

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT STUDY SESSION OF THE
TOWN COUNCIL AND PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
OF THE TOWN OF CHINO VALLEY**

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2026

5:30 PM

COUNCIL CHAMBERS | 202 N. STATE ROUTE 89 | CHINO VALLEY, ARIZONA 86323

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL

Mayor Armstrong called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

Council Present: Mayor Tom Armstrong, Vice-Mayor Eric Granillo, Councilmember John McCafferty, Councilmember Sherri Phillips, Councilmember Robert Schacherer, Councilmember Larry Holt, Councilmember Robert Switzer

Absent:

Commissioners Present: Chair Chuck Merritt, Vice-Chair Gary Pasciak, Commissioner Teena Meadors, Commissioner Richard Zamudio (arrived at 5:35 p.m.), Commissioner Michael Ditta, Commissioner Joseph Morabito

Absent: Commissioner William Welker

Staff Present: Town Manager Terri Denemy, Town Attorney Andrew McGuire - remote, Officer Tod Cupp (Sgt. at Arms), Executive Assistant Mike Coomer, Development Services Director Laurie Lineberry, Assistant Development Services Director Will Dingee, Community Services Director Cyndi Thomas, Economic Development Manager Maggie Holmberg, IT Support Technician Matt Widner, Audio Visual Technician Nicholas Harwick, Deputy Town Clerk Sara Burchill, Town Clerk Erin N. Deskins

Mayor Armstrong stated that anyone disrupting the meeting would be asked to leave. He reminded councilmembers, commissioners, and staff to speak loudly so their voices would be picked up by the microphones.

Councilmember McCafferty expressed thanks to the Commission for the work they do.

2. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a. Discussion regarding ZC-2025-03 and CUP-2025-05 for the Perkins Airfield Project. Discussion will be between Town Council, Town Planning and Zoning Commission, the Applicant Team, and Town Staff.

Laurie Lineberry, Development Services Director, presented the following:

- Staff compiled questions asked by the Council and the Commission in a topic format and would be reviewing them throughout the meeting, including questions regarding the zoning and General Plan.

Will Dingee, Assistant Development Services Director, presented the following:

- Discussed the Agricultural Residential 36-Acre Minimum (AR-36) zoning district and its history within the Town Code. Airports were added as a conditional use, not a permitted

use, by design to require case-by-case review to preserve Council's discretion on such matters.

- Explained conditional uses, how they are approved, and the process for such and specifically discussed airstrip considerations.
- Reviewed the General Plan including Heavy Industrial (HI) zoning, which references airports and helipads, and where that zoning is located within the Town.
- Stated that the staff's role is to evaluate and present proposed projects, but it's the Council's decision on whether to move forward with the project.

Tom Perkins, President of Perkins Ranch, Inc., presented the following:

- Thanked the Council and Commission for the opportunity to address them and work out issues they may have.
- Introduced representatives from Perkins Ranch (Ranch Lawyer Heidi Short, Perkins Ranch, Inc. Vice President Danny Perkins, Perkins Ranch, Inc. Treasurer Debbie Perkins), Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU) (Dean of the College of Aviation Dr. Ken Witcher, Vice-President for Facilities Scott Gesele), and GMC (Vice President, Aviation Tennessee and Kentucky Mark Paslick).
- Gave an overview of the proposed location for the airstrip, and its relation to the nearest residences.
- Reviewed the proposed timeline and phases of the project.
- Discussed the aircraft that would be used at the airstrip.
- Listed the operations timing, noise impacts, and comparisons.
- Discussed traffic and access near and to the airstrip.
- Provided a brief overview of the full build-out plan.
- Gave a broad overview of the Prescott airspace (Class D) and the proposed Chino Valley airspace (Class G).
- Discussed regulations on airspace and aircraft equipment tracking and documenting aircraft movements.
- Reviewed the test flights and the circuits they completed.
- Discussed ERAU's safety record for aviation.
- Discussed costs of the project and who would be paying them.
- Discussed the sell-off of farmland in Chino Valley and the desire of the Perkins family to keep as much land as possible undeveloped.
- Discussed provisions the Perkins Ranch provides for the pronghorn.
- Gave an overview of the Cottonwood airport and gave a comparison of it to the proposed airstrip.

Dr. Witcher presented the following:

- Gave a brief overview of the Daytona Beach Research Park including employment, salaries, external funding provided, internship numbers, etc.
- Discussed the demographics of Daytona Beach and how it compares it to the Town of Chino Valley.

Council, Commission, Applicant, representatives, and staff discussed the following:

- Chair Merritt asked for clarification on a "flight" and other descriptions.

