

Prescott Fire Department
Fire Board of Appeals
Meeting Minutes
July 25, 2007

Location

City of Prescott Council Chambers
201 South Cortez
Prescott, Arizona

Minutes

1. Call To Order

The Fire Board of Appeals was called to order by the Board Chairperson, Jim Burch at 6:05 P.M.

Board members present: Jim Burch, Judith Hawley, and Dan Fraijo.

Fire Department representatives: Ted Galde, Fire Marshal, Duane Steinbrink, Division Chief, Eric Kriwer, Todd Rhines, Jeremy Brinkerhoff, and Jaimie Gillo.

Recorder: Jaimie Gillo

2. Discussion and possible action to recommend adoption of the 2006 International Urban Wildland Interface Code (IWUIC) with local amendments.

The Chairperson turned the floor over to Ted Galde who introduced Duane Steinbrink. Chief Steinbrink gave an overview presentation of the proposed IWUIC amendment changes to the Board. The changes being proposed are:

- adding an exemption for designated riparian areas,
- ornamentals exempt from provisions of Zone 2 and Zone 3
- language added to encourage uneven-aged stands of native trees
- remove irrigation requirements for ease of enforcement and to bring amendments back toward original intent of code

- an updated map that defines the boundaries of where the IUWIC would apply, and
- a change in the maximum tree density limitations.

Charlie Hildebrandt, representing the Yavapai County Landscapers Association, gave a presentation on the association's interpretation of proposed IUWIC amendments.

The Board solicited comments from the public.

Public Comments:

- At what point do you draw the line between infringement upon personal property rights and public safety with the fire departments regulation?
- People move to Prescott because of its ambience. Some feel that the Fire Department has over reacted with its proposed Wildland amendments. We are concerned about having the possibility of having no vegetation. Some are happy with and not opposed to current code.
- There is concern about the possibility of a wildfire and the likelihood of personal property not protected by the fire department if they do not meet the Wildland code.
- Question was asked if the City is done cleaning the forest.
- Comment made about the homeowners paying a premium for insurance to live in Prescott. It is okay if the fire department passes by in the event of a wildfire. That is the decision we make when we landscape as we please.
- Residents fear "big brother" with the proposed Wildland code amendments.
- Public advised the Fire Department to work out the Wildland discrepancies with the landscaper's association.
- Fire Marshal stated that there needs to be a good balance with being fire wise, having a nice home, and yet still having a nice community.
- Concerned about wildfires, e.g. Oakland, California fire, and the hundreds of homes and thirty or so lives lost. Understand the need for defensible space and responsible neighbors.

- Question was asked, “If my house burns down because my neighbor did not comply with the code and defensible space, who is responsible?”
- Comment made about how density housing exacerbates the problems.

Fire Board of Appeals Comments:

- It’s the Fire Department’s responsibility to educate the people not to regulate.
- There needs to be a balance between suppression and codes with the fire departments employees’ best interest and safety in mind.
- There were 11 structures burning per minute during the Oakland, California fire.
- It is up to the fire department to make recommendations.
- If there were a wildland fire in Prescott the public would be asking, “What did the Fire Department do to prevent this in the first place?”
- The Fire Department ops for safety.
- As a retired Fire Official, I have the experience to recognize difficult situations, the political implications, and the parameters can be restrictive. No one wants “big brother.”
- Your neighbors could be the culprit.

3. Discussion and possible action to recommend the adoption of the 2006 Edition of the International Fire Code (IFC) with local amendments.

The Board asked Ted Galde to review the proposed code changes to the IFC. The main code changes were administrative and substantive.

Administrative changes included reorganization, reformatting and clarifying. There are some new operational permits, e.g. carnivals and fairs, plan review fees will increase with additional inspections, definitions were updated, and the annexes from the NFPA were adopted.

The main code changes were related to fire sprinkler protection in existing buildings. Ted advised the Board on how the proposed changes would affect existing buildings.

In existing buildings, the changes would require the installation of a fire sprinkler system in all existing buildings, when the occupancy classification/use changes from a less hazardous to a more hazardous use.

In addition, the installation of a fire sprinkler system will be required in all existing buildings when an occupancy classification/use changes to Public Assembly occupancy where the occupant load is increased. The unused or unoccupied spaces of the existing building will also require a fire sprinkler system to be installed within 36 months of notification.

The Board solicited comments from the public. There were no public comments.

4. Discussion and possible action to recommend the adoption of the adjusted fee schedule.

The Board asked Ted Galde to review the proposed changes to the fee schedule. There were a half a dozen adjustments made to the fees, mostly in the blasting section. The fire department compared their fees to a number of other communities of Prescott's size and found that the adjustments were in order.

The Board solicited comments from the public. There were no public comments.

5. Discussion and possible action to recommend the adoption of the City of Prescott Explosives/Blasting Standard.

The Board asked Ted Galde to review the new Explosives/Blasting Standard. Ted stated that the new Explosives/Blasting Standard is a supplement to Chapter 33 of the IFC. The supplement will guide the blasting companies on how to blast safely. Chapter 33 of the IFC will remain as it is.

All the blasting companies will be required to use seismographs. The seismographs are a good tool and can be used in court if necessary. Pre-blast surveys, using the spear of influence, can also be utilized if the blaster feels that they are necessary.

There are a number of punitive measures in place if the blasting companies or blasters mess up.

The Board solicited comments from the public. There were no public comments.

After hearing public comment on the IWUIC, the Board decided to delay action on the codes until a future date. This would allow the fire department to solicit additional public comment and give the department time to reconsider their proposal based on public comment, at which time the fire board will then recommend them to Council.

6. Adjournment: A motion was made to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 P.M.