



EMIGRATION  
CANYON

**EMIGRATION CANYON  
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING**

**JUNE 24, 2025, 6:00 PM**

UNIFIED FIRE AUTHORITY STATION 119

5025 E. EMIGRATION CANYON ROAD, SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84108

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**EMIGRATION CANYON  
JUNE 24, 2025  
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES**

**Council Members Present:**

Joe Smolka, Mayor

Jennifer Hawkes, Deputy Mayor

David Brems, Council Member

Catherine Harris, Council Member

Robert Pinon, Council Member

**Council Members Excused:**

**Staff Present:**

Cameron Platt, Legal Counsel

Diana Baun, City Recorder

Detective Dawn Larsen, Unified Police Department

**Others Present:**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Joe Smolka, presiding, called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

**2. COUNCIL DISCUSSION TOPICS**

A. Discussion on Commercial Dog Walkers

Detective Dawn Larsen and the council addressed ongoing concerns related to dog walkers, trail use, and responsible pet waste management in the canyon area. Detective Larsen explained that Middle Fork Trail, which is Forest Service land including its parking area, had seen more use lately, especially by commercial dog walkers who have fewer places to go as restrictions increase in nearby canyons like Neff's and Millcreek. Larsen noted that the Forest Service had been stepping up outreach to dog walkers in the area, informing them of rules and restrictions.

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**EMIGRATION COUNCIL MEMBERS**

MAYOR JOE SMOLKA, DEPUTY MAYOR JENNIFER HAWKES,

COUNCIL MEMBER CATHERINE HARRIS, COUNCIL MEMBER ROBERT PINON,

COUNCIL MEMBER DAVID BREMS

Council Members David Brems and Catherine Harris clarified the exact location of Middle Fork Trail and other popular spots like Pinecrest and the “Tall Grass” area, pointing out that some access points cross private property. Council Member Harris reminded everyone that much of the trail access depends on the cooperation of private landowners and that misuse, including dog waste left behind, could jeopardize future access. Council Member Hawkes added that she had heard from other communities like Alta that had enacted stricter restrictions on dogs to protect watershed areas, suggesting that Emigration Canyon should learn from how other jurisdictions handle similar issues.

Cameron Platt, the city’s legal counsel, confirmed that the council had authority to regulate commercial dog walking activities, such as limiting the number of dogs per handler, as long as it was tied to a rational basis like protecting water quality or trail safety. The group discussed that while the county code generally allows up to three dogs before requiring a kennel license, the city could adopt its own ordinance to address local concerns more specifically.

Detective Larsen reported some improvement with commercial dog walkers being more mindful and following guidelines, but acknowledged that pet waste left behind remained an ongoing issue, consistent with what she had observed in other areas like Millcreek Canyon. Council members discussed practical solutions to help mitigate this, including installing dog waste bag dispensers and trash receptacles at popular trailheads to encourage proper cleanup. They agreed that clear signage would be needed to remind visitors that access depended on respecting both private and public lands and that violations could lead to restrictions.

Council Member Hawkes suggested researching what other canyons and cities are doing and offered to contact Millcreek Canyon to learn about their odd/even dog day rules and management practices. Council Member Harris emphasized the need to approach this thoughtfully, proposing that the city develop cohesive design guidelines for signage and facilities to maintain a consistent look across the canyon.

Mayor Joe Smolka summarized the next steps, which included researching the costs for dog waste stations and trash pickup, developing unified signs to educate trail users, and gathering comparable policies from other canyons. The council tentatively planned to revisit the issue in a July or August meeting once this information was compiled, with an emphasis on balancing public access with responsible stewardship to maintain the canyon’s recreational opportunities.

#### B. Discussion on Recognizing Residents for Outstanding Community Awareness

Council Member Robert Pinon introduced the idea of developing a formal method for recognizing residents who go above and beyond in serving the Emigration Canyon community. He shared an example, without naming the individual, of a resident who recently helped prevent a significant fire and suggested that moments like this deserved consistent acknowledgment. He proposed creating a process for recognizing exceptional contributions, whether through a certificate, token, or other meaningful gesture, and emphasized that any recognition should be handled respectfully, especially for cases involving sensitive circumstances.

Mayor Smolka, Council Member Harris, and Council Member Hawkes all agreed that recognizing residents' efforts was important. Council Member Harris pointed out that regular recognition already occurs in organizations like the fire authority and that even small gestures of sincere thanks can have a powerful impact. Council Member Hawkes suggested exploring options beyond a paper certificate, such as a commemorative coin or a symbolic gift, to make the recognition feel more special. Council Member Harris cautioned, however, that any recognition should be checked with recipients first, as some people may prefer to avoid public attention.

