

Proposition 478 Town Hall Meeting Minutes

Public Safety Tax Initiative (PSTI) Update

Date: August 26, 2026

Purpose: Public update on Proposition 478 implementation, project progress, financial reconciliation, and community questions.

Opening and Purpose

The meeting opened with acknowledgments of City staff, elected officials, public-safety leadership, and community members in attendance. Speakers thanked Prescott voters for approving Proposition 478, describing the initiative as a long-term public-safety investment intended to address aging facilities, staffing needs, response-time performance, and community growth.

City representatives noted that Prescott's newest existing fire station is approximately 30 years old and that the City has not constructed a purpose-built fire station in decades. Proposition 478 was described as a legacy initiative designed to prepare public-safety infrastructure and staffing capacity for the coming decades.

The City stated that PSTI sales-tax revenues began being collected on April 1, 2025. Staff committed to providing continuing public transparency through online information, OpenGov materials, Council budget discussions, and future public updates.

Proposition 478 Overview

Proposition 478 established a 0.95 percent public-safety sales tax. The initiative includes:

- A 0.20 percent component for capital projects, intended to sunset after 10 years or sooner if capital obligations are completed early.
- A 0.75 percent component to support ongoing public-safety staffing and operations.
- Restrictions requiring PSTI revenues to be used for defined public-safety purposes, including police, fire, dispatch, and medical-response-related services.
- Separate revenue and expenditure tracking, with reporting during Council budget workshops and review through independent audit processes.

The City emphasized that PSTI funding was intended to supplement, rather than replace, General Fund support for existing public-safety operations. Officials reported that General Fund support for police and fire operations has continued to grow, including investments in compensation, recruitment, retention, signing incentives, and take-home vehicle programs.

Fire Department Update

Service demand and response performance

Fire Department representatives reported that, since 1995, call volume has increased by approximately 200 percent while Prescott's population has increased by approximately 60 percent. During that period, no additional fire stations were constructed.

The Department's adopted response-time objective is an approximately eight-minute total response time at the 90th percentile for specified incident types. Current performance was reported at approximately 13.5 minutes at the 90th percentile, although the Department stated that it has stabilized response performance through operational improvements and added staffing.

Recent operational changes include:

- Addition of a daytime engine company before new stations become operational.
- Use of deployment and predictive-response tools.
- Changes to medical-response deployment intended to use resources more efficiently.
- An October 2025 response-model change that reportedly reduced overall fire-department responses by about 10 percent and medical responses by about 50 percent, helping keep fire engines available for higher-acuity incidents.

Fire capital projects

The Fire Department reviewed planned capital projects:

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Project	Status/Description
Fire Station 72	Originally planned as a major remodel; now planned as a complete rebuild at the Sixth Street site because renovation was determined to be less cost-effective and carried greater uncertainty.
Fire Station 73	Relocation of the airport-area station to the Constellation Trailhead area to improve coverage in the northwest and support growth-related response needs.

Fire Station 76	New fire station planned in the Sundog/Prescott Lakes growth area.
Future Fire Station 77	A future additional station remains planned, but the City will wait for greater certainty about development patterns before final site selection and construction.
Stations 74 and 75	Public-safety health and safety retrofits, including measures intended to reduce firefighter exposure to cancer-causing contaminants.
Fire Training Center	Improvements include replacement of an outdated and condemned training tower, improving local training capacity and reducing the need to send crews out of the area for certain training.

Staff explained that modern fire-station designs include distinct “hot,” transition, and “cold” zones to reduce personnel exposure to carcinogens and contaminants brought back from emergency scenes. They stated that these safety features, along with apparatus bays, decontamination spaces, and firefighter living areas, contribute to the increased cost and complexity of modern fire-station construction.

The City said fire-station locations are determined through community-risk assessment, standards-of-cover planning, GIS analysis, historical and projected demand, response-time modeling, road networks, property feasibility, and coordination with neighboring agencies through the automatic-aid system.

Fire staffing

The PSTI plan includes staffing for new stations and operational needs. Speakers described a need for 13 fire personnel to staff a new station across three shifts, plus coverage considerations for leave, injuries, training, and responsible overtime use.

Since Proposition 478’s passage, the City reported:

- Ten initial fire personnel have been added.
- An administrative specialist has been hired.
- A full-time emergency manager position was approved and is expected to be filled in the fall.

Police Department Update

The Police Department explained that its existing downtown headquarters, constructed in 1991 and intended as an approximately 20-year facility, is now substantially undersized.

The department reported having approximately 101 sworn officers and roughly 50 additional employees, while space limitations have required offices to be created in closets and some functions to be housed at off-site locations.

Police facility plan

The proposed police facility strategy includes:

- A combined police substation and property-and-evidence facility near Prescott Lakes Parkway, across from the new jail.
- Consolidation of functions currently scattered across multiple locations, including patrol-related operations, traffic safety, animal-control support, canines, property and evidence, specialized vehicles, mobile command resources, motorcycles, and related storage.
- Continued use of the existing downtown headquarters for command staff, records, detectives, and community-services personnel such as bicycle officers.
- A future-ready facility intended to accommodate projected needs over the next 20 to 30 years.

