

Williamson Valley Community Organization  
2024 Town Hall and Annual Meeting  
March 20, 2024

WVCO Directors/Board Members

Jim Fortney, President/Treasurer

Pam Poco, Secretary

(Don Braun, Vice President was unable to attend due to business travel)

Town Hall Representatives

Craig Brown, District 4 Supervisor

Dan Cherry, Public Works Director

Jeremy Dye, Development Services Director

Ashly Ahlquist, Manager of Emergency Management

Lt. Scott Joy, Yavapai County Sheriff's Office

Jim Fortney called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. Jim introduced Supervisor Brown who moderated the presentations by the County Officials.

Presentation by Supervisor Craig Brown

Supervisor Brown gave a brief history of the original territorial capital, which is to be the site of the Del Rio State Park, also known as the Upper Verde River State Park. A handout was available giving details of the park including its location. (The handout is available online at <https://prescottnews.com/2024/03/22/trust-for-public-land-and-partners-help-secure-land-for-arizonas-newest-state-park/> for a description of the new park.)

**Supervisor Brown** summarized several projects affecting Williamson Valley residents. These included the following:

- The county is replacing the multiple mailboxes along Williamson Valley Road with regular lock and key postal boxes.
- Due to several accidents, the county is planning on putting in a left turn lane at Strazenski Rd.
- Plans to convert the Williamson Valley Road/Outer Loop intersection into a round-about are progressing.
- A new trail head with a parking lot is being planned at mile 1 on pioneer parkway. It will include bathrooms and will connect to trails through Springfield to Little Granite Lake.
- The County is working on plans to complete improvements on 89N.

Supervisor Brown provided information on the 23 acres that are being converted to a mining operation near the Cedar Heights residential neighborhood. Under an 1890 mining law neither the County nor the Cedar Heights neighborhood have any rights to prevent the planned mining of rock and gravel. There is a Bill in the Senate to address this issue. In the meantime, Supervisor Brown encouraged people to ensure they have mineral rights to any land they purchase.

The Greater Chino Valley Cooperative is trying to make their Chino Valley Ranch Park more attractive. It will extend from the Peavine Trail for a total of 21 miles. The extension will allow only walking and biking. No horses or powered vehicles will be allowed.

The LASER (Large Animal Shelter and Emergency Readiness) Program is ready to help with the care of large animals in the case of an emergency, such as a fire. They are a nonprofit

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organization of community volunteers that can provide individuals and households with large animal transportation and medical care if needed. Their phone number is 928-713-9691 or they can be reached via email LASER at [info@laser-shelter.org](mailto:info@laser-shelter.org). The LASER Website is [laser-shelter.org](http://laser-shelter.org).

Supervisor Brown encouraged people to cut their weeds for fire safety. There will be a Free Slash Drop-Off Program for all Yavapai County residents to dispose of yard waste at no charge. This does not include commercial loads. This drop offsites are located at Black Canyon City, Camp Verde, Congress, Mayer, Paulden, Seligman, and Skull Valley. The program will operate from April 1<sup>st</sup> through June 1<sup>st</sup>.

Presentation by Lt. Scott Jay, Yavapai County Sheriff's Office.

Lt. Jay represented the Northern Area Commander at the meeting. We are in district 4, which includes 3,000 square miles and 42,000 people and is the fastest growing district in the county. There are 25 deputies and 7 sergeants covering our area. While the number of deputies has decreased, there are several new deputies in training. The Yavapai County Sheriff's Office has 3 canine deputies and now has 2 full-time human trafficking officers.

Lt. Jay provided a summary of the various calls and arrests in our area comparing 2022 and 2023. The primary crime concern in our area is fentanyl. Arizona has 50% of all fentanyl passing into the United States through its border.

Lt. Scott stated that the Prescott detention facility is now fully operational, easing the transportation requirements when someone is arrested.

In other good news Lt. Scott reported that the Yavapai County Reach Out Program has resulted in a low recidivism rate of 16.9%, compared to 30% nationally. The Program is successful in connecting people help who need help with substance abuse or mental health to the proper resources.

