



HIGHLAND CITY

HIGHLAND CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

Approved January 20, 2026

Highland City Council Chambers, 5400 West Civic Center Drive, Highland Utah 84003

6:00 PM REGULAR SESSION

Call to Order: Mayor Kurt Ostler

Invocation: Council Member Scott L. Smith

Pledge of Allegiance: Council Member Doug Cortney

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Kurt Ostler as a regular session at 6:07 pm. The meeting agenda was posted on the Utah State Public Meeting Website at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. The prayer was offered by Council Member Scott L. Smith. Those in attendance were led in the Pledge of Allegiance by Council Member Doug Cortney.

PRESIDING: Mayor Kurt Ostler

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Ron Campbell	Present
Doug Cortney	Present
Kim Rodela	Present
Scott L. Smith	Present

CITY STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Erin Wells, Assistant City Administrator/Community Development Director Jay Baughman, City Attorney/Planning & Zoning Administrator Rob Patterson, City Deputy Recorder Heather White, Finance Director David Mortensen, City Engineer/Public Works Director Chris Trusty, Fire Chief Brian Patten, Police Chief Brian Gwilliam

OTHERS PRESENT: Jon Hart, Liz Rice, Wes Warren, Kristen Richey, Jeffrey Anderson, Teri T. Jerman, Kelson Gorrell, Dennis J. LeBaron, Brittney P. Bills, Natalie Ball, Kevin Black, Ami Gorrell

Mayor Ostler explained Council Member Ron Campbell was present as a current Council Member, but former Council Member Brittney P. Bills was not present on the dais as she had resigned her position on the Council this morning; as Mayor-elect, Ms. Bills will be participating in the process to select a new Council Member, along with Council Member-elect Liz Rice.

1. UNSCHEDULED PUBLIC APPEARANCES

Please limit comments to three minutes per person. Please state your name.

Kevin Black addressed the Council, expressing interest in the process of appointing a new Council Member. He commended the many applicants who demonstrated a sense of public virtue and willingness to sacrifice their personal time for the greater good of the community. Mr. Black urged the Council to thoroughly investigate

potential conflicts of interest among candidates and to select someone who would bring more diversity to the Council to ensure all perspectives in Highland are represented.

2. ACTION ITEMS

a. RESOLUTION: America250 Partnership and Ad-Hoc Committee *General City Management*
Rob Patterson, City Attorney/Planning & Zoning Administrator

The City Council will consider adopting a resolution to partner with America250 Utah and to establish an ad hoc committee to commemorate and celebrate America's semi quincentennial.

City Attorney/Planning & Zoning Administrator Patterson explained that this item was carried over from the previous meeting. He described the opportunity for Highland to participate in the semi quincentennial (250th anniversary) of America by adopting a resolution, creating an ad hoc committee, and submitting ideas for celebration to qualify for state and federal grant funding of \$1,500. Mr. Patterson indicated that the ad hoc committee would be formed as directed by the Mayor and would last for the upcoming year. He noted that in a previous meeting it was suggested that Kurt Ostler lead the committee.

Council Member Campbell inquired about potential strings attached to the grant funding. Mr. Patterson responded that while federal funds typically have many requirements, this particular grant appeared to have minimal restrictions beyond requiring the City to submit celebration ideas that reflect America and the community. Council Member Cortney added that these were State funds rather than Federal funds, which might further reduce concerns about restrictions.

Council Member Ron Campbell MOVED that the City Council adopt the proposed resolution to support America250 Utah and create the Highland Utah250 Community Committee.

Council Member Scott L. Smith SECONDED the motion.

The vote was recorded as follows:

<i>Council Member Ron Campbell</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Council Member Doug Cortney</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Council Member Kim Rodela</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Council Member Scott L. Smith</i>	<i>Yes</i>

The motion carried 4:0

b. ACTION: Vacancy Appointment *General City Management*

Kurt Ostler, Mayor

The City Council will consider applicants to fill Brittney P. Bills' seat.

