

Formal Meeting  
Thursday, January 8, 2026  
5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Join Via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3703674458?pwd=xigAA5545gKVfbjuBUjQhpOPQtUb20.1>

Or Join at the Fisher Mansion, Carriage House 1206 W 200 S, Salt Lake City, UT 84104

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Meeting ID: 370 367 4458

## Unapproved Minutes

<b>1. Gather &amp; Ice Breaker</b>	<b>5:00 PM</b>
A. Dinner & Jeopardy  Board Members present socialized over dinner, and introduced themselves by doing get to know you interviews.	45 min
<b>2. Approval of Minutes</b>	<b>5:45 PM</b>
– Call meeting to order  Ginger Cannon Thomas Merrill Aaron Wiley Eric McGill Austin Whitehead Steve Bloch Meridith Benally Melanie Pehrson Sarah Foran Christian Chavez Kerri Nakamura  – Approve December 4, 2025, meeting minutes  A motion to approve and adopt the Thursday, November 6th, meeting minutes for the Parks, The Natural Lands, Urban Forestry, and Trails Advisory Board was made by Board Member Ginger Cannon. The motion was seconded by Board Member Steve Bloch. The vote passed unanimously, with the Board Members present to approve and adopt minutes from Thursday, November 6 <sup>th</sup> , Advisory Board meeting.	
<b>3. Public Comment</b>	<b>5:50 PM</b>
– Verbal comments are limited to no more than 3 minutes; 15 minutes total. Written comments are welcome.  No members of the public present	
<b>4. Board Action Items</b>	<b>5:55 PM</b>
A. Chair Elections	5 min
B. Vice-Chair Elections  Ginger Cannon asked Maria Romero, Board Manager, to name the candidates for the 2026 Chair and Vice Chair. Maria Romero, Board Manager, added that Kerri Nakamura is the candidate for Chair and Ginger Cannon is the Candidate for Vice Chair. A motion to have Kerri Nakamura as Chair and Ginger Cannon as Chair was made by Steve Bloch, Board	5 min

<p>Member. Christian Chavez, Board Member, seconded the motion. The vote was passed anonymously, with the Board Members present to approve.</p>	
<p><b>5. City Attorney</b></p>	<p><b>6:05 PM</b></p>
<p>A. Open Public Meeting Training, GRAMA Training, and Board Powers &amp; Duties – Cameron Johnson, Senior City Attorney</p> <p>Cameron Johnson, Senior City Attorney, briefly introduced himself and his assignments for Salt Lake City Corporation. Cameron Johnson provided the Utah Open Public Meeting Act Training for the board members present.</p> <p>Cameron Johnson, Senior City Attorney, provided the board members with the Government Records Management Act Training. He added that this is not a mandated training, but it is good information for volunteers for the Public Lands Department.</p> <p>Cameron Johnson provided an overview of the Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA), noting that while the training is not required, it is strongly encouraged to help board members understand public records obligations. He explained that board discussions, deliberations, and work products, including emails, texts, and documents, may be subject to public records requests, a process commonly referred to as being “GRAMA-able.”</p> <p>He also described FOIA, the federal counterpart to GRAMA, and emphasized that the purpose of these laws is to promote transparency by ensuring public access to government records. Cameron clarified what constitutes a record, explaining that nearly all materials prepared, received, or retained by a government employee or official, including electronic communications, may qualify, with limited exceptions such as temporary drafts, personal notes, junk mail, and attorney-client communications.</p> <p>Cameron discussed best practices for compliance, including organizing records, using shared platforms such as Google Drive for board work, and being mindful when communicating about official business via personal email or text messages. He cautioned that texts related to city business may be subject to records requests and encouraged professionalism in all written communications.</p> <p>He concluded by outlining how GRAMA requests are submitted and processed, the City’s timelines for response, and the types of records that may be classified as private, protected, or controlled. Cameron emphasized that transparency is a core function of government and encouraged board members to promptly forward any potential records requests to City staff for handling.</p>	<p>30 mins</p>
<p><b>6. Break</b></p>	<p><b>6:35 PM</b></p>
	<p>10 min</p>
<p><b>7. Director’s Report and Priority Goals for 2026</b></p>	<p><b>6:45 PM</b></p>
<p>– Department overview and 2026 upcoming goals and priorities – Kim Shelley, Public Lands Director</p> <p>Kim Shelley, Public Lands Director began by noting her appreciation for the opportunity to highlight the department’s work. Before starting, she acknowledged a loud alarm was scheduled to sound in the building at 8:30 pm. Although it could not be turned off, she reassured attendees that everyone would be safe when it occurred and Maria Romero, Board Manager for managing the situation and communicating it in advance.</p> <p>Kim Shelley then provided an overview of the department for newer board members, explaining that the department is responsible for caring for the places where Salt Lake City residents gather, play, and connect with nature. This includes the maintenance and care of</p>	<p>30 mins</p>

approximately 90 city parks spanning about 860 acres, more than 2,000 acres of natural lands, 145 miles of trails, and roughly 90,000 trees. The department also oversees several premier properties, such as the cemetery and the Regional Athletic Complex (RAC), and manages citywide event permitting, including special events, demonstrations, and filming. She also emphasized the important role of park rangers in supporting these efforts.