Police representatives stated that the combined facility improves operational efficiency because it is near the jail, juvenile justice center, humane society, firearms range, and key roadway connections. The site was selected after review of multiple locations and factors including central access, highway connections, service consolidation, operational efficiencies, and long-term needs.

Staff clarified that the original PSTI plan already contemplated a property-and-evidence facility, a substation, and improvements to existing police facilities. The subsequent decision combined the property-and-evidence and substation projects into one facility, rather than adding an entirely new scope of work.

Police staffing and recruitment

The PSTI plan includes 16 additional police officer positions, phased as follows:

- Six positions in FY 2025.
- Six positions in FY 2026.
- Four positions in FY 2027.

The Department reported that two of the new PSTI police positions have been filled to date. Hiring has been affected by existing vacancies, a competitive national law-enforcement

labor market, and the extended training period needed for new officers. City representatives said the Department is emphasizing recruitment of experienced lateral officers, who can enter field training and begin patrol duties more quickly than entry-level recruits.

The Department also identified planned support positions, including records support, public-safety information-technology support, and radio-infrastructure support. The City has also contracted for radio technical support through Central Arizona Fire and Medical, which officials stated has improved police and fire communications infrastructure.

Financial Reconciliation and Oversight

Finance staff presented a reconciliation comparing original estimates with updated forecasts, current costs, and projected future obligations. The City stated that the reconciliation will be posted online, including project-level capital and operating comparisons, variances, and explanations for changes.

Key figures presented included:

- Approximately \$228.8 million in expected Proposition 478 revenue over the planning period.
- Approximately \$138 million in current projected capital costs for the public-safety facilities discussed.
- Approximately \$17.2 million in projected capacity above expected expenditures, based on updated revenues and costs.
- An estimated fund balance of approximately \$17.7 million that could support cash-funded construction and reduce interest costs associated with borrowing.

Finance staff said the original sales-tax forecast used a conservative 2 percent growth assumption. Updated forecasts incorporate newer population, economic, legislative, sales-tax, and impact-fee information. The City also cited adjustments in project timing, staffing timing, construction scope, and the availability of cash for construction as factors affecting the updated financial outlook.

City representatives stated that changes in scope and cost are concentrated primarily in two projects:

- Fire Station 72, where the project changed from a major remodel to a full rebuild.
- The consolidated police substation/property-and-evidence facility.

The City stated that the current financial plan remains on track to retire the 0.20 percent capital component within the voter-approved timeframe and potentially earlier, while retaining the ongoing public-safety operating component.

Staff also explained the Construction Manager at Risk process. Under this approach, the construction manager participates during design, provides current market-based cost input, assists with value engineering, and ultimately develops a guaranteed maximum price based on the completed design. The City noted that project estimates are expected to become more precise as design progresses from approximately 30 percent through 60 percent, 90 percent, and final design.

Public Questions and Discussion

Constellation Trailhead location

Several attendees raised concerns about locating Fire Station 73 near the Constellation Trailhead, including potential effects on recreation, open space, trail access, noise, sirens, wildlife, and the character of the area.

City representatives responded that:

- The trailhead parking area would be relocated and improved before the station project, with additional parking capacity planned.
- The station location was identified as the most effective site for improving response coverage in the area based on GIS and response-time analysis.
- Emergency vehicles would generally avoid activating sirens until reaching major roadways when feasible and safe.
- The City would continue discussions with interested residents and trail users regarding site design, mitigation, and community concerns.
- The proximity of the station could also support rescues and emergency response in nearby recreation areas, trails, and the Dells.

A Councilmember expressed concern about continued co-location of public-safety and related government facilities near sensitive recreation and open-space areas, encouraging a long-term approach that better separates such uses from high-use recreational areas.

Cost escalation and fiscal sustainability

Attendees asked how the City would control scope growth, capital cost escalation, future staffing costs, benefits, retirement obligations, and potential risks to the City's financial position.

City representatives responded that:

- The PSTI financial plan includes the ongoing 0.75 percent operating component to support future public-safety staffing and related costs.
- Staffing levels will be phased based on project timing and operational needs.
- The General Fund is expected to continue supporting existing police and fire operations.
- The current financial reconciliation includes updated revenue forecasts, capital estimates, operating estimates, reserves, and contingencies.
- Construction risks will be managed through professional project oversight, design development, due diligence, contingencies, and the Construction Manager at Risk process.
- Any significant future changes or decisions that exceed available funding would require discussion and action by City Council.

Public information and future engagement

Attendees requested that future presentations be recorded and made available to a broader audience. City representatives stated that the current presentation and reconciliation materials would be posted online and agreed that future meetings should provide broader public access, including possible recording or additional outreach.

City representatives also discussed establishing a more regular oversight and public-update framework, potentially including quarterly updates or updates tied to major project decisions and new financial information.

Next Steps

- Post the presentation and detailed Proposition 478 financial reconciliation materials online.
- Continue design, permitting, land-development, and construction-procurement activities for fire and police facilities.
- Continue recruitment for PSTI-funded police and fire positions.
- Provide public access to response-time, standards-of-cover, and performance information through Fire Department and City transparency resources.
- Continue community engagement regarding Fire Station 73, trailhead relocation, and related site-design considerations.

- Develop a recurring public and Council reporting/oversight process for Proposition 478 implementation.