Mayor Ostler invited newly elected Council Member Liz Rice and Mayor-elect Brittney Bills to participate in the appointment process. He noted that Council Member Ron Campbell had recused himself from the vote as he was an applicant for the vacancy.

City Attorney Rob Patterson explained the process for filling the vacant council seat left by Mayor-elect Brittney Bills. The process would include initial introductions from each candidate, followed by a round of questions from each council member, Mayor-elect Bills, and Council Member-elect Rice. After the questioning, each council member would nominate up to two candidates. Those receiving nominations would proceed to a final round of questions before the voting process. Mr. Patterson noted that only current council members and Mayor-elect Bills would participate in the final vote, with Mayor Ostler voting only in case of a tie.

All candidates were given two minutes for introduction and one minute to respond to each question. Candidates included: Ron Campbell, Wes Warren, Kristen Richey, Jeffrey Anderson, Teri Jerman, Kelson Gorrell, and Dennis LeBaron.

Ron Campbell:

In his introduction, Mr. Campbell expressed humility about serving on the Council and described the experience as a steeper learning curve than anticipated. He praised the collaborative nature of the Council, noting that most votes were unanimous. Looking at the other candidates, Mr. Campbell stated "you can't go wrong" as "whoever is chosen tonight will make a contribution to the Council." He emphasized his open-mindedness despite having strong opinions, citing his approach to the 11200 North road decision where he made a list of issues to address before making his decision.

Council Member Kim Rodela asked Mr. Campbell how he would balance community survey results showing clear majority preference with feedback from smaller but more vocal groups. Mr. Campbell referenced the alcohol sales issue where 62 percent of residents supported allowing restaurants to serve alcohol, despite vocal opposition. He explained that he based his decision on principles of liberty, which he fought for as a veteran, while trying to do what he believed was best for Highland citizens.

Mayor-elect Bills followed up asking how Mr. Campbell weighs personal preference versus duty to the public. Mr. Campbell stated that duty to the public trumps personal preferences in representative government. He gave an example of Sunday business openings, where he personally supported it but respected the residents' vote to keep businesses closed on Sundays.

Council Member Smith asked how Mr. Campbell would meet state mandates for affordable housing while maintaining low density. Mr. Campbell described mandates as problematic and explained that he consistently votes against them on the Utah League of Cities and Towns legislative policy committee. He believed Highland's approach in the general plan addressing ADUs in specific locations satisfied mandates while preserving the City's character.

Council Member Doug Cortney presented Mr. Campbell with a scenario about zero lot line setbacks where a builder's roof overhangs the property line and may request an exception to the City's building code. Mr. Campbell opposed making exceptions for clear violations, referencing a past fence issue where he voted to require removal or replacement of a non-compliant fence.

Council Member-elect Rice asked what three steps Mr. Campbell would take to put the city on firmer financial footing. Mr. Campbell noted that Highland is currently stable, debt-free, with reserves for emergencies. He expressed reluctance to support property tax increases, describing himself as fiscally conservative.

Mayor Ostler asked Mr. Campbell's position on retaining the R1-40 zoning designation, and other City zones. Mr. Campbell supported maintaining R1-40 zoning unless specific objectives justified changes, such as senior housing, which he believed should be deed-restricted rather than merely targeted.

Wes Warren:

Mr. Warren explained that the current vacancy wasn't a new beginning but continuing an existing term. He believed he was uniquely qualified because he's knowledgeable about Highland's current issues and could "hit the ground running." He emphasized his productive working relationships with current Council members and his connection to young families in Highland, a demographic he feels needs better representation. Mr. Warren expressed his commitment to preserving Highland's values.

Mayor-elect Bills asked Mr. Warren how he would separate personal preferences from duty to the public. Mr. Warren emphasized transparency in decision-making, describing himself as a proxy for residents who listens, studies issues, and represents citizens' voices while utilizing city staff expertise and existing code.

