

**NORTH OGDEN CITY COUNCIL
ANNUAL RETREAT – STRATEGIC PLANNING
MEETING MINUTES**

November 21, 2025

The North Ogden City Council convened on November 21, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. at the North Ogden City Public Safety Building at 515 East 2600 North. Notice of time, place, and agenda of the meeting was posted on the bulletin board at the municipal office and posted to the Utah Public Notice Website on November 13, 2025. Notice of the annual meeting schedule was posted on the bulletin board at the municipal office and posted to the Utah Public Notice Website on December 11, 2024.

Note: The timestamps indicated in blue correspond with the recording of this meeting, which can be located on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCriqbePBxTucXEzRr6fclhQ/videos> or by requesting a copy of the audio file from the North Ogden City Recorder.

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

S. Neal Berube	Mayor	Arrived at 8:30 a.m.
Ryan Barker	Council Member	
Blake Cevering	Council Member	Excused
Jay D Dalpiaz	Council Member	
Chris Pulver	Council Member	
Christina Watson	Council Member	

STAFF PRESENT:

Jon Call	City Manager/Attorney
Rian Santoro	City Recorder
Peter Brown	Finance Director
Dylan Hill	Public Works Inspector
Dave Espinoza	Public Works Director/Assistant City Manager
Casey Hunsaker	Treasurer and Emergency Management
Katie Gerard	Human Resources Director
Brian Eynon	Chief of Police
Scott Hess	Community and Economic Development Director

VISITORS:

Kevin Burns
Tera Carney

0:00:03 Mayor Pro Tem Barker welcomed everyone to the meeting, offered the invocation, and led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ACTIVE AGENDA

1. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comment was made.

2. ANNUAL OPEN AND PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT TRAINING

0:01:16 City Manager/Attorney Jon Call provided the required annual Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) training. He noted that most Council Members have completed this training previously and that citizens can access OPMA information online as needed. He briefly reviewed that public business must be conducted openly, and any gathering of a Council quorum, including by electronic communication, can constitute a public meeting unless it is a purely social event with no discussion of City business. He reminded the Council to avoid back-and-forth emails or texts that could create an electronic meeting.

Jon explained which committees are considered public bodies and noted that while some groups are not formal public bodies, the City still provides transparency by posting agendas, recording meetings, and preparing minutes. He also reminded Council and staff to speak from the podium so comments are audible and properly recorded in the minutes. Jon reviewed what constitutes disruptive behavior in a meeting, such as shouting, clapping, speaking over the presiding officer, or engaging in dialogue from the audience. The presiding officer is responsible for maintaining order and may ask individuals to stop disruptive conduct or leave if the behavior prevents the meeting from progressing. Removal must be based on conduct, not the content of a person's speech. Council Members discussed common situations and the benefit of giving reminders at the start of meetings.

Jon summarized how First Amendment protections apply in public meetings. The City may regulate the time, place, and manner of speech, but may not limit speech based on viewpoint. Criticism of public officials is protected, even if discourteous, as long as it occurs during the appropriate time and is not disruptive. He briefly reviewed the difference between protected speech and unprotected speech, such as true threats or incitement.

Jon clarified when the City must hold a public hearing and the distinction between hearings and general public comment.

He noted that many land-use hearings occur at the Planning Commission level, while others, such as annexations, occur before the Council. Although not required at every meeting, the City continues to offer public comment to support transparency. The training concluded with no further questions.

Jon concluded by outlining the retreat's focus on the four strategic pillars: Public Safety, Community Unity, Employees, and Economic Growth. Departments will report how they support these priorities and how progress can be measured. The purpose is to confirm Council direction and guide future reporting.

3. DISCUSSION ON NORTH OGDEN CITY COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC GOALS

0:40:44 City Manager/Attorney Jon Call outlined the retreat's focus on the four strategic pillars: Public Safety, Community Unity, Employees, and Economic Growth. Departments will report how they support these priorities and how progress can be measured. The purpose is to confirm Council direction and guide future reporting.

