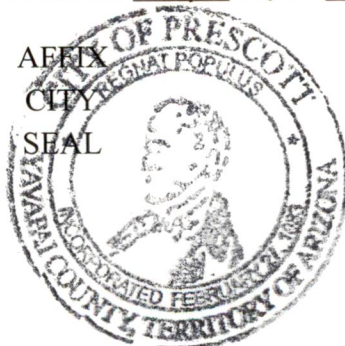
ATTEST:


SARAH M. SIEP, City Clerk

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Study Session of the City Council Study Session of the City of Prescott, Arizona held on August 23, 2022. I further certify the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this 19 day of September, 2022.




Sarah M. Siep, City Clerk