

**UNIFIED FIRE SERVICE AREA
Special Meeting Minutes**

This meeting held at UFA Headquarters and electronically via ZOOM

Board Members Present

Council Member Tyler Huish
Council Member Trish Hull
Surveyor Reid Demman
Council Member Kathleen Bailey
Council Member Catherine Harris

Mayor Jeff Silvestrini
Council Member Chrystal Butterfield
Mayor Kristie Overson
Mayor Tom Westmoreland

Board Members Absent

Mayor Dan Knopp
Council Member Sheldon Stewart
Paul Glover, Midvale
Mayor Roger Bourke

Staff

Tony Hill, UFA CFO
Chief Dominic Burchett
Cyndee Young, UFSA Clerk
Rachel Anderson, UFSA Legal Counsel/District Administrator

Guests

AC Dern
AC Pilgrim
OC Russell
Captain Greensides
Courtney Samuel
Jay Torgersen
Jeff Kuhr, Public

Johana Wiggins, Public
Kate Turnbaugh
Kiyoshi Young
Michelle Paradise, Public
Nathan Kay
Nile Easton, DOC
Pam Bennett, Public

Paul Schmidt, Public
Steve Crandall
Sue Wiggins, Public
Ted Wiggins, Public
Tracey Burkhart, Public
Van Larson, Public
Wolfgang Franz, Public

.....
Chair Tom Hull Presided
.....

Called to Order

Chair Hull called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Quorum present.

Property Tax and Final Budget Introduction – DA Anderson

DA Anderson provided an overview of the proposed tax increase.

Public Hearing to Receive and Consider Comments on Proposal to Increase Property Taxes in 2025 by \$11,473,218 which is a 23% Increase – Chair Hull

The purpose of the Increase is to continue to appropriately fund the fire service including 4-handed crews, upgrade aging fire stations, maintain the Board approved minimum fund balance, and additional engine companies at Kearns, Station 107, and Eagle Mountain, Station 253.

Mayor Westmoreland moved to open the Public Hearing to receive and consider comments on proposal to increase property taxes in 2025 by \$11,473,218 which is a 23% increase.

Mayor Overson seconded the motion.

Roll call vote taken.

Bailey	Y	Knopp	-
Bourke	-	Overson	Y
Butterfield	Y	Silvestrini	Y
Demman	Y	Glover	-
Harris	Y	Stewart	-
Huish	Y	Westmoreland	Y
Hull	Y		

Public Comments:

Included in the packet was an online comment from Rhonda McLeod, who does not support the tax increase.

Pam Bennett, Kearns

Opposed, senior citizens can't afford increases when cost of living only goes up 2.5%.

Tracy Burkhart, Taylorsville

Ms. Burkhart can see the increase with Eagle Mountain, but with Kearns and Magna those homes are small and even though properties have increased, we are way over scale. Eagle Mountain has two stations with a smaller population. I haven't received a pay increase since 2020 and Taylorsville has three fire stations. Do we share or are we supporting Eagle Mountain? How many ambulances are actually contracted to facilities we have within the district, how many ambulances are housed in stations, or do we contract ambulances? Some of that should be considered with part of the tax increase.

Wolfgang Franz,

Opposed to the increase, he looked at his tax notice and the increase in rate is almost 45%. This increase doesn't take into account the increase in houses, every day there are 2-3 new houses built that will be generating tax revenue. Mr. Franz doesn't know what makes us so special to make a 45% increase. His suggestion is to renovate the old engines and stations to make them last longer.

Jeff Kuhr,

Mr. Kuhr does not want to give UFA one dime more, and they are only second to UDOT in wasting money. There are two fire stations on 7200 S. with traffic lights, he is tired of us wasting taxpayer money.

Michelle Paradise, Taylorsville

Ms. Paradise is opposed to the tax increase, and has also seen large increases with water, garbage, utilities of up to and over 30%, unreasonable. We have paid extra money for new stations already; I am still working I would like to negotiate a proposed 2.3% increase which is more than my salary increase will be. I suggest finding new ways to conserve, make adjustments, or do without.