Kim Shelley outlined the department's scale, noting an operating budget of approximately \$35 million, about 160 full-time employees, 152 part-time positions, and up to 100 seasonal employees at any given time, bringing the total workforce to just under 400 throughout the year. She described the team as "small but mighty" given the scope of responsibility. She clarified that the RAC stands for Regional Athletic Complex, located in the northwest quadrant of the city, consisting of 16 sports fields. The RAC recently celebrated its 10-year anniversary, an accomplishment she highlighted as part of the department's success. Kim added that while she may be biased, she believes the department plays a critical role in the city, as its work directly impacts residents' quality of life.

Kim Shelley emphasized the department's role not only in operations and maintenance but also in stewardship of public lands and the urban forest. She shared that the department is actively delivering on approximately \$200 million in capital projects through bond funding and the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), while also partnering with residents, nonprofits, and other city agencies to achieve shared goals.

Kim Shelley connected the department's work to the Mayor's four priority areas for the next four years: public safety and homelessness, retaining and growing families in the city, climate resiliency, and organizational resiliency, employee well-being, and efficiency. Kim stated that the department made meaningful progress across all four areas in the past year. Under public safety, Kim highlighted 20 community event series that activated 49 park days, including programs such as Pilates in the Park, Yoga in the Park, and Yappy Hour. She noted expanded nighttime security in parks and open spaces, including private security services to lock restrooms, which significantly reduced vandalism and improved perceptions of safety. She also referenced the Jordan River Vegetation Pilot Project, which will expand next year thanks to a state grant, as well as wildfire mitigation efforts completed at Allen Park, Memory Grove, Ensign Peak, and along the Jordan River. Additionally, park rangers logged more than 15,000 patrol hours citywide.

In support of families, Kim Shelley shared that the department hosted nine family-focused events, delivered 119 ranger-led programs for all ages, and organized 93 volunteer events. The department celebrated several major milestones and grand openings, including Bonneville Trailhead, Jefferson Playground, Backman Open Space, Phase 1 of Glendale Pickleball, and the Seven Canyons Refuge, as well as the replacement of a playground at Madsen Park. She also noted that the RAC generated nearly \$26 million in economic impact this year through a partnership with Sports Salt Lake City.

Kim Shelley acknowledged board participation at several park and trailhead openings and stated that improving advance notice for these events would be a focus moving forward to better accommodate members' schedules.

Addressing climate resiliency, She highlighted the department's urban forestry efforts, including the planting of 2,100 trees this year, with a priority on the west side of Salt Lake City. She shared that the department completed the replacement of trees lost in the 2020 windstorm, including the planting of the 250th replacement tree in the cemetery. She also emphasized the department's volunteer and stewardship impact, noting the removal of over 2,500 pounds of invasive weeds and the planting of nearly 450 native plants.

Kim Shelley explained that the city's tree planting efforts align with the Mayor's Urban Forestry Challenge of planting 1,000 trees annually, a goal the department exceeded this year. She noted that while many plantings typically occur in neighborhoods, a significant number were placed in parks this year due to irrigation limitations on the west side. She confirmed that the department tracks tree mortality rates and is exploring innovative

approaches, including potential ordinance changes, to enable tree planting on private property where irrigation is feasible.

Kim discussed efforts related to organizational resiliency and employee well-being. She highlighted the reclassification of Ashlyn Larson's position to Partnership Coordinator to strengthen external collaborations and the department's use of the new community engagement platform, Shape SLC, which she encouraged board members to explore as a way to stay informed and engaged with city projects.

Kim Shelley explained that recent community feedback, particularly related to the whale installation, helped drive significant traffic to the engagement website, which is still relatively new. As a result, several projects benefited from increased visibility, including Civic Center projects, Liberty Park, and the Emerald Ribbon along the river corridor. She noted that this platform now serves as a central tool for community engagement and will continue to be used for upcoming projects such as Fleet Block when it returns for another round of public input. Additional projects will be added as progress continues.

Kim then transitioned to department goals, noting that a longer list had been shared with the Mayor's team and that she would focus on highlights for the board. She emphasized plans to continue activating parks through positive, pro-social programming, with a priority on the west side of the city. The department also aims to increase volunteer engagement by 10 percent.