Council Member Smith thanked Mr. Warren for his service on various committees, particularly the Parks and Trails Committee and his work on Highland Family Park. Council Member Smith asked him to name another park needing improvements and how to fund them. Mr. Warren suggested enhancing Beacon Hills Park and its disc golf course, which he described as a "hidden gem" in Highland. He recommended reallocating existing budget resources rather than seeking new funding.

Council Member Cortney presented a scenario about Highland's requirement for the top two feet of 6-foot fences abutting trails to be 50 percent open; he asked his opinion on this requirement. Mr. Warren supported maintaining the existing ordinance requiring the top portion of fences to be open near trails for safety reasons, noting that openness creates a sense of security for trail users based on conversations he had with residents.

Council Member Rodela asked for a specific project Mr. Warren had been involved in and how it benefited the City. Mr. Warren discussed his work on the Highland Family Park, where he appreciated the city's responsiveness to resident feedback. He noted the personal significance of the all-abilities park, as his son is on the autism spectrum.

Council Member-elect Rice asked Mr. Warren if he would bond for a recreation center. Mr. Warren stated he would not support bonding for a recreation center, explaining that while bonding can be appropriate for essential infrastructure, there are more responsible approaches for amenities like a recreation center.

Mayor Ostler asked where Mr. Warren thought high density would be appropriate in Highland. Mr. Warren supported limited development similar to the Coventry Development in the Longhorn property area, restricted to senior housing.

Kristin Richey:

Ms. Richey shared that she moved to Highland four years ago from Redlands, California, where she witnessed that City's decline over 35 years due to homelessness, educational quality issues, and safety concerns including a terrorist attack. She expressed her desire to prevent Highland from experiencing similar problems and stated she would love to be part of keeping Highland great.

Council Member Smith asked about Highland's budget, specifically the general fund amount. Ms. Richey acknowledged she wasn't familiar with specific figures but emphasized the importance of prioritizing expenditures. She expressed her commitment to studying City finances if appointed.

Council Member Cortney presented a scenario about the city contracting with a lobbyist for \$100,000 per year who secured \$1 million grants, but with concerns about propping up a broken system. Ms. Richey noted her experience at the state Capitol with the Eagle Forum. She suggested that examining the specific interests being represented would be important to determine whether the expense provided value to Highland. She expressed concerns about state requirements for cities that might be unconstitutional.

Council Member Rodela asked about Ms. Richey's experience with Highland's local government structures. Ms. Richey explained that while she hasn't served in Highland's local government, she had experience in Redlands and has been active at Utah's state legislature with the Eagle Forum. She expressed interest in serving on Highland's Planning Commission.

Council Member-elect Rice asked how Ms. Richey would mitigate traffic problems specifically on 9600 North. Ms. Richey mentioned her own near-accident due to road design issues and supported the Council's efforts to implement traffic calming measures and improve safety.

Mayor-elect Bills asked how Richey would balance short-term versus long-term needs. Ms. Richey appreciated the City's general plan process and the importance of maintaining a long-term vision while addressing emergent issues as needed.

Mayor Ostler asked under what circumstances she would approve tax increases for various services. Ms. Richey expressed opposition to tax increases, noting resident frustration with rising taxes and fees. She advocated for careful prioritization of needs within existing resources.

Jeffrey Anderson:

Mr. Anderson, a Highland resident for 15 years and homeowner for 10, expressed his desire to give back to the community through public service. He acknowledged his limited experience in civil government but highlighted his expertise in risk management from his hospital career and his current work as a real estate agent selling new construction.

Council Member Cortney asked Mr. Anderson's opinion on a scenario about Highland's planned development zones requiring commercial aspects, with a general plan proposal to remove this requirement to encourage moderate income housing. Mr. Anderson emphasized examining long-term impacts. From his real estate background, he noted that higher density housing doesn't necessarily solve affordability issues as construction costs remain high. He supported maintaining some commercial zoning to meet community needs.

Council Member Rodela asked Mr. Anderson about his long-term vision for Highland and maintaining all residents' interests. Mr. Anderson prioritized maintaining larger lots and the rural feel identified in the general plan. He noted Highland's property tax rates are lower than neighboring communities like Salem.