Van Larson, Taylorsville

Mr. Larson is happy to approve/support more pay for firefighters, but not to support administrative increases where the top dogs get all the money and workers don't get enough. The facilities are too pretty, get by with more conservative stations and all government buildings. The jail is better than what it ought to be. We have all been spoiled, everyone has got to tighten our belt, inflation is killing our kids, grandkids, all of us and we better get a handle on it. Pay the firefighters more money, no more to management and facilities.

Paul Schmidt,

There is a fire station 2.5 blocks from my house, we are out of control. Just a 20% increase is absurd. I look at property tax revenue, it's almost \$20M above last year, it's insanity, there have to be cuts. Mr. Schmidt understands its hard to get staffing, but this building is taj mahal and isn't cheap, we should be going out for minimum standards, it's absurd.

Sue Wiggins, Millcreek

With the extra housing we should generate a lot of revenue, teachers and firefighters don't make enough money. Raise firefighter wages, I am supporting my family on my wages, and it is difficult to make ends meet, the little people are having a hard time.

Ted Wiggins, Millcreek

We do appreciate UFA and recognize the needs. We support tax, but we are interested in fair and necessary tax. Our city, Millcreek, is wonderful place to live, we have too much stuff going on. But why turn everything into a place where a normal man can't live. Programs need to be cut back, budgets need to be trimmed, excess fluff, administrative positions, SLCo has so many assistants to the mayor, it's just crazy. You can trim taxes, everyone can, it all adds up and it's killing us. On our modest property in Millcreek, it adds \$200 per year, but think of all the taxing entities. Hundreds of taxpayers attended the SLCo council meeting, and at the end, none of the commissioners cared, they raised taxes. Please consider us, we love you and need you, but we need to live ourselves and we didn't get a 23% increase in our income.

No online public comments.

Mayor Silvestrini stated that the Board wants to discuss this and deliberate as a Board but will address these comments.

Mayor Silvestrini moved to close the Public Hearing to receive and consider comments on proposal to increase property taxes in 2025 by \$11,473,218 which is a 23% increase.

Council Member Harris seconded the motion.

Roll call vote taken.

Bailey	Y	Knopp	-
Bourke	-	Overson	Y
Butterfield	Y	Silvestrini	Y
Demman	Y	Glover	-
Harris	Y	Stewart	-
Huish	Y	Westmoreland	Y
Hull	Y		

Public Hearing to Receive and Consider Comments on the Final Budget for the 2025 Fiscal Year – Chair Hull

Mayor Silvestrini moved to open the Public Hearing to receive and consider comments on the Final Budget for the 2025 Fiscal Year

Mayor Overson seconded the motion.

Roll call vote taken.

Bailey	Y	Knopp	-
Bourke	-	Overson	Y
Butterfield	Y	Silvestrini	Y
Demman	Y	Glover	-
Harris	Y	Stewart	-
Huish	Y	Westmoreland	Y
Hull	Y		

Teresa Larsen, SLCo

Ms. Larsen asked if there is any other way to get revenue besides taxes, cutting back, any other way? People are strapped and real estate has been strategically higher, everyone is paying more. As they caught up with tax assessments, the appraisals are closer to what the properties are worth. Any other way besides raising taxes?

Ted Wiggins, Millcreek

Addition addendum, like what this lady said about adjust, do without. I have been to council meetings where certain entities talk about bonuses at years end, I can't comment on the budget line items and am confident the budget is full of necessary things and some unnecessary that can be trimmed. You need to look at where you can cut back, all America has had to cut back. Expenses, depending on the category have gone up 80-400 % so we get it, but if all citizens have to do more with less, government agencies must do so as well. You are causing people like us stress, UFA is causing us stress. 99.9% of the public doesn't know about these hearings, so low attendance at these hearings is not disinterest, most people don't know, we need to advertise this tax raise better. Why not say this to all tv stations and see what attendance we get. Please look at our hearts and wallets and help us out.

Michelle Paradise, Taylorsville

Ms. Paradise doesn't understand why all the increases over the last 6 years, she has had to work with that and still can't afford all the other increases. She doesn't have enough money to replace her driveway and must do what she has to do and doesn't have money for extra expenses. We need to find creative ways to cover costs, the tax presentation proposal shows increases, our taxes go up every year.