- Mr. Perkins stated that there are training flights, or mission flights. A training flight includes pre-flight tasks, maneuvers or operations, such as touch-and-goes, landing back at the training site, post-flight tasks, and a debrief.
 - Chair Merritt spoke to the concerns he had heard from others about 50 flights per day.
 - Dr. Witcher clarified that they are proposing 20 take-offs and 20 landings (40 operations) maximum per hour average.
- Chair Merritt stated there were concerns about rotary wing and jet aircraft because they're louder, and limiting the type of aircraft that could fly in.
 - Mr. Perkins stated that during Phase 1, only Cessna 172s would be landing. Otherwise, it would be on a case-by-case basis if someone from the Town requested to let someone land. Those cases would be coordinated with the Town for approval (but no jets or helicopters). However, in Phase 3 and 4, if a business owner wanted to come on a small jet or a corporate helicopter to check on a business, he thought the Town would be welcoming of that. Mr. Perkins felt that outright limiting the type of aircraft didn't make sense.
- Chair Merritt felt there should be a timeframe for review of the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to mitigate any issues that come up during the first few years of operation.
 - Mr. Perkins stated that he and ERAU would be agreeable to that.
 - Chair Merritt further stated that P&Z should have a study session at every development level.
- Chair Merritt stated that the CUP should have a mechanism to address road improvement during construction and continued road maintenance going forward.
 - Mr. Perkins presented a letter (attached to these minutes) from Rodney Cruz, ERAU COO, and discussed tax incentives for the Town of Chino Valley. He further stated that ERAU has agreed to improve the road after the project is complete, but most road improvements would come in Phases 3 and 4, possibly Phase 2.
 - Mayor Amrstrong clarified that road improvements would come in the form of a development agreement.
- Chair Merritt stated that there needed to be a mechanism to limit the runway length to avoid use of larger aircraft.
 - Mr. Gesele stated that there is no room for a larger runway than what is being proposed.
- Chair Merritt clarified that CAFMA development expenses should be covered by Perkins and ERAU and not through the tax fund.
 - Mr. Perkins stated that ERAU and the Perkins' would work on that together. Taxpayers would not incur those initial costs.
- Chair Merritt stated that the airfield should remain private and not expand in the future to a public airfield or airport.
 - Mr. Perkins stated it would stay in the family.
- Chair Merritt stated that noise reduction and mitigation should be a top priority and hoped to have the majority of flights done before Noon.
- Chair Merritt referred to a conversation about the Perkins' releasing the Town of a prior water commitment.
 - Mr. Perkins stated that he talked to Ms. Lineberry and Ms. Denemy about rewriting the pre-annexation agreement. He discussed the history of water relations between the Perkins' and Chino Valley and the Perkins' and Prescott and expressed a desire to heal those bonds so they could work together to make Chino Valley a water provider.

- Chair Merritt stated that the use of the ADSB system should be written into the CUP or development agreement.
 - Mr. Perkins suggested a quarterly update for ERAU to provide those numbers to the Town.
 - Chair Merritt felt that it should start out as a monthly update.
 - Mayor Armstrong stated that he was unsure if the Town had the ability to require the aircrafts be ADSB equipped.
 - Mr. Perkins stated all ERAU aircraft are equipped with the equipment. Mr. Perkins offered a ride-along to the Council and Commissioners.
- Chair Merritt stated that there should be a time limit on the CUP to get the project done.
 - Mr. Perkins stated that he would be heading up the project and would be nudging ERAU and the Town to move the project along as quickly as possible.
- Commissioner Meadors inquired about where the APS lines would be coming from.
 - Mr. Paslick stated that it would likely be coming up Perkinsville Road and everything would be underground.
- Commissioner Zamudio inquired if they had any specifics yet about the firehouse, staffing, and equipment.
 - Mr. Perkins stated they did not have those specifics yet, but everything built would be done top rate, no tin siding, the structures would be brick, etc.
- Commissioner Zamudio inquired if the night flights could be shortened.
 - Mr. Perkins stated that the students need night flight time, and it can be difficult to get that time in the warmer months when the sun goes down so late.
- Commissioner Morabito discussed the Great Western Connector as a potential way to increase the success of the airstrip. He stated that people were concerned about what-ifs, but growth means progress, and he felt this would be a great way to bring better jobs so that kids could live and work here.
- Commissioner Ditta stated that ERAU does a great job, but he struggled on whether he wanted an airstrip in the Town. He discussed the amount of flight operations and inquired if they would continue to use the Prescott and Cottonwood airports.
 - Dr. Witcher stated that they would have to continue to use public accessible airports.
- Commissioner Ditta inquired if missed flights due to rain would be made up in the following days.
 - Dr. Witcher stated that they would be made up.
- Commissioner Ditta referred to an article in Signals AZ stating that a new site would reduce flight congestion and noise in populated parts of the country and inquired what noise the article was referring to.
 - Dr. Witcher stated that an additional airfield would allow them to reduce percentages and pull some of the congestion off of some fields like Cottonwood.
 - Mr. Perkins stated that Prescott is so full of circuit training and pilots often must sit on taxi ways for a half hour as only a maximum of four aircraft can be in a circuit at a time. Mr. Perkins equated restricting the number of planes that can utilize the airstrip to restricting a gas station to only 50 cars per day and stated that planes coming in pays the bills.
- Commissioner Ditta referred to comments stating that if they don't accept the airstrip they'll put in houses.
 - Mr. Perkins stated that they didn't want houses there and they don't want to sell any of the land.