Council Member-elect Rice asked Mr. Anderson's take on the governor's reported statewide zoning takeover from cities. Mr. Anderson strongly disagreed with state control of local zoning, citing Thomas Jefferson's vision of keeping governance focused at the local level.

Mayor-elect Bills asked what the Council had gotten right and wrong in the last two to three years. Mr. Anderson acknowledged limited direct involvement but appreciated that Council members listen and try to understand issues. He specifically mentioned Council Member Smith's transparency regarding the alcohol decision.

Council Member Smith asked for ways to generate revenue without raising taxes, noting Highland has the lowest tax rate among all the cities in the area. Mr. Anderson observed that Highland's larger lots and lower density contribute to higher property values and therefore tax revenue. For projects like a recreation center, he suggested partial funding rather than full bonding.

Mayor Ostler asked if Anderson had read the proposed General Plan and what suggestions he had. Mr. Anderson confirmed he had reviewed the General Plan and felt maintaining Highland's feel with larger lots was important, while pushing back against the state on density mandates. He noted that more density is not the right answer in every situation because it does not necessarily translate to affordability. As someone who sells real estate, he saw this firsthand and appreciates the Plan's specificity.

Teri Jerman:

Ms. Jerman, a 30-year Highland resident, expressed her love for the community and its people. She emphasized the importance of protecting Highland's character, particularly its density and development patterns. Ms. Jerman

questioned whether townhomes truly provide affordable housing, noting that rezoning affects property values significantly and doesn't necessarily result in affordability. She advocated for common sense approaches to city issues.

Council Member Rodela asked how to balance Highland's focus on large lots and low density with urban planning showing well-planned cities need variety in housing types. Ms. Jerman agreed balance is important, wanting people's married children to live nearby. She strongly advocated for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on owner-occupied properties as a mechanism to double housing units while keeping costs reasonable. The City would get really good residents living in the ADUs because of an owner-occupancy requirement.

Council Member-elect Rice acknowledged Jerman's past city council service, asking about remaining bond debt and what she would bond for if she were a Council Member. Ms. Jerman reported the city's bond is nearly paid off and she supports remaining debt-free except for health and safety issues. She suggested exploring alternative funding approaches like citizen contributions for desired amenities and demonstrating fiscal responsibility to build public trust.

Mayor-elect Bills asked Jerman to define the job description for a City Council Member. Ms. Jerman described it as protecting the community while maintaining an open mind and being sensible about decisions. She emphasized the importance of separating personal interests from community needs, recalling instances where she lost potential real estate clients due to Council positions.

Council Member Smith asked if Highland should have its own ZIP code and why. Ms. Jerman indicated this is an issue she has not thought about; she stated she believes there are likely good reasons for pursuing a ZIP code for Highland, but she does not know what they are.

Council Member Cortney thanked Ms. Jerman for her previous service, noting late 1990s decisions she was a part of that set the foundation for the Highland that residents enjoy today. He asked Ms. Jerman to consider a scenario involving City staff recommending moving half of reserve funds into highly rated longer-term investments for better returns during dropping interest rates, costing an additional \$15,000 annually to manage. Ms. Jerman indicated this type of information is 'out of her realm', but she would consult and rely on good, certified public accountants (CPAs) before making sound decisions on City investments.

Mayor Ostler asked Jerman to reflect on her previous Council service to highlight accomplishments and things she wished were different. Ms. Jerman stated that Highland was very different when she previously served, but she felt she was part of great decisions that balanced the needs of residents and the health of the City overall.

Kelson Gorrell:

Mr. Gorrell, an eight-year Highland resident, described his professional background in real estate development with companies like Woodbury Corporation. He explained that his experience on the developer side would be valuable as he understands when cities should work with developers and when they should maintain boundaries. Mr. Gorrell also highlighted his accounting background as useful for budget considerations.

Council Member-elect Rice asked how Gorrell would differentiate loyalties between his employer and Highland City. Mr. Gorrell acknowledged the importance of being transparent about potential conflicts and recusing himself when necessary. He shared that he had previously left a manufacturing company over ethical concerns, demonstrating his willingness to stand by his principles.