There has been an uptake in illegal alien activity. When arrested, the Sheriff's Department does work with ICE. While deportations are not off the board, when illegal aliens are turned over to ICE they are usually given a ticket to appear and then released.

In response to a question from the audience, it was clarified that there are no squatter's rights in Arizona. Someone cannot just occupy a vacant building. It is different when there is lease agreement with a tenant who stops paying. In that case the eviction process must be followed.

The Yavapai County Sheriff's Office has a VIP (Volunteers in Protection) program, where trained volunteers support the various sections of the Sheriff's Office. Upon request, the VIP program can keep an eye on property during a vacation or prolonged absence. See <https://ycvip.org> for more information.

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Presentation by Jeremy Dye, Yavapai County Director of Development Services

The Development Services Department is responsible for permits, address assignments, and code compliance. Mr. Dye presented information regarding his staff and services. He stated that in 2023, there were 5000 permits and 250,000 miles of travel for various inspections.

Director Dye talked about the following issues:

- There is starting to be egregious hoarding issues in our area. Complaints can be made through the Development Services.
- Mr. Dye's Department is streamlining its services. This includes the ability to do virtual inspections using the camera on a smart phone for about 20 types of inspections. The virtual process can also be used for obtaining permits and planning. This will benefit the department (and the taxpayers) in reducing the travel costs and times associated with inspections.
- The Department has instituted a program called "A Home of My Own," which is intended to assist in the housing of the work force, such as teachers. There are 3 house plans with various amenities which have been already developed and are available at no cost. To date, 61 homes have been completed.

In response to a question from the audience Director Dye confirmed that the area near Outer Loop Road is not going to change from residential to commercial in the foreseeable future.

Presentation by Dan Cherry, Yavapai County Public Works Director

Mr. Cherry described the responsibilities of his department, including a variety of services associated with the 1600 miles of area roads, such as drainage, mowing, street sweeping, and snow removal. Solid waste management also falls within his jurisdiction. His department is also responsible for the three county airports in Seligman, Bagdad, and Sedona, all of which are run by the airport authority.

Examples of the Public Works projects being worked upon include the following:

- There is a design project associated with the Single Tree/Rainmaker intersection, which may consolidate access by reducing side roads. The design phase should start in April.
- The Outer Loop Road circle probably won't be completed until 2028, as there are still some design issues being resolved.
- The Department is looking for a grant to widen the shoulder near Longview.
- Public Works are looking at the Pleasant Valley Ranch proposal near Las Vegas Ranch where the developers want to have 160 5-acre units. This project is unlikely due to its involving too high a density.
- There is a new study to identify additional areas for safety improvement involving southern part of Williamson Valley Road south of Pioneer Parkway to Iron Springs Rd. The Department is looking for a grant to widen the shoulder near Longview.

A comment was made by an attendee regarding concerns about the proposed Pleasant Valley Ranch, with a plea for people to sign the "Say No" petition at <https://www.lvranchpoa.com>. The various community concerns are described at that website. The proposed development would

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negatively impact Las Vegas Ranch Estates, Long Meadow, and Crossroads Ranch as well as a few nearby residential parcels.

Presentation by Ashley Ahlquist, Manager of Emergency Management

Ms. Ahlquist gave a succinct presentation on Yavapai County emergency preparedness, response, mitigation, and evacuation zones. She made a plea for people to be prepared and to have a plan should an emergency arise, including having an updated “Go Box”. She wanted to ensure people were familiar with Ready, Set, Go, which involves “Being Aware”, “Being Prepared”, and “Taking Action” at the appropriate time. More information is available at the Yavapai County Office of Emergency Management’s web pages: <https://www.yavapaiaz.gov/Resident-Services/Environmental-Safety/Emergency-Management>.