Mayor Silvestrin moved to close the Public Hearing to receive and consider comments on the Final Budget for the 2025 Fiscal Year.

Council Member Bailey seconded the motion.

Roll call vote taken.

Bailey	Y	Knopp	-
Bourke	-	Overson	Y
Butterfield	Y	Silvestrini	Y
Demman	Y	Glover	-
Harris	Y	Stewart	-
Huish	Y	Westmoreland	Y
Hull	Y		

Board Member Response to Public Comments

Mayor Silvestrini, Millcreek

This is painful for us to consider tax increases and the Board does not like folks angry. Mayor Silvestrini appreciates that many folks are on fixed incomes, however, he noted that those on social security over the last 7-8 years have received a 30% increase in Social security, the cost of everything has gone up. This is the problem we are dealing with, everything with the fire department has gone up too. One main thing government does is to provide public safety, we don't like to pay for it, but sure want to have it when we need it. Do you want them to respond in 5 minutes or take one-half hour to get there, we could cut the budget and say one-half hour if people would accept that.

There were some comments on the three Taylorsville stations, this budget is expanding service in Kearns so those residents will get better service and West Valley Fire doesn't need to keep coming into Kearns. Service is not based on which city the stations are in, its geography and roads and how quickly they can get to your house, your emergency service comes from the place that can get there the quickest and that is the goal of our fire service.

There is and has been new growth, yes, we benefit from new growth, but that also has the expense of serving it. The way UFSA is set up, there is no other source of income, the only tool is taxes. The UFA Fire Department does charge for ambulance service if transported to a hospital, but they are very limited, by state statute, in what they can charge. But as a public service and as a community, we provide public emergency service to everyone, so residents don't get a bill if their house burns down.

There are no bonuses paid in UFA and administration is pretty lean compared to what they have to do. The department doesn't run if someone isn't administering it. It takes personnel to pay staff, track how much equipment is used and replace that equipment, they are necessary for the department to run.

Most of the increase is going to firefighters, we have had to confront wage wars amongst other agencies. We have the best fire department in the state because of our firefighters, if we don't pay a competitive salary, they can go to another dept, there is a shortage of firefighters and there is difficulty in finding recruits to staff the services we want to provide. The only thing we have to combat this challenge is salary competitiveness.

With regard to the Taj Mahal, under two prior administrations, stations were built big and taj mahal-ish. Our firefighters live there, but we have adopted a philosophy with the last two administrations to build more modest fire stations. Look at the new stations, they are one story, modest, but effective. We want them effective and want them to have safety equipment to clean engine fumes, and carcinogens out of the air and their uniforms, so they need equipment to wash the turnouts. That kind of stuff costs money, we aren't just buying new equipment, we are trying to use old stuff, we only buy new equipment when we have too, but it does wear out and gets used hard. With the hard duty that this equipment goes through, we want serviceable equipment that can save our lives.

I to am on a fixed income, I got a 7% raise in 8 years, social security has gone up three times more than that in the same period of time. But I recognize the benefit I get and the need to pay for these services, that is why I will vote for this tax increase.

I assure you, we have done all we can to cut the budget.

Council Member Hull, Magna

80-90% of this budget is paying firefighters and there is no other way to raise money, we are only allowed tax by the State of Utah.

Council Member Harris, Emigration

Thank you to all who came out tonight, none of us on the board are paid. I encourage everyone to follow our meetings via zoom, we could do a better job publicizing the meetings, but we do meet the standards to advertise. We have not been regularly raising taxes, this was done in 2017 and only just last and this year. Everyone who works here looks at every single expense with a fine tooth comb.

Council Member Huish, White City

White City participates in UFSA; however, UFA is not first response to White City, we are not getting a direct benefit as other communities might be. Your comments are a good reminder of the impact that we have on the individual level and appreciate all of these public comments. I am not in favor of the 23% increase but reviewing the financials it's hard to justify anything other than that. My community is 1,800 homes with a \$93.00 average increase, it will be hard asking my neighborhood to pay more.