Mayor-elect Bills asked about the biggest challenges facing Highland in the next two to three years. Mr. Gorrell identified housing affordability and cost of living as key issues, suggesting collaboration between government and the business sector to find solutions.

Council Member Smith noted Highland runs "a tight ship" with a small budget compared to American Fork. He asked what service Gorrell would like to see Highland provide. Mr. Gorrell praised the Highland Family Park but noted frustration with trail maintenance, particularly un-mowed areas. He expressed caution about expensive projects like a recreation center but remained open to discussing them.

Council Member Cortney presented the scenario of a group of Highland residents asking permission for golf carts to be operated on City streets. Mr. Gorrell noted he initially opposed the idea, comparing it to safety concerns with electric bikes, but noted he would remain open-minded about the discussion. He joked about his own child driving a go-kart in his neighborhood.

Council Member Rodela asked what one change Mr. Gorrell would want to tackle as a council member. Mr. Gorrell expressed frustration about Highland Boulevard being used by residents of neighboring communities while Highland residents bear the maintenance costs. He wanted to work on solutions to this issue rather than just complaining about it with neighbors.

Dennis LeBaron:

Mr. LeBaron, a long-time Highland resident and former Council Member, focused on three priorities: continuous improvement, increased citizen involvement, and preserving traditional values. He proposed implementing quarterly informal meetings with citizens to gather feedback and ideas. Mr. LeBaron noted that his 60 years in Highland allowed him to bring a long-term perspective on maintaining foundational values.

Mayor-elect Bills asked how LeBaron balances community input, data, staff advice, and resident input when making decisions. Mr. LeBaron emphasized doing research, relying on staff expertise, and listening to residents through various channels, including informal meetings. He stressed the importance of balancing people's rights with those of their neighbors.

Council Member Smith asked what Mr. LeBaron saw as Highland's number one problem. Mr. LeBaron believed the City was doing well overall but identified pressure for high-density housing as a concern he would resist.

Council Member Cortney's asked Mr. LeBaron's opinion on the proposal to limit campaign contributions over \$1,000 from those filing land use applications. Mr. LeBaron supported the proposal, stating that campaign contributions should be limited to smaller amounts to prevent special interest influence.

Council Member Rodela asked about Council decisions Mr. LeBaron agreed and disagreed with. Mr. LeBaron approved of efforts to improve funding arrangements with Alpine for fire services and securing a unique ZIP code. However, he disagreed with the decision on alcohol sales, suggesting that controversial issues should be put to a public vote through initiatives.

Council Member-elect Rice asked Mr. LeBaron how he would improve the trail system and open space areas without a tax. Mr. LeBaron proposed reviewing trail usage to prioritize the most-used trails and exploring alternative funding through donations and grants before considering fee or tax increases.

Mayor Ostler asked if there was any vote Mr. LeBaron wished he could undo. Mr. LeBaron acknowledged that his vote for a road fee contradicted his campaign promise of "no road fee." He explained that after three years of budget analysis, the Council determined a fee was necessary to fix roads within ten years, but in retrospect, he felt he should have honored his campaign commitment.

Following the interviews, the Council conducted a nomination and voting process; in the first round, the following candidates were nominated to proceed to the next round of interviews. Ron Campbell, Wes Warren, Kristen Richey, Teri Jerman, and Dennis J. LeBaron. Each candidate was then asked one additional question.

Dennis J. LeBaron:

Mayor Ostler asked Mr. LeBaron about what type of zoning he would support for the City. Mr. LeBaron favored maintaining the same kind of ratio of zoning the City currently has, between large lots and high density. If any more high density was needed, it could be in the Longhorn area because it is adjacent to a major road. He emphasized his support of the R1-40 zone and his desire to preserve it whenever possible.

Council Member Rodela asked Mr. LeBaron how he weighs survey results when the majority wants something against his personal decisions. Mr. LeBaron found surveys helpful in guiding the Council's thinking and suggested doing more than one survey on a topic. While it is good to know public leanings, for important issues like alcohol sales or Sunday closing, he would be more supportive of a public vote to determine how the majority of the citizenry feels.

