



## SMITHFIELD CITY COUNCIL MINUTES August 13, 2025

The Smithfield City Council met in a regularly scheduled meeting at 96 South Main Street, Smithfield, Utah on Wednesday, August 13, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. Mayor Monson was in the chair.

Opening remarks by Wade Campbell

**Council Members in Attendance:** Wade Campbell, Sue Hyer, Todd Orme, Jenn Staker, and Ted Stokes

**City Staff:** Justin Lewis (City Manager), Clay Bodily (City Engineer), Dana Lazcanotegui (City Recorder), Travis Allen (Police Chief), Shawn Bliss (Library Director), Jeremy Hunt (Fire Chief)

**Visitors:** Nay Dean Park, Lee Helms, Chris Olsen, Aaron Rudie, Terry Christensen, Dave Forrester, Lynn Godderidge, Carole Holland, Mike Monson, Jennie Orme, Caralee Stokes, Debbie Zilles

**Public Hearing to discuss the proposed increase in property tax revenue for the city. The Smithfield City tax on a \$505,000 residence would increase from \$366.91 to \$375.52, which is \$8.61 per year. The Smithfield City tax on a \$505,000 business would increase from \$667.11 to \$682.76, which is \$15.65 per year. If approved, the city would receive an additional \$45,859 in property tax revenue per year as a result of the tax increase. If approved, the city would increase its property tax budgeted revenue by 2.25% above last year's property tax budgeted revenue, excluding eligible new growth.**

### 6:32 p.m. **Public Hearing Opened**

Terry Christensen lives on the west side of the city and most of the residents in his area had no clue about this hearing because there was no information given out, other than Facebook, which many people do not use. It is a disservice to residents to not let them know there is a possible tax increase so they can come to the meeting and voice their concerns. Taxes were raised 17% in 2023, 7% last year and now it is proposed to be raised another 2.25%; supposedly to pay for an arborist to trim trees. He does not understand why taxes have to be continually raised which makes it hard on the residents; especially those on fixed incomes. The public is not being informed and it almost feels like their input is trying to be subverted. He pointed out that the city used to publish a newsletter, which may have served as an important communication tool for many, implying that its absence has created an information gap: "He feels like all citizens have a right to know what is happening." He recalled a previous interaction, when he voiced concerns in 2023, he was told that because the council was elected, their vote represented the residents even though he did not vote for all the council members. He disagreed with this sentiment, emphasizing that citizens have a right to be heard directly.

Lee Helms has lived in Smithfield for 26 years, over that time his property tax has tripled. In looking over the budget for this year, he sees that there is over one million dollars going to the golf course. He thinks if they cannot pay for their own services, they should be privatized. It is not a benefit to the city if everyone is not using it. There should be room to take money out of their portion of the budget.

Carol Holland serves on the Smithfield City Tree Committee and shared/read some thoughts from Jack Greene who is the Tree Committee Chairman who said *"If approved, this new revenue will fund only the start of tackling the tree care problems on city-owned properties, including some of the very own trees planted on park strips in front of private homes. We do not have the equipment, crews or expertise to take care of this on our own at this time so we would like to hire a private tree company to begin taking steps to care for, trim, or remove problem trees. This would only fund a small amount of what is necessary and would be a good step to get us headed in the right direction. Tree care, trimming and removal is a highly dangerous and skillful profession and cannot be done by our city crews safely."* She said Mack Park has many trees that are damaged and diseased and need care. She does not like taxes being raised, but the planned use from this revenue is needed.

Mayor Monson said the state has required this meeting be broadcast, which is being done. Mr. Lewis noted that there were no online attendees wishing to comment.

#### **6:39 p.m. Public Hearing Closed**

<b>Discussion and possible vote on Resolution 2025-08</b>
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Councilmember Campbell, responding to Mr. Christensen's comments, addressed the concerns regarding a lack of transparency. He explained that the Council has explored multiple ways to communicate with residents. A newsletter was previously mailed with utility bills; however, this was discontinued when online payments reduced readership, making it an inefficient use of funds. Currently, information is shared at the Senior Citizen Center, posts are made on all social media platforms, a notice for this particular meeting is included on the yearly tax statements, CivicReady the city email communication system has frequent updates, and updates are available on the city's website. The Council remains open to new ideas and suggestions for improving outreach. He said the rate is the same as last year and is not being increased. The city is proposing to the "hold the rate" the same as last year. He does not like taxes and has seen them increase over the years, but the revenue does help the city provide residents with very important services. He said the proposed estimate of taking care of all the trees on city property is in the city is \$3-4 million range. This revenue will help start the process. Many trees, if not taken care of, are a liability to the city.

Mayor Monson noted that the golf course is self-sufficient and has a balanced budget.