Cameron Platt, the city's legal counsel, explained the formal options available. The council could issue individual resolutions each time or adopt a standing resolution outlining a clear process for nominating and recognizing residents. He also clarified how confidentiality could be maintained for sensitive cases, with recognition handled more discreetly by the mayor or a small delegation of council members.

There was consensus that the city should keep the process flexible but thoughtful, starting with certificates that could be easily personalized and delivered, while leaving open the possibility of using other forms of recognition like shirts or small mementos in the future. Several council members emphasized that the delivery should feel personal and meaningful. Council Member Brems noted that during community-wide emergencies, like the flooding, there had been many instances where recognition would have been appropriate but logically challenging; having a simple system in place would make it easier to show gratitude when needed.

The discussion concluded with agreement that the mayor and Council Member Pinon would move forward immediately with a first example of this new recognition, delivering it quietly and respectfully to the resident who recently contributed in a significant way. The council agreed this would serve as a starting point to refine the approach and eventually develop a consistent policy for future recognitions.

#### C. Discussion on Restrictions for Bicycle Traffic in Construction Zones

Mayor Joe Smolka and the council addressed growing safety concerns about bicyclists passing through an active construction zone in the canyon. Mayor Smolka noted that there had been repeated incidents of cyclists running the construction lights and even entering hazardous work areas, including one case where a cyclist fell into an open trench but fortunately was not seriously injured. He explained that he had spoken with the construction contractor, who confirmed that the situation was creating real safety risks for both workers and riders.

Council Members Hawkes, Brems, and Pinon shared mixed observations, acknowledging that while some cyclists followed the signals, others frequently ignored them — a problem compounded by the lack of concrete barricades and the use of cones, which made it easier for cyclists to weave through restricted areas. Council Member Pinon pointed out that the current lane setup and signal timing were challenging for some riders, especially slower cyclists who struggled to clear the zone before the light changed.

Mayor Smolka outlined several options for improving safety, including potentially restricting bicycle access through the construction zone either entirely or during working hours. He mentioned that electronic signs could be updated to inform cyclists of any new restrictions. However, Council Member Hawkes strongly cautioned against moving forward without first engaging cycling groups and other stakeholders, noting that similar restrictions proposed in the past drew significant backlash and media attention. She emphasized that other canyons could not easily absorb the overflow of cyclists if Emigration Canyon were suddenly closed, and that the city needed to be mindful of how its decision might affect the broader community.

Council Members Brems and Harris agreed that a full closure was likely unnecessary and would generate a strong negative response, given that the construction segments were only about 1,500 feet long. Brems suggested exploring whether the contractor could reduce the length of the active work area to shorten waiting times, though Mayor Smolka pointed out that the construction plan was based on larger 1,500-foot sections. Council members agreed that better communication with the cycling community would be essential, particularly ahead of the upcoming micro-paving work in August, when the canyon would need to be fully closed to bicycles for a few days.

Cameron Platt clarified that any restriction would need to be carefully defined, whether it was a full closure or just restricting passage through the construction area during work hours. Council Member Pinon suggested that improving the physical barricade system might help by making it harder for cyclists to slip through the work zone unsafely.

Before closing this topic, the conversation shifted briefly to the condition of the existing bike repair station at the fire station, which several council members noted was worn out and not easily visible. Council Member Pinon proposed replacing it with a newer, more functional version, and Council Member Hawkes suggested coordinating placement with planned updates to crosswalk striping and landscaping at the site. She emphasized that the crosswalk should be repainted in the correct location during the micro-paving work to ensure better safety and functionality for all users.

Mayor Smolka concluded the discussion by reiterating that more input and stakeholder outreach would be needed before any final decisions were made about restricting bicycle access during construction. The council agreed that the issue would be brought back for a decision at a future meeting, giving staff time to gather additional information, coordinate with cycling groups, and develop clear communication plans to manage the impact on the community.

### **3. Adjourn**

**Council Member Brems moved to adjourn the June 24, 2025 Emigration Canyon Council Workshop Meeting. Council Member Harris seconded the motion; vote was 5-0, unanimous in favor.**

The June 24, 2025 Emigration Canyon Council Workshop Meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM.

**The June 24, 2025 City Council Meeting Workshop Minutes were Approved by the City Council on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of July 2025:**

**ATTEST:**



Joe Smolka, Mayor



Diana Baun, City Recorder