The meeting recessed at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 7:03 p.m.

- Councilmember Switzer stated that he would like the flight path to stay over the wash away from Chino Valley, Mingus, Coyote Springs, and Poquito Valley, and have aircraft get into the airstrip pattern sooner to avoid going over homes on MA Perkins.
 - Discussion ensued regarding uncontrolled airspace and flight paths depending on weather conditions.
- Councilmember Switzer inquired where the holding pattern would be when aircraft are unable to return to PRC.
 - Dr. Witcher stated they hold over the fairgrounds in Prescott Valley. Mr. Perkins stated they can also climb and hold at 2,000 or 3,000 feet.
- Councilmember Switzer inquired if the maximum of four aircraft in the pattern would hold even through Phase 4.
 - Dr. Witcher stated that is their current standard operating procedure and is standard for all airfields.
- Councilmember Switzer inquired if ERAU can commit to using unleaded fuel in the future.
 - Dr. Witcher stated that the FAA is currently trying to mandate getting away from leaded fuel by 2030.
- Councilmember Switzer inquired if CAFMA would be responding to any calls at the airfield during Phase 1, prior to the fire station being built. He also inquired about funding for ongoing operations, equipment, and staffing, and if they would respond in adverse weather, and expressed concern that their apparatus might not make it there on the dirt road.
 - Mr. Perkins stated that the pre-annexation agreement provides fire and police protection. Specifics regarding funding would be worked out by CAFMA. Mr. Perkins stated that if there was adverse weather, flights would not occur.
 - Councilmember Switzer clarified that the addition would increase CAFMA's budget and would require more taxes.
- Councilmember Switzer inquired when ERAU would have onsite security.
 - Mr. Perkins stated the airfield could be secured at the gates. Once growth occurred during Phases 2 and 3, then security would be added.
- Councilmember Switzer inquired if a portion of the land to the east and west of the airstrip could be dedicated as a wildlife corridor.
 - Mr. Perkins stated he had no problem taking care of the antelope.
- Councilmember Switzer stated that he would like to have the development agreement done prior to any vote.
 - Staff suggested that a condition of the CUP should be a development agreement approved by Council. It would be onerous to get a development agreement completely done, but the project should not be able to start until there is a development agreement in place.
 - Councilmember Switzer clarified that if the development agreement would be voted down there would be no project.
- Councilmember McCafferty agreed that the CUP should have a window for permit issuance such as four to five years to allow the Town to address any unforeseen issues. He also wanted some method to dedicate parts of Perkinsville Road that are currently not dedicated.