She outlined upcoming policy work that will be brought to the board, including a donation policy, which has already been discussed, and a time-sensitive policy related to mini-parks. Kim stated that board input and direction on these policies would be especially valuable due to their importance to neighborhood communities. She also addressed ongoing challenges with off-leash dogs in public spaces, noting that park rangers recorded more than 2,000 leash-related public interactions in a single quarter. She stressed the need to find more effective and safer ways to engage dog owners and the broader public to encourage compliance.

Kim added that, in response to drought conditions and a hotter climate, the department continues to work on irrigation upgrades and reducing non-functional turf. In response to a question about increasing volunteer engagement, Kim shared that the department is launching a new engagement platform to improve accessibility and make it easier for community-sponsored events to connect with the department. She invited Tyler Murdock, Deputy Director to elaborate, given his close involvement in volunteer programming.

Tyler Murdock, Deputy Director, explained that the department plans to significantly expand volunteer efforts by focusing on stewardship series, recurring, predictable volunteer projects in specific areas. He cited the foothills stewardship model as a successful example and shared that a similar dedicated series will be launched along the Jordan River. This approach has increased efficiency and participation by creating consistency and clarity for volunteers. Tyler also highlighted the growing role of partnerships, noting efforts led by Ashlyn Larsen, Communications Coordinator, to formalize relationships with "Friends of" groups and other community organizations. These partnerships allow community groups to lead volunteer events independently, reducing the need for city staff presence. He recognized Friends of Fairmont as a leading example and noted the department's goal of replicating this model with other groups.

Kim Shelley added that groups such as Friends of Gilgal Garden offer additional volunteer opportunities, particularly for Master Gardeners and those with horticultural interests. She noted that increased transparency will help residents better understand which groups exist and how to get involved.

Kim Shelley then shared that the department plans to begin or advance construction on at least 20 capital projects this year. Pioneer Park construction is scheduled to begin in late February and conclude by October, alongside progress on several other projects. She emphasized the department's commitment to improving transparency and communication with residents and elected officials, an area where she welcomed board guidance and support. Kim explained that improvements could include clearer project signage to explain temporary fencing and construction activity, more frequent website updates, and expanded communication efforts. She noted that the department has launched new district-specific newsletters, which will be shared with council members and board members, and will also increase the frequency of briefings with council staff. When asked about including community councils in the newsletter distribution, Kim agreed and thanked the board for the suggestion.

Kim then reaffirmed her belief that the department plays a vital role in shaping everyday experiences for residents and visitors, supporting public safety, families, quality of life, and climate resilience, key priorities for both the Mayor and the department. She expressed pride in the department's staff, sharing a moment from a recent cemetery team meeting in which a new employee described the group as the most solid team he had ever been part of, a comment that deeply resonated with longtime staff.

In response to a question about volunteer opportunities across the city, Kim noted that while other departments, such as those involved in the Mayor's Love Your Block initiative, offer volunteer programs, her department is among the most heavily dependent on volunteers.

She shared that the Mayor's team is exploring ways to revamp and streamline citywide volunteer processes and has sought input based on the department's experience. Kim closed by thanking Tyler for including a historic slide showing canoes at Liberty Lake before paddle boats were introduced, noting the department's pride in being part of that legacy and expressing appreciation for the board's continued support. She then opened the floor for additional questions.

Kerri Nakamura, Chair, as Kim Shelley had noted, requests to close a street for a march or special event are processed through Public Lands. Street closures for other purposes follow a separate process coordinated through the City Engineer's office.

They then asked Kim Shelley to return to a previous slide, using it as an opportunity to emphasize the importance of public lands, noting that public health was not explicitly called out. They highlighted that the vitality of public lands directly affects physical and mental health, in addition to quality of life and climate outcomes. Kim acknowledged this point, agreeing that connectivity to public lands contributes to improved mental health and thanking the speaker for raising the issue.

Aaron Wiley, Board Member, raised a question regarding parades, and it was clarified that parade permitting, such as for the 24th of July, goes through the Special Events Office. The office serves as a central coordinating body, helping applicants navigate requirements across departments, including street closures, sanitation, and logistics.

The discussion then shifted to the mini-parks policy Kim had referenced earlier. When asked to clarify what input from the board would entail, Kim explained that the concept of mini-parks comes from the Reimaginature Master Plan, which categorizes parks by type. Mini-parks are smaller, neighborhood-focused parks, such as Imperial Park and Laird Park. Using Laird Park as an example, Kim explained that while the park is central to the surrounding neighborhood, there can be friction between residents' expectations and organized recreational use. The proposed policy would help establish clearer boundaries that allow recreational programming while remaining respectful of neighborhood context. Kim noted that the policy could be brought forward as early as the following month, ideally before the reservation season opens.