A. PUBLIC SAFETY

0:42:18 Police Chief Brian Eynon presented an overview of how the Police Department supports the City's public safety pillar and emphasized that public safety involves all departments, including fire, public works, engineering, planning, emergency management, and administration. He described how major incidents, such as the recent large fire, required coordinated response from multiple departments and illustrated the importance of cross-departmental planning, communication, and problem-solving. He noted that residents often call the Police Department first for issues such as water leaks, and staff then connect them with the correct City division, underscoring the department's role as a front-line contact for the community. Chief Eynon explained that the Police Department's strategic plan focuses on operational integration, community engagement, data-driven planning, and cross-department partnerships. He stated that public safety performance should be tracked through clear metrics, such as crime rate trends, response times, resident satisfaction (including survey and social media feedback), and safer business and neighborhood environments. He suggested that future reporting to the Council be tied to the four pillars, using measurable targets (for example, implementation of new officers or training, reductions in crime, or improved response times) so that pillar liaisons can receive consistent, data-based updates.

The Council and staff discussed metrics related to police staffing, including the current officer-to-population ratio (approximately one officer per 1,000 residents), and the need for a regular annual population estimate tied to staffing decisions. Council Members and the Mayor also noted that staffing needs are influenced by factors such as commercial development, call types, and daytime population, not just total residents. There was discussion about balancing sworn officers and Community Service Officers (CSOs), and possibly adjusting staffing over time to better address enforcement of nuisance and property maintenance issues.

Chief Eynon and staff discussed using metrics across departments to support public safety, including roadway and crosswalk safety, school-zone compliance, workplace safety and reportable incidents, infrastructure complaints, and water quality testing. The group stressed that metrics should be meaningful, actionable, and tied to clear goals, rather than collected only for reporting purposes. Council and staff also discussed community feedback and code enforcement, including the visual appearance of the City, use of CSOs, and potential volunteer or partnership models to help address ongoing concerns such as signs, overgrown yards, and neighborhood appearance.

Council Members and Mayor Berube further discussed the definition of public safety, the role of perception and resident feedback, and how growth and housing patterns might affect safety expectations. Staff noted that public perception often links higher-density housing with crime, and suggested exploring metrics such as calls for service per household or per area to better understand actual impact and inform future land use and policing decisions. Chief Eynon committed to continuing to provide data-driven information to the Council, including crime statistics and other key indicators, so that policy decisions can be based on accurate information rather than anecdotal reports.

Emergency communication was also discussed, including challenges experienced during the recent fire when cell service was impacted. Council expressed interest in pursuing FirstNet or similar priority communication options for elected officials and key staff so they can help share accurate information and reduce rumors during critical incidents. Chief Eynon reported that he and staff are in active discussions with FirstNet representatives and will bring back additional information.

B. COMMUNITY UNITY

1:46:40 City Recorder Rian Santoro and Public Works Director/Assistant City Manager Dave Espinoza presented staff's proposed goals and metrics for the Community Pillar, emphasizing connection, belonging, trust, transparency, and partnerships as essential to a healthy City.

They explained that community engagement directly supports all other City priorities, including safety and economic development.

First, they proposed simple, predictable opportunities for resident engagement, such as quarterly service events, expanding Youth Council involvement, and building a unified volunteer tracking system based on software already used by Youth Council. They recommended using pre- and post-event surveys through Placer AI to measure participation and adjust programming, especially for large traditions like Cherry Days. Dave noted that the City should rely on existing technology to evaluate what events actually draw people and when adjustments are needed.

Second, they outlined ways to improve communication and transparency. They recommended creating a basic public dashboard showing project status, budgets, timelines, volunteer participation, and event metrics so residents can understand City work at a glance. They suggested hosting quarterly community conversations like “Tacos with a Cop,” “Pizza with Public Works,” and topic-specific workshops such as zoning, water sampling, housing, or “City 101.” These would help reduce misinformation and give residents early, accurate information rather than engaging only after controversy arises.