Council Member-elect Rice asked Mr. LeBaron what he would do with a \$1 million grant. Mr. LeBaron stated he would consider more glamorous projects, like a park rather than just infrastructure projects, though that might be necessary. He noted Highland has done well with long-term planning of utility infrastructure and he would consider what would really benefit the City, mentioning the recreation center as something to understand majority opinion on, agreeing he would not want to bond for such a project, but would maybe dedicate grant proceeds to something like that.

Mayor-elect Bills asked for the most important principle when facing difficult decisions. Mr. LeBaron simply answered 'listening and research'.

Council Member Smith asked about the process for establishing pressurized irrigation rates, noting 500 more meters being installed and that many people gave up water shares when the system was installed. Mr. LeBaron found water restrictions unfair and acknowledged the desire of people to have access to unlimited water at a reasonable price, but understood limited resources. He would study data on outcomes for different lot sizes and overall bills. While needing to factor in lot size since one-acre lots use more than quarter-acre lots, he questioned if they should pay four times as much, calling it a factor needing consideration.

Council Member Cortney asked for what services Mr. LeBaron would consider tax increases. Mr. LeBaron labeled a tax increase as a last resort since property and sales tax rates provide revenue rising with inflation. He would expect City budgets and fees to rise with inflation for things like police and roads. He noted the road fee is supposed to be eliminated in 2027, joking it would be awesome for residents to get money back from the government.

Teri Jerman:

Council Member Rodela asked Ms. Jerman how she would respond to small but loud groups pressuring for decisions against Highland's broader needs. Ms. Jerman affirmed she would move in the direction that is best for the entire City but would ensure citizens felt heard through meetings and education about why certain approaches were better. She emphasized it is important to not ignore resident concerns while maintaining focus on City welfare.

Council Member-elect Rice asked Ms. Jerman about her senior housing vision. Ms. Jerman noted she has friends who left Highland because maintaining a 6,000-square-foot home no longer made sense for them. She strongly supported providing options for long-term residents who had participated in and contributed to the community.

Rather than typical developments backing roads, she envisioned senior housing backing to parks where residents could walk and enjoy amenities.

Mayor-elect Bills asked Ms. Jerman to communicate her most important decision-making principle. Ms. Jerman responded: "What's good for the community, the citizens overall."

Council Member Smith asked Ms. Jerman her ideas about connecting Highland's divided town center across the expanding seven-lane Timpanogos Highway for walkability. Ms. Jerman admitted not having considered this issue sufficiently to provide a good answer; she acknowledged overpasses might not work well for all community segments and recognized the question's importance deserving thoughtful consideration of options.

Council Member Courtney asked what would justify the issuance of new bonds in the City. Ms. Jerman cited health and safety as primary considerations; while extra services would be nice, she does not find them imperative. She advocated thinking differently about desired projects - making them smaller, seeking citizen contributions, and being conservative in approach to gain citizen support.

Mayor Ostler asked Ms. Jerman about her General Plan priorities. Ms. Jerman apologized for not reviewing the General Plan recently given her sudden decision to participate. She supported Highland's conservative direction, opposing significant density increases except for specific needs like senior housing. She emphasized maintaining Highland's uniqueness based on long-standing ordinances and conservative resident values.

Kristin Richey:

Council Member-elect Rice asked Ms. Richey how to keep state government out of City matters. Ms. Richey emphasized the importance of good people standing up at legislative sessions, voicing strong opinions, and talking with legislators about concerns. She cited recent concerns about the Governor's proposed zoning takeover, describing efforts to educate legislators and the public about what is at stake. The challenge lay in engaging busy residents who were often unaware of state-level impacts. She advocated for awareness, education, and standing up in opposition when necessary.