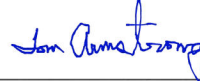
- Councilmember McCafferty inquired where ERAU was doing night operations. He further inquired about changing the times to range from sunrise to sunset to mitigate impact.
 - Dr. Witcher stated that they are doing them at Prescott Field or Deer Valley Field.
 - Mr. Perkins stated they did not want to go from sunrise to sunset because having night operations was good for both parties.
- Councilmember Switzer inquired if the airstrip would remain VFR only through Phase 4.
 - Mr. Perkins stated that an IFR approach had been addressed in GMC's development and discussed the design in more detail.
- Councilmember McCafferty referred to a Board of Supervisor meeting where Clarkdale expressed concerns over a non-binding friendly flying agreement and inquired about creating a binding agreement and the ramifications of violating such.
 - Dr. Witcher stated that after that Board of Supervisor's meeting he now meets every month with the Mayor of Clarkdale, Mayor of Cottonwood, Cottonwood Airport Manager, and County Supervisor from that district. He stated they discuss what's working, what's not working, and what can be done differently. Since that meeting, they discussed ingress/egress to keep ERAU off Clarkdale's area, and things have been much better.
- Councilmember Schacherer inquired about the daily total and what 5% of Operations Daily Total would amount to.
 - Dr. Witcher stated it would be based off the projection of 40 operations average maximum per hour, and they won't put more than four aircraft in a pattern. The maximum operation timeframe would be from 6:00 a.m. to Noon.
 - Further discussion ensued regarding decibel levels and whether the noise levels of the test flight were accurate without having done a touch-and-go operation.
- Councilmember Schacherer inquired about the airstrip lights and if there would there be a beacon.
 - Mr. Perkins stated that the lights would stay on for about five minutes. They are not big lights like seen at Prescott.
 - Mr. Paslick stated that a rotating beacon is part of the lighting package because it's a private airfield, but it's not necessary. They're only used when the airfield goes Instrument Flight Rules (IFR).
- Councilmember Schacherer asked for clarification on when the CAFMA station would be built.
 - Discussion ensued regarding the CAFMA station and the desire to have it built before any other buildings are constructed.
 - Further discussion ensued regarding funding for operation of the CAFMA station.
- Councilmember Holt inquired about ERAU's projected growth for the next five years.
 - Mr. Witcher stated that they are currently investing in taking up to a maximum of about 5,000 students total in the next 15–20 years. Currently, they are at 3,300 students.
- Councilmember Holt inquired if it would be possible to cut the hours at 10:00 p.m. and just revert back to Prescott at that point.
 - Mr. Perkins stated that would probably work in the winter, but would be tight in the summer.
- Councilmember Holt inquired how many student crashes ERAU has had in the past 10 years.
 - Mr. Witcher stated that they have not had any.
- Councilmember Holt inquired if they were planning for security during the after-hours of construction.

- Mr. Gesele stated they typically leave that up to the contractors since it's their equipment.
- Further discussion ensued regarding companies who have done prior projects and adding security into the contracts.
- Councilmember Holt inquired if the Prescott runway extension would further impact people in north Prescott Valley.
 - Discussion ensued regarding flight patterns, equipment, and approach requirements.
 - Further discussion ensued regarding property values and whether they go up or down around an airport.
- Councilmember Holt inquired why they don't just build the airstrip 6,000 feet to start with.
 - Mr. Perkins stated the COO could possibly get an extra bid to do that, but they were trying to make some money back during the first phase.
- Vice-Mayor Granillo stated that there are plenty of automobile accidents down Perkinsville Road, and law enforcement has to go out there anyway, and didn't see that as a concern.
- Vice-Mayor Granillo revisited the numbers on crashes.
 - Dr. Witcher stated they track incidents, accidents, and crashes. Since 2020, there have been 17 accidents. The last time there was a fatality was 2004.
- Vice-Mayor Granillo inquired if there would be a helipad for helicopters to land.
 - Mr. Perkins stated that helicopters can land anywhere, there was no helipad planned.
- Vice-Mayor Granillo inquired about the size of executive planes that might come in during Phases 3 and 4.
 - Mr. Perkins stated they would be smaller ones as a large aircraft could not land on this size of airstrip. Further discussed the logistics of allowing other aircraft to land.
- Vice-Mayor Granillo asked for more information on how the airstrip gets paid for planes to land, referring to Mr. Perkins's analogy of only allowing 50 cars per day at a gas station.
 - Mr. Perkins stated that a private airstrip requires landowner's permission to land, and they could choose to charge a fee, but they would not charge the ones who built the airstrip.
- Vice-Mayor Granillo inquired about leasing of the hangars.
 - Mr. Perkins stated that he wanted to invest his money in one of the hangars and ERAU has offered to lease a hangar. Mr. Perkins wanted to take some of the operations from Prescott airport for students, instructors, and mechanics to live in Chino Valley and bring benefit to the Town and revenue streams to the Perkins family.
- Discussion ensued regarding take-offs and taxi backs as a way to create less noise, as is done at airports like Cottonwood, when additional planes enter the pattern, and how this procedure might affect nearby residents.
- Commissioner Morabito clarified that ZC-2025-03 was just serving to rezone the land to AR-36. The second part would be the CUP which would apply to ERAU.
 - Staff stated that was correct. The February 3rd meeting would bring the zone change and the subsequent CUP for P&Z recommendation.

Mayor Armstrong thanked the public for maintaining decorum. He also thanked Town staff and the Perkins family for presenting the information.

3. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Armstrong adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.



Tom Armstrong, Mayor

ATTEST:



Erin N. Deskins

Erin N. Deskins, Town Clerk

CERTIFICATION:

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Joint Study Session of the Town Council and the Planning & Zoning Commission of the Town of Chino Valley, Arizona held on the 20th day of January, 2026. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this 10th day of February, 2026.

Erin N. Deskins

Erin N. Deskins, Town Clerk