Third, they discussed improvements to parks, trails, and public spaces, emphasizing ADA access, connected trails, shade, and amenities that make parks feel welcoming and inclusive. Dave noted the importance of ADA beyond ramps, including sidewalks, slopes, and accessibility features. They also encouraged updating gateway signage and beautification elements city-wide.

Fourth, they encouraged deeper collaboration with schools, HOAs, churches, and local businesses through twice-yearly partnership roundtables. Dave stressed that schools and HOAs are major community stakeholders that the City rarely coordinates with and said these partnerships could benefit events, volunteering, youth involvement, and community problem-solving. They also recommended sponsorship and recognition programs for business partners.

Both presenters emphasized that Community Unity is the thread that strengthens every other pillar. Strong community reduces strain on police and public works, increases civic pride, improves trust, and boosts economic confidence. They noted that most residents do not understand infrastructure or City processes, and one-on-one workshops and recorded educational videos could help bridge that gap and reduce confusion.

Council discussed the need to support the Youth Council, provide clearer metrics, improve communication beyond social media, and consider creating a part-time outreach coordinator role.

They also noted the value of Council-to-Council and City-to-City regional collaboration, increasing attendance at strategic planning discussions rather than only controversial meetings, and encouraging volunteer committees like beautification or outreach. Rian emphasized that she and Dave intend all proposed metrics to remain simple, easy to track, and scalable.

C. EMPLOYEES

2:31:29 Human Resources Director Katie Gerard and Administrative Services Manager Bryce Nelson presented the Employee Pillar, emphasizing that North Ogden's Staff are the "most important pillar" and that the City's culture and people are what make it feel like home. They framed the strategy around three main areas: employee growth and development, management and well-being, and maintaining competitive pay and benefits, all tied to retention and internal advancement. For growth and development, Katie described a clear Citywide framework of job ladders and professional growth plans. Every position has defined criteria and training required to move up (for example, Water Worker I to II), and the City funds the necessary courses and certifications while expecting employees to take initiative. They are tracking the percentage of employees completing required and optional trainings, how many have current growth plans, and how many are cross-trained in at least one additional role. She highlighted recent cross-training at City Hall, where all front-office staff were trained to take utility payments and answer basic service questions so residents are not impacted when key staff are sick or in training. Promotions are intentionally internal whenever possible; both Public Works and the Police Department have developed strong internal candidates for supervisory roles, which Katie and Bryce see as a sign that the system is working. On employee management and well-being, Bryce said this is an area where the City is already strong and wants to keep investing. They are watching engagement and communication scores, participation in recognition efforts, use of work-life (or "life-work") balance benefits, team-building activities, and mental health support. Utilization of the city's Employee Assistance Program through Bloomquist Health is well above the benchmark, with usage around one-third of employees and their family members, which the presenters see as evidence that employees know about and are using the support available. The City has deliberately encouraged employees to take time off, modified policies so people can use sick leave without being penalized at year-end cash-out, extended sick and vacation benefits to part-time and seasonal staff, and provides front-loaded banks of leave at hire so new employees are not afraid to ask for time off.

On pay and benefits, Katie explained that the City continually benchmarks salaries and benefits against comparable cities by size and by a 75-mile radius, adjusting pay scales regularly to stay in the market range. New employees are hired at a percentage of the market average and can move up through annual merit increases and completion of training and certifications. The City tracks how often pay scales are updated, how benefits are used, and how well employees understand the compensation system, emphasizing transparency as a way to build trust. They also track performance-based incentives to ensure high performance is recognized and rewarded. Council members noted that investing in employees is cheaper than turnover and consulting costs, that pay and benefits decisions have required tough choices (including property tax increases and reallocation of positions), and that the City has moved from being a “training ground” to a more competitive employer.

In discussion, the Mayor and Council reinforced that employees are the foundation of every other pillar: strong compensation and culture support public safety, community unity, and economic planning. They discussed the importance of benefits (PTO, sick leave, medical), praised recent cultural improvements and HR’s responsiveness, and noted that supportive public comments from the council in meetings significantly affect morale and retention. There was also a brief discussion about ensuring elected official compensation is not left far behind market realities, and about continuing to refine metrics (such as engagement surveys and small, frequent feedback tools) so that staff and Council can monitor employee experience and adjust strategies over time.