Council Member Bailey, Copperton

Copperton opposes taxes whenever possible, but my community understands that I would be completely against the increase if UFA couldn't give me line by line exactly how they are spending their money. The budget is not frivolous, it's not wasted, there are no bonuses, it's not spent on administration. Every dollar spent is shown to the Board at every meeting, this is not an organization that is abusing the system. As hard as it is to see 23%, the Board has made the decision so that moving forward next year, we can avoid another tax increase. I can say, this is not being done frivolously, I can't say that about other organizations, because they don't do what UFA does, so it makes it easier to swallow.

Chrystal Butterfield, Kearns

I have to admit, this definitely hurts, Council Member Butterfield offered a story of when her husband needed emergency care while out of town, it took 15 minutes for crews to arrive, and he almost lost his life. My husband is disabled, and I work two jobs. UFA is running on a lean budget; our firefighters work their tails off to make sure the community is taken care of. Kearns Station 107 is not new; we have the second highest call volume of the whole agency. Opening this station will help take the pressure off of neighboring fire departments. If there was a way to get around this, trust me, we would try to do it. When minutes matter, we need to do what is needed to take care of everyone.

Tom Westmoreland, Eagle Mountain

I don't like being in this situation at all, I feel it and our family feels financial crunches as well. We are constantly working to figure out how to readjust our budget to make things work. The money we have is worth less, there are things in government that ought to be changed and cuts made, but the area where I have a hard time compromising is public safety. Saving lives and protecting homes, those are our people, and I cannot compromise there and say "well, this is just the best we can do". This isn't a luxury service, but a necessary service and the challenge is that this Board has to create a standard of acceptable service to protect property and save lives. Your comments are heard, and we feel it too, but we have a responsibility to see everyone get services when needed.

Rachel Anderson, UFSA District Administrator

DA Anderson explained how the percentages are applied and how property tax works. UFSA asks for a dollar amount and SLCo takes that dollar amount and looks at property values and changes it into a percentage. We always get the same dollar amount, but our same dollar still needs to purchase on increased costs, we don't get to increase what we receive year to year without this tax process. We aren't increasing the size of government, we only do when we have to add staff due to increases in population,

that is the only time. This increase is to help our dollars go the same distance and UFSA was able to go a lot of years without a tax increase. We conducted public hearings, present the potential increase to all councils, posted public notices, and sent cards to every individual home telling them the impact to their homes taxes. DA Anderson noted that there are some services for reduced property tax for those needing that, through SLCo Abatement.

Consider Resolution 12-2024A Approving a Tax Increase in 2025 by \$11,473,218 which is a 23% Increase – CFO Hill

Mayor Silvestrini moved to approve Resolution 12-2024A approving a tax increase in 2025 by \$11,473,218 as discussed.

Council Member Harris seconded the motion.

Roll call vote taken.

Bailey	Y	Knopp	-
Bourke	-	Overson	Y
Butterfield	Y	Silvestrini	Y
Demman	Y	Glover	-
Harris	Y	Stewart	-
Huish	Y	Westmoreland	Y
Hull	Y		

Consider Resolution 12-2024B Approving the Final Budget for the 2025 Fiscal Year – CFO Hill

CFO Hill presented the budget for approval. Mayor Silvestrini explained how formulation of this budget began months ago with the Benefits & Compensation and the Finance Committees review of wages, negotiations for healthcare, etc. All UFA Division Leaders present their budgets and are questioned and reviewed by the Board for cuts and priorities. Mayor Silvestrini explained the Boards active participation in the process and how involved Board Members are in the overall process. A lot of work goes into this budget, everything has been critically reviewed with the goal of providing the best services at the lowest prices. This organization runs a lean ship.

Mayor Silvestrini moved to approve Resolution 12-2024B approving the Final Budget for the 2025 Fiscal Year as discussed.

Council Member Huish seconded the motion.

Roll call vote taken.

Bailey	Y	Knopp	-
Bourke	-	Overson	Y
Butterfield	Y	Silvestrini	Y
Demman	Y	Glover	-
Harris	Y	Stewart	-
Huish	Y	Westmoreland	Y
Hull	Y		

Adjournment – Chair Hull

Council Member Harris moved to adjourn the December 10, 2024, UFSA Special Board Meeting.

Mayor Westmoreland seconded the motion.

All voted in favor, none opposed.