Concerns Addressed to the County Representative from the Audience

Before concluding the Town Hall, attendees were given the opportunity to raise additional issues to the County Representatives:

- Concern was expressed about the lack of enforcement of the County’s Dark Sky Ordinance. While the issue is initially addressed with the permit associated with a property, the concern is that some residents are installing “after approval” lighting that is not consistent with the Dark Sky Ordinance. Complaints regarding non-compliant lighting should be directed to 928.771.3214 and should result in an inspection of the property.
- Concern was expressed in the need for instructions on how to drive in the roundabouts. The County referred to information on the Central Yavapai County Metropolitan Organization (CYMPO) website (<https://www.cympo.org>).

The Town Hall portion of the meeting concluded with many thanks expressed for the excellent presentation.

Williamson Valley Community Organization (WVCO) Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting portion was managed by the WVCO President, Jim Fortney. Jim thanked those who have become members of WVCO and reminded the attendees that membership is tax deductible. He reported that WVCO membership was up in 2023 to 125, compared to only 60 memberships a few years ago. Jim then gave an inspiration speech emphasizing the need for volunteers, particularly regarding the Board of Directors. With the resignation of two of the Board Members this year, the WVCO Board will be down to 2 members at the conclusion of this meeting. However, the WVCO Board needs to have 5 Board members to be compliant with its bylaws. Additional opportunities for volunteering include managing the trash cleanup for miles 3-4 due to the pending retirement of the current clean up manager, Judy Williams. There are also 22 communities associated with WVCO, and it is desired that we have at least 1 person signed up to be a point of contact for the Board.

Jim described some of WVCO’s achievements for the year, including the installation of the “No Engine Braking” signage due to Jerry Pittman’s efforts, the recognition by Development

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Services of Williamson Valley being an entity in Yavapai county, and the issuing of 10 newsletters and 4 email bulletins.

Jim briefly went over the WVCO Financial Report. Much of our current funds were created during the fight against the 5-lane freeway that had been proposed for Williamson Valley Road. The residual funds from that battle provide a base for which we can wage the next fight. A good portion of the annual expenditures goes to a \$1700 insurance policy, maintaining a website, and the cost of meetings.

The floor was then opened for attendee introductions with a request that any issues that should be brought to the attention of the WVCO Board be mentioned. Attendees who identified problems represented Granite Park Ranch, Inscription Canyon, Talking Rock, Las Vegas Ranch, Granite Oaks, Chipmunk, and Sundown acres. The topics and concerns mentioned during the introductions were as follows:

- Water availability
- Future expansion of Williamson Valley Road
- Lack of infrastructure to support continued growth
- High density living
- How WVCO input to the 10-year County Planning document were ignored
- Threats posed by the proposed development near Las Vegas Ranch
- Safety of the Williamson Valley Road Corridor (with a suggestion that a 3-lane road with a center turn lane)
- Traffic speeding
- The need for Fire Wise to clean state land
- Emergency planning
- Installation of new cell towers
- Lack of cell coverage
- Enforcement of Dark Sky Ordinance
- Slow drivers on Williamson Valley

Several attendees expressed an interest in volunteering to be on the Board during their introduction. They were encouraged to contact WVCO and submit their information including why they believe they should be on the Board.

Chris Kuknyo made a statement regarding his candidacy for District 4 supervisor and expressed the energy he would bring to the position if elected.

Jim pointed out that several of the issues raised during the meeting could be supported by WVCO if volunteers are willing to help.

Jim suggested that people become familiar with the Citizens Water Advocacy Group (CWAG) as he feels they have the best scientific information regarding the Prescott area water situation. Links to the CWAG site are included on the WVCO website. He stated that due to climate change water will continue to be an issue and that we all need to understand that we are sharing a limited water source.

Jim expressed concerns regarding the Stringfield development. Supervisor Brown noted that there is erroneous information about the project being circulated but did not explain.

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Jim Fortney was supportive of WVCO getting involved in Pleasant Valley Ranch issues and committed to posting the website where people could learn more about the associated concerns Las Vegas Ranch have documented.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.