D. ECONOMIC PLANNING

[3:10:29](#) Finance Director Peter Brown and CED Director Scott Hess presented the Economic Planning pillar, centering on how North Ogden funds City services sustainably, invests in infrastructure and beautification, and plans land use to support a long-term, healthy tax base. They framed their discussion around a “three-legged budget stool” (sales tax, property tax, and service fees), strategic infrastructure investment, and deliberate land-use planning supported by modern, streamlined development services.

Peter explained the “budget stool” using Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) guidelines. For a City like North Ogden (no local income tax, ~20–25k population), GFOA recommends balanced reliance on three main City-derived revenues: sales tax, property tax, and service fees. North Ogden’s current mix is roughly 29% sales tax (recommended not to exceed ~30% due to volatility), 48% property tax (recommended not to exceed ~60% to avoid over-burdening property owners), and 24% service fees (recommended not to exceed ~30%). He stressed that

beyond the overall property tax share, the split between residential and commercial payers matters: currently about 84% of property tax comes from residential, higher than the recommended 60–70% range, which suggests a need to grow the commercial base so more of the load is carried by commercial and multifamily properties that are taxed at 100% of value versus the 45% residential discount.

Council discussion noted that increasing commercial property and certain fees (e.g., licenses, fines) can strengthen revenues without repeatedly pushing large property-tax hikes on homeowners, and that any sales-tax dependence above the ideal threshold should be treated as reserves rather than baked into ongoing operating budgets. They also highlighted that North Ogden’s ordinance dedicating property tax to public safety has made truth-in-taxation increases easier to explain and accept, though some staff flagged the practical difficulty of maintaining a “lock box” in a pooled fund environment.

Scott then shifted to how infrastructure and beautification underpin both public safety and economic strength. He underscored that well-maintained roads, utilities, parks, and stormwater systems are “invisible” when they’re working; the toilet flushes, water drains, and emergency vehicles can respond quickly, but they are foundational to residents’ quality of life and to attracting investment. Beautification elements, such as the hanging flower baskets that once signaled “you’re in North Ogden,” wide sidewalks on Washington Boulevard, and better signage to parks and trailheads, were described as part of civic identity and economic competitiveness, not luxuries.

Trackable measures for this goal include lane miles improved annually, park and playground projects completed on a planned replacement schedule, infrastructure condition ratings (pavement, utilities, parks), and visible beautification projects (planters, streetscapes, signage). Council members and Mayor Berube noted that cities that invest in aesthetics and amenities tend to see stronger long-term economic outcomes than those that avoid “nice things” to save in the short term.

A major portion of Scott’s presentation focused on land-use strategy and the City’s long-term tax base. Using a 1961 general plan map, he illustrated how past planning decisions still shape today’s development and where opportunities were missed, for example, not reserving a commercial corner near today’s Nordic Valley access that could have served as a strong tax generator. He emphasized the importance of designating and protecting key commercial and “neighborhood commercial” nodes along major corridors (e.g., Monroe, Washington, 1700–1900 North) to ensure sufficient commercial property for future tax revenues, rather than allowing those sites to default to permanent residential neighborhoods. Commercial and professional office uses (banks, clinics, offices) can be relatively low-impact neighbors while paying the full property-tax rate, which benefits the City’s finances.

There was extensive Council discussion about recent controversies where residents opposed commercial zoning near them, the tension between immediate neighborhood preferences and 20–40-year fiscal needs, and the idea that the general plan should be more specific and proactive, designating future commercial areas now, and then aligning zoning accordingly before development applications arrive. Scott also touched on consistency in zoning decisions, the risk of unused special zones (like storage facilities or mixed-use that never actually becomes mixed), whether unused entitlements should eventually revert, and state-level efforts to preempt local zoning. Staff urged that careful, forward-looking planning and consistent application of rules are key to preserving local land-use control.