Councilmember Orme clarified the concept of "holding the rate," noting it can be misunderstood as a tax increase. The rate will remain unchanged, consistent with previous years. Revenue may increase as property values rise, even without changing

the rate. No one wants higher taxes, but reducing or not maintaining the rate now could result in a larger increase in the future.

Mr. Lewis said “holding the rate” at the city level is a common option in several local cities to implement smaller increases over the years.

Councilmember Staker said this will just be a start to the tree problem. There will also be additional money from the general fund allocated to this issue.

Mr. Lewis said if this is approved, the tree pruning plan will be put out for bid. The city has created a map of five (5) specific areas that will be targeted. Private tree companies do have interest in this idea because they can work during the winter months when their schedules are not as busy. If this is approved, the additional revenue of approximately \$45,000 and the allocated funds from the city of approximately \$55,000 will be used to pay for this project. As Councilmember Campbell mentioned, the city does not have the crew or the equipment to handle this undertaking. The project will be for one year, after which, its continuation will be determined by the city council.

Councilmember Hyer said in 2023 there was a \$4.00 per month public utility fee which is no longer in place and was removed by the city council. Mr. Lewis said the State Auditor’s Office encouraged that particular fee to be removed. Councilmember Hyer said in 2024 the increase in revenue was used for one new full-time position in the Fire Department, one new full-time position in the Police Department and one new full-time employee in the Recreation Department. The arborist is an existing city employee who received specialized training; no additional revenue will be used to hire or pay for this position.

Councilmember Staker noted that this seems to be the most cost-effective long-term solution to a problem that can no longer be ignored. As elected officials and residents, councilmembers will also bear the tax burden for this initiative. An attorney has advised that if someone is harmed due to a falling tree, the city could be held legally liable, reinforcing the importance of responsible tree maintenance. The project aims to address an ongoing tree safety concern, seeking to keep the city’s trees safe, healthy, and well-maintained.

Councilmember Stokes criticized the characterization of this as merely a “tree increase.” He emphasized that this issue was recognized and could have been addressed earlier without resorting to tax adjustments. He agreed on the necessity of the tree maintenance project, observing that adjustments could have been made within the existing budget, noting there were unnecessary increases in some departments. In his opinion, this project could have paid for itself. Holding the rate is absolutely increasing taxes. It is unfortunate that it got to this point because there was room in the budget to find another way to pay for the need. Responding to concerns raised by Mr. Christensen about transparency, Councilmember Stokes encouraged residents to support candidates running for election who champion better public notice practices. He commended Mr. Lewis for successfully implementing the CivicReady notification system; however, he noted that technology may be inaccessible for some residents, calling for alternative communication methods to ensure a broader reach.

The rate is not being raised to take care of the trees, but to take care of the city budget. The council failed to itemize the budget sufficiently to take care of the tree problem.

Councilmember Stokes exercised his First Amendment right and criticized a recent \$2,000,000 Cache County land purchase under the Open Spaces Ordinance led by Cache County Executive David Zook. He questioned the usability of the acquired land and hoped for an accessible family trail, but described the purchased mountain as less user-friendly, suggesting that trail space intended for residents may have been misallocated. He urged residents to pay attention to the upcoming election. Elected officials directly influence how funds are allocated and how public services evolve.

**\*\*\*Motion made by Councilmember Campbell to adopt Resolution 2025-08 increasing the property tax budgeted revenue by 2.25% above last year's property tax budgeted revenue, excluding eligible new growth. Councilmember Staker seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4-1.**

**\*\*\***

**Yes Vote: Campbell, Hyer, Orme, Staker**

**No Vote: Stokes**

**Absent: None**

**\*\*\* The meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m. \*\*\***

## **SMITHFIELD CITY CORPORATION**

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Kristi Monson, Mayor

### **ATTEST:**

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Dana Lazcanotegui, City Recorder



**SMITHFIELD CITY CORPORATION**  
**96 South Main**  
**Smithfield, UT 84335**

**AGENDA**

Public notice is given that the Smithfield City Council will meet in a regularly-scheduled meeting at 96 South Main, Smithfield, Utah on **August 13, 2025**. The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. Opening remarks by Wade Campbell

1. Public Hearing to discuss the proposed increase in property tax revenue for the city. The Smithfield City tax on a \$505,000 residence would increase from \$366.91 to \$375.52, which is \$8.61 per year. The Smithfield City tax on a \$505,000 business would increase from \$667.11 to \$682.76, which is \$15.65 per year. If approved, the city would receive an additional \$45,859 in property tax revenue per year as a result of the tax increase. If approved, the city would increase its property tax budgeted revenue by 2.25% above last year's property tax budgeted revenue, excluding eligible new growth.
2. Discussion and possible vote on Resolution 2025-08

Adjournment

**\*\*Items on the agenda may be considered earlier than shown on the agenda\*\***

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals needing unique accommodations for this meeting should contact the City Recorder at (435) 792-7997 at least three (3) days before the date of the meeting.