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Pleasant Street zoning back before council

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PRESCOTT – A down-zoning effort that has been in the works for months is back on the Prescott City Council agenda this week.

At their study session at 3 p.m. Tuesday, City Council members will consider whether to change the zoning on a number of parcels on South Pleasant Street from multi-family residential to single-family.

The council meeting will take place at Prescott City Hall, 201 S. Cortez St.

The down-zoning originated with a group of Pleasant Street home owners in an effort to protect the residential nature of their neighborhood. Even though most of the parcels hold single-family homes, the property has long carried multi-family zoning.

Despite the support from many of the residents, however, several property owners have voiced strong opposition to having the city down-zone their property.

In December, the city pulled the matter off the council agenda after a property owner pointed out an error in the legal notice for the down-zoning.

This past Thursday, the corrected action went back to the Prescott Planning and Zoning Commission for review. As it had in previous action, the commission voted unanimously to recommend denial of the down-zoning.

In other action, the council will:

- Consider hiring an environmental attorney to handle the lawsuit that might result from the city's recent purchase of the JWK Ranch in the Paulden area.

On Dec. 8 – the day after the council agreed to proceed with the purchase – the city received a notice of intent to sue from the Center for Biological Diversity under the Federal Endangered Species Act. The city has until the end of February to respond to the notice.

The notice of intent maintains that the city's planned pumping of water from the Big Chino Basin would "condemn the Upper Verde River to death," which in turn would hurt endangered species that live in the river.

City Manager Steve Norwood said Friday that the city would need an attorney with environmental expertise to defend against that lawsuit, if it occurs.

The city already has an attorney with expertise in water law on retainer, but Norwood said that firm would not necessarily have expertise in the Federal Endangered Species Act.

- Consider a modification to the lease with Hauser Farms that the city received as a part of the purchase of the JWK Ranch.

The lease covers the irrigated farmland that is part of the JWK

acreage. Hauser Farms previously leased the property from the former ranch owner, the Kieckhefer Foundation.

Under the terms of an ordinance that the council will consider this week, the lease would be with the City of Prescott. The existing lease runs until 2006, Norwood said.