Finally, Scott outlined Goal 4: modernizing and streamlining development services. Over the past few years, the City has moved from paper applications and hand-drawn plans to largely digital processes, online land-use and building permits, electronic plan review and interdepartmental routing, and online payment processing. North Ogden is meeting or beating State timelines for permit reviews and significantly shortening rezoning and application processing compared to many other cities. They plan to continue migrating the remaining “one-off” paper or email forms into online portals, track average review times, and begin measuring developer and resident satisfaction with these tools. The City is also expanding use of its Placer.ai data platform to understand event attendance (e.g., Cherry Days parade routes), visitor movement, and how those patterns support local businesses, as well as park and facility utilization. While the software is a substantial investment for a small City, staff argued that its value is already being realized via better decision-making and staff time savings (e.g., reduced manual payments and phone calls).

In closing, Peter and Scott reiterated that Economic Planning is about long-term balance: maintaining a healthy revenue mix consistent with best practices, investing steadily in infrastructure and beautification, protecting and strategically expanding the commercial tax base through thoughtful land use, and using modern tools to make development and permitting efficient. They asked the Council for directional feedback on whether these goals and proposed metrics are aligned with the Council’s vision, with the understanding that staff will refine the metrics into “SMART” measures and report back through the pillar-liaison structure and quarterly pillar-focused work sessions.

3:52:53 Following the strategic pillar presentations, City Manager/Attorney Jon Call invited the group to offer additional thoughts on any of the pillars, noting they did not need to remain solely on the topic of economic planning.

Council Member Pulver began by circling back to the general plan and annexation, pointing out that the current plan appears more aggressive about annexing county “islands” than the City has been in practice. He expressed concern that if the City does not intend to follow the General Plan as written, it should be revisited and adjusted. Jon explained that while the City can compel annexation of islands, doing so is costly per parcel and often unpopular with affected residents who would face a higher tax rate.

Council and staff discussed the fish farm as an example of a long-standing, unique County use that does not fit neatly in current zoning but is tied closely to the community’s identity. Staff noted that, when annexation becomes necessary, the City will likely need a tailored zoning approach so the fish farm can continue operating in a way that both reflects its impact and preserves its role as a community asset.

The discussion then shifted to code enforcement and the possibility of using volunteers or citizen support to address lower-priority nuisances. Council Member Pulver suggested identifying tasks that do not implicate immediate fire-life-safety issues, such as long-term unfinished front yards, chronic weeds, or illegal temporary signs, and exploring ways trained volunteers or a small committee could help track and report those issues so code staff and CSOs can focus on higher-level concerns. Staff acknowledged that some legal constraints and nuances must be researched, but were open to creative approaches. A prior concept of maintaining a “Top 10” priority nuisance list was mentioned; staff suggested that a small committee could be invited to attend periodic meetings where the list is reviewed and updated, allowing residents to act as additional “eyes and ears” while also getting a better understanding of the laws and enforcement limitations. Jon cautioned that State statutes would need to be checked carefully before moving forward with any bounty-style “sign pulling” or similar ideas, but there was agreement that the concept is worth exploring.

Council then asked how follow-up from Council meetings is being tracked to completion. City Recorder Rian Santoro explained that staff are now using Monday.com as an internal tracking system. During each Council and Staff meeting, she records Council suggestions and action items, assigns them to a responsible staff member, and sets automated reminders. These items are reviewed weekly in staff meetings, and the tool has already helped staff move several items, such as the new crosswalk at the boundary of three cities on 2550, through to completion. Council members expressed interest in having view-only access so they can see the status of council-generated tasks, such as third-party audit questions or citizen summary ideas, without needing to email or text staff. Staff agreed that providing view access is the next logical step now that internal use is more consistent.

There was also interest in eventually using the same platform to track pillar-related metrics and projects so that council members can quickly see, for example, whether specific beautification or dashboard projects are underway or complete.

