

Thursday, January 1, 2026

To: Heber City Council, City Manager, Matt Brower and Heber City Public Information Officer, Ryan Bunnell

Unanimously From: Wasatch County GOP Executive Board

Dear Heber City Elected Leaders, Matt Brower and Ryan Bunnell,

Recently we reviewed the Heber City Communications Policy (“Policy”) that has been proposed. Before the council votes on this Policy, we as representatives of the Wasatch County Republican Party would like to respond to this Policy proposal.

In a Constitutional Republic, elected officials are chosen by voters to act as their direct agents in making decisions, explaining policies and actions taken and being held accountable through elections and ongoing dialog. When communications of any sort come primarily from unelected staff or city managers, it undermines this fundamental principle of direct agents. The mayor, Heber City’s CEO, and the city council are Heber City’s executive and legislative branches. It is these elected direct agents to whom we look for communications that concern Heber City residents.

Accountability flows from voters to elected officials, not bureaucrats. Direct communication ensures that officials cannot hide behind intermediaries. Unelected staff or managers face no electoral consequences; they lack the same incentive to prioritize constituent needs or respond transparently. Creating a Policy that requires all communications to be made by paid staff, creates a “buffer” that dilutes such accountability. Officials can distance themselves from unpopular messages or decisions by attributing them to “staff recommendations”, eroding the direct link between voters and their elected representatives. Accountability relies on a clear chain – citizens elect representatives, who must then justify their actions directly to stay in office.

Authenticity and trust are built through direct and personal engagement. Constituents deserve to hear from the people they voted for, not filtered or ‘branded’ interpretations. This beautiful city is much more than a logo or controlled messaging; it is made up of a diverse group of people who love living here and trusted the mayor and council with their votes. It is a gross disservice to put a wall of communication between the voters/taxpayers and those they directly elected.

Staff directed communications removes the authenticity of hearing directly from our elected leaders. If trust is to be rebuilt or earned, it cannot and will not come by removing direct engagement with the public. Direct outreach via signed letters, personal social media posts, surveys and live Q&A sessions builds trust by showing the public that our officials are accessible and invested in the well-being of the citizens of Heber City. Direct communication will foster stronger connections and build stronger relationships with the public. This will lead to higher public confidence and better-informed policy feedback.

Historical concerns about “unelected bureaucrats” as well as recent news regarding our government, highlight how over-reliance on staff can create a perception of a ‘shadow government’, reducing transparency and fostering distrust.

Direct communication empowers Heber citizens and improves governance. It allows constituents to hear unfiltered explanations, ask follow-up questions and feel their voices matter, while

encouraging civic participation, something each elected individual should want for those who trust them with their votes. The mayor and council should seek first-hand insights into public sentiment, leading to more responsive policies rather than decisions made in the echo chamber of staff advice, and this Policy is a red flag to all voters that there is a lack of interest in hearing Heber voters.

Admittedly, staff plays a vital role in our city – but public communications should come directly from elected leaders if you seek to preserve democratic legitimacy. It should be required and encouraged that direct outreach and engagement be a part of elected leaders' jobs. The end result would be a stronger trust in government at all levels.

We urge you to not pass this Policy and have the strength to look your direct agents in the eye on all city matters. Upholding all aspects of First Amendment rights is a core principle of the United States of America and we urge your Policy to match the Constitution, not negate it.

Sincerely,

Wasatch County GOP Executive Board

David Johnson, Chair

Patty Sprunt, Vice Chair

Katrina Berg, Treasurer

Stefani Sanatar, Secretary

Cindy Cossairt, State Central Committee Representative

Jordanelle Ridge Conservation Easement Discussion

January 6, 2026

At the request of Wasatch County, Jordanelle Ridge is willing to discuss the use of a Land Trust, subject to the following conditions:

1. Jordanelle Ridge shall retain rights to install any and all necessary infrastructure for development (for example: water tanks, storm flow basins, underground utility transmission lines, access roads, etc). Heber City will retain jurisdiction and exclusive rights over all approvals of infrastructure and Jordanelle Ridge will not be required to seek approval from the Land Trust or Wasatch County.
2. Heber City, Wasatch County and Jordanelle Ridge will work together in good faith to establish a process to select the proper Land Trust entity that is qualified and capable to act as trustee.
3. The purpose of the Land Trust easement shall be for recreational purposes and shall provide for flexibility relating to recreation.
4. The Land Trust will oversee and be limited to 1,967.30 acres, plus the 217.25 (acres of land previously conveyed to the County by Jordanelle Ridge), for a total of 2184.55 acres. The Land Trust will not include or extend to any additional acreage within the Jordanelle Ridge Master Plan.
5. Wasatch County and/or the Wasatch Open Lands Board will pay all costs associated with establishing the Land Trust, including stewardship costs and the one-time endowment fee.
6. Wasatch County and/or the Land Trust will assume all responsibility for the maintenance, management, and care of the trails and will fund all associated costs.
7. Jordanelle Ridge and Heber City will retain step-in rights in the event the trails are not maintained at a level consistent with the standard of maintenance over the past 15 years.