Mayor-elect Bills asked Ms. Richey what she does first upon realizing she made a bad decision. Ms. Richey explained she analyzes how she reached that decision - examining influencing circumstances, whether she was misinformed, or if emotional baggage affected her judgment. She would quietly apologize when appropriate and work to reach out and move forward positively, acknowledging this response could be difficult, even within families.

Council Member Smith asked Ms. Richey how she would defend Highland's water rights if neighboring cities wanted them. Ms. Richey connected this issue to State-level involvement with water diversion legislation for the Great Salt Lake and data centers. She felt cities had lost control over water to State dictates, which she opposed. While supporting wise water conservation, she objected to diverting residential water to other projects while citizens suffered.

Council Member Courtney asked Ms. Richey how she handles issues with principled, value-based opinions on all sides. Ms. Richey stated it is possible to strike a balance between being steadfast and kind toward others, seeking dialogue for common ground. However, some issues warranted taking firm stands based on principles, though not constantly.

Council Member Rodela asked Ms. Richey which Council decision she supported and which she opposed. Ms. Richey praised traffic safety efforts addressing dangerous conditions she witnessed daily. She opposed the alcohol passage, sharing that her daughter was hit by a drunk driver as a pedestrian, completely impacting her life. While acknowledging emotional involvement, she felt preserving Highland's original ordinances that residents "bought

into" was worthwhile, objecting to newcomers trying to change Highland rather than adapting to its conservative values.

Mayor Ostler asked Ms. Richey her vision for the Longhorn property along SR-92. Ms. Richey expressed support for beautiful senior housing as a community need, possibly with small commercial elements though uncertain about fit. She suggested tunnels under Timpanogos Highway for safe crossing, sharing her daily walking experience using existing tunnels, finding them safer than bridges.

Wes Warren:

Mayor-elect Bills asked Mr. Warren if consensus is ever necessary. Mr. Warren answered simply: "Yes."

Council Member Smith asked Mr. Warren about Council Members' responsibility after decisions they opposed, and how he would act. Mr. Warren appreciated the American system's recourses for disagreeable decisions. While honoring and upholding decisions made, he believed in continued agitation through education when seeing injustice or poor decisions. He balanced representing people with doing what's right, sometimes protecting minorities despite majority voice. As a Council Member, he emphasized staying unified while respecting appropriate ways to address disagreements as both Council Member and citizen, preserving Council integrity.

Council Member Cortney asked Mr. Warren to identify the biggest argument against appointing him and why they should anyway. Mr. Warren stated the biggest argument against him was that he "is not Ron Campbell," whom he loved and respected. However, the appointment's particular nature required a particular candidate. He worried back-to-back appointments for the same candidate would not look good for the City, the Council, or for Mr. Campbell. Mr. Warren stated he had hit his stride campaigning in the final weeks, discovering many residents felt unrepresented despite the Council's diversity. His goal included improving communication between residents and the City.

Council Member Rodela asked what motivates Mr. Warren for seeking appointment to the City Council given his long attendance at meetings. Mr. Warren highlighted his initial disillusionment with divisive national and state politics that negatively affected him mentally and emotionally. Turning to his City, he found Highland "came through and delivered," showing how government should work. This intoxicating and invigorating experience restored his hope. He could not identify Council Members' party affiliations because partisan lines disappeared when serving neighbors. He loved the nonpartisan nature and appreciated finding a place for complete honesty as the best policy serving the community.

Council Member-elect Rice asked how someone who dislikes conflict avoids being a "yes person." Mr. Warren credited honesty and his real joy for being wrong. While saying yes feels good, he valued the process of changing positions through education, citing his evolution on the recreation center bonding after learning from knowledgeable friends. Being wrong brought him closer to finding what works and what's right. He emphasized honesty with residents, himself, and colleagues since everyone should be considered a member of the same team working to benefit the City; he stated sees no point in political games at this level.

Mayor Ostler noted Mr. Warren's campaign support for library taxes and asked what other areas warranted tax increases. Mr. Warren could not identify anything beyond obvious necessities currently being met. While viewing the library as a necessity better funded through means other than taxes, he would explore tax options if needed. He cited Provo City and Brigham City's successful library campaigns and described himself as being very pro-tax, but very cautious regarding how tax revenue should be spent. He considers it a sacred duty to spend collective funds carefully and appreciated Highland's tight budget and responsible penny-by-penny spending, which he would continue.