Council and staff next discussed the status of RDA-funded projects. Scott Hess reported that he has spoken with each project sponsor and that the City will be issuing “notice to proceed” letters requiring a concrete response within a set timeframe, likely 60 to 90 days. If projects still do not advance, he and Jon will bring options back to the Council for reprogramming those funds, particularly as the City transitions from the old RDA to a new CDA at the request of the state. Mayor Berube emphasized that incentive money sitting unused is a missed opportunity when there are other projects of greater benefit to the community that could be funded. Council members questioned whether staff should continue “holding hands” with applicants who have had more than a year to act, or whether the City should shift those resources toward more impactful and timely projects.

Solid waste services and recycling were also addressed. Dave Espinoza confirmed that a new solid waste RFP is being released and will be structured to show multiple options. One option will mirror the current service, while another will include scenarios for reintroducing recycling. Those bid schedules will allow the City to see the true cost of bringing recycling back. Council asked whether recycling could be offered on an opt-in basis; Dave responded that this is operationally difficult because it requires different billing and route controls when almost every household still has a blue can. Council members also briefly revisited prior discussions about an amphitheater promotion committee. Jon noted staff are working to build stronger partnerships with community groups so that volunteers and partners can shoulder more of the promotion and planning, as occurred successfully in the last season when Rian, Stacy’s group, and administrative staff collaborated.

A substantial portion of the discussion focused on the City’s leaf vacuum truck service, affectionately referred to as “Snuffleupagus.” Council members noted that residents strongly value the leaf collection service and that many may not realize it could disappear when the current truck reaches the end of its life. Dave acknowledged that replacing the truck would be expensive and would likely require an increase in stormwater or similar fees but also noted that, if the service disappears, the City will still have to manage leftover leaf piles, which will put pressure on other systems. Council Member Dalpiaz suggested a short survey or “flash vote” to explain the projected life of the existing truck and ask residents directly whether they would support paying more to continue the service. Jon pointed out that creating a dedicated fee also creates an expectation that crews will be available on demand, which would need to be managed carefully.

Alternatives, such as free or expanded leaf drop-off at the green waste site, were mentioned as possible compromises. Staff agreed to explore ways to gauge resident support for continuing or modifying the service.

The conversation returned several times to resident engagement and how to combine in-person and digital tools.

Council members noted that online surveys routinely produce hundreds of responses, which is far more than most in-person meetings. There was interest in ensuring that pillar-related workshops and “City 101” classes could be attended live and also accessed online via recordings, summaries, or dashboard posts. Council Member Watson suggested that as the City builds out a community dashboard, it could include recaps of one-on-one workshops, simple charts and graphs, and links to ongoing surveys so residents who prefer to participate from home can still engage meaningfully. Staff agreed this should be a standing goal whenever community engagement is discussed and noted that Katie’s short informational videos have already proven to be an effective online communication tool.

Finally, the group touched on several other operational items and next steps. Staff confirmed that an RFP for solid waste will include scenarios for recycling and noted that green waste and other utility services will likely need periodic fee reviews. Council members asked about a possible amphitheater promotion group; staff indicated they are working to formalize relationships with community partners so future seasons are less staff-heavy. There was also a brief mention of the City’s road funding needs as an “800-pound elephant” that intersects every pillar, from public safety to employee capacity and long-range economic planning, with staff indicating this topic will be addressed in greater depth at upcoming meetings. The meeting concluded with an understanding that staff will refine metrics under each pillar, continue to log and track council requests using monday.com, and bring back targeted items, such as RDA fund decisions, solid waste options, and potential general plan adjustments, for further Council direction.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No Public Comment was made.

5. **MAYOR/COUNCIL/STAFF COMMENTS**

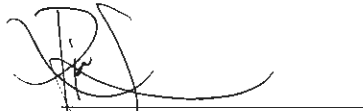
4:29:25 Council Member Pulver closed by saying he really enjoyed the strategic discussions and thought all the presentations were excellent.

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

Council Member Watson motioned to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 12:29 p.m.


S. Neal Berube, Mayor


Brian Santoro
City Recorder



12.7.25
Date Approved