Ron Campbell:

Council Member Smith asked Mr. Campbell to explain enterprise funds and rate-setting decisions. Mr. Campbell explained enterprise funds as utilities with fees established to avoid tax increases. Using the road fee example, he praised the previous Council's resident involvement in demonstrating that preventive seal coating costs one-third of replacement. Residents supported the fee based on this information. Any increases would be based solely on projected costs to maintain roads and prevent failures.

Council Member Cortney asked Mr. Campbell to communicate the strongest argument against appointing him, and why the Council should appoint him anyway. Mr. Campbell acknowledged benefits of "new blood" balanced against consistency. In two years, he had learned greatly and made mistakes. He detailed his error supporting campaign contribution limitations for developers, not considering the extensive staff work required - pages of documentation, lists of developers, and training time. While not necessarily reversing his position, he learned to consider implementation impacts more carefully before acting.

Council Member Rodela asked Mr. Campbell what motivates him to seek reappointment to the City Council. Mr. Campbell cited lifelong public service, including nonprofit boards, Senator Hatch's committees, and nine years on the State Rehabilitation Council. Approaching retirement when Sarah Peterson's seat opened, he saw an opportunity to serve his community after serving other causes. Having lived in Highland for 15 years, he called it his favorite place ever, loving its character, open space, and amazing residents. He wanted to serve them while keeping Highland fiscally responsible and sustainable.

Council Member-elect Rice asked Mr. Campbell how to save the library's Libby service without taxes or donations. Mr. Campbell identified the general fund as the only remaining option. Referencing the resident survey showing 66 percent support for the library through either general fund or taxes, he emphasized Libby's importance, sharing how his own children called concerned about the potential loss of a service they use.

Mayor-elect Bills asked Mr. Campbell his most important principle for hard decisions. Mr. Campbell stated being "open-minded and listening" - being open-minded while listening to residents and other Council Members. He valued collaboration and different perspectives from varied life experiences. He had learned more from Council colleagues than from himself, appreciating both agreements and differences that led to common ground. While celebrating numerous five to zero votes as "shocking" and "wonderful," he didn't think all votes should be unanimous but hoped they always involved genuine listening.

Mayor Ostler asked Mr. Campbell his feelings about R1-40 zoning and appropriate locations for multifamily or senior housing. Mr. Campbell firmly supported keeping R1-40 zoning unless serving specific purposes like senior housing - not condos or apartments but small homes on small properties near City edges like the Longhorn property borders. He emphasized locations without negative impact on City feel. For most of the Longhorn property, he would advocate for larger lots and bigger homes, viewing the R1-40 feel as important to residents and himself.

After completing the second round of questions, voting commenced among the Council for five nominated candidates. The first round resulted in Ron Campbell moving forward, and a tie for second place between Wes Warren and Kristin Richey, requiring Mayor Ostler to cast a tie-breaking vote. Mayor Ostler voted for Kristin Richey to move forward.

The final round of voting was conducted between Ron Campbell and Kristin Richey. City Attorney Patterson tabulated the votes and announced that Ron Campbell had been appointed to serve on the Council for the next two years, filling out the remainder of Brittney Bills' term.

Mayor Ostler thanked all candidates for their time and effort, encouraging them to remain involved through various committees including the Planning Commission, Library Board, Parks Committees, and the potential America250 Committee. He expressed being inspired by everyone's desire to serve the community.

ADJOURNMENT

Council Member Doug Cortney MOVED to adjourn the regular meeting and Council Member Scott L. Smith SECONDED the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:42 pm.

I, Heather White, Deputy Recorder of Highland City, hereby certify that the foregoing minutes represent a true, accurate and complete record of the meeting held on December 11, 2025. This document constitutes the official minutes for the Highland City Council Meeting.

Heather White
Highland City Deputy Recorder