Eric McGill, Board Member, expressed appreciation for the update, noting that the department's goals were strong and that significant progress had been visible over the past several months, both internally and from a community perspective. They commented that the department appeared to be moving in a positive direction.

Eric McGill, Board Member commented on the issue of off-leash dogs in parks. A board member suggested reframing the issue as an opportunity, drawing a parallel to past challenges—such as skateboarding conflicts—that were addressed by creating dedicated facilities like skate parks. They suggested that increasing off-leash opportunities could help address current challenges, noting that Salt Lake City has more dogs than children. The idea was framed as meeting an existing need rather than simply responding to enforcement issues.

Kim agreed that the point was well taken and shared that she had recently discussed the possibility of conducting an off-leash dog park survey with the Park Ranger Director. She referenced a previous effort to understand park usage patterns related to off-leash dogs and acknowledged ongoing friction in some areas. However, she emphasized that dogs can also be an effective way to activate underused parks. Kim stated that the department is considering a balanced approach that includes expanding off-leash opportunities while increasing enforcement in areas where off-leash use is not appropriate.

Austin Whitehead, Board Member, added that time-based off-leash hours, used successfully in other cities could be an effective strategy. The discussion concluded with agreement that the issue reflects a genuine community need and that exploring a range of options would be beneficial.

Sarah Foran, Board Member, asked how the board fits into discussions around value and solutions related to the issue at hand. She noted that many potential solutions appear to be ordinance- or law-based and may involve politically sensitive considerations. As an example, she referenced differing approaches to leash laws, such as whether electronic collars are considered leashes, noting that while some jurisdictions have allowed them in the past, others have moved away from that approach.

Sarah Foran asked how these considerations align with the board's role and how board members can best contribute. She inquired whether such topics should be addressed through special discussions outside of regular board meetings, such as by emailing staff with ideas or recommendations, rather than bringing them forward during full meetings when they may not be appropriate for that setting.

## 8. Presentations & Updates

7:15 PM

### A. Board Norms and Membership Expectations – Ginger Cannon, Vice Chair

30 mins

Ginger Cannon, Vice Chair explained that Kerri Nakamura's request was that she spend a few minutes discussing how to be an effective board member. She noted that the topic was timely, given that approximately half of the board is new and that it provided an opportunity to review board norms, expectations, and ways members can be strong advocates for public lands. She emphasized that the discussion would be brief and interactive, encouraging questions and dialogue throughout.

Ginger Cannon framed the conversation around the board's role, explaining that the board serves in an advisory capacity as defined by city code and reinforced through its bylaws. In this role, the board provides strategic guidance to the department rather than engaging in day-to-day operational decisions. She highlighted advocacy as a key responsibility, noting that as board members deepen their understanding of the department's work, they become more effective advocates and educators within their communities, whether through volunteering or outreach.

Ginger Cannon then reviewed the board's core duties, beginning with the duty of care, which involves being informed, exercising sound judgment, and making decisions based on experience, knowledge, and thoughtful consideration. The duty of loyalty requires board members to place the interests of public lands above personal gain and to disclose any conflicts of interest. The duty of obedience emphasizes compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and the board's own bylaws, which serve as adopted norms and are critical to maintaining public trust. Finally, the duty to represent reflects the responsibility of board members—whether elected by district or at-large—to bring forward perspectives and needs from their respective communities.

Ginger described characteristics of effective board members, drawing from her five years of experience on the board. She noted that the most effective members are consistently engaged, come prepared, review agenda materials in advance, and thoughtfully consider questions before meetings. She emphasized respectful communication, collaboration, and ensuring that board decisions align with the department's mission, values, and long-term strategies, such as those outlined in the Reimagine Nature plan. She also highlighted the importance of ethics, transparency, and adaptability, noting that the board benefits from the diverse professional and personal experience of both new and returning members.

Ginger then shared best practices for maximizing board effectiveness. These included being intentional about questions raised during meetings, focusing discussions on strategy rather than operational details outside the board's scope, and committing time to learning more about the department's work. She noted that greater engagement—through reviewing materials, asking questions of staff and experienced board members, and participating in committees—leads to increased effectiveness and a stronger partnership with department leadership.

She stressed the importance of relationship-building among board members, noting that retreats and shared experiences strengthen collaboration and improve overall board performance.

Ginger also addressed behaviors that can undermine effectiveness. She noted that coming to meetings unprepared or missing deadlines can slow progress and affect the board's collective efficiency. She reminded members that board service requires a meaningful time commitment, typically four to five hours per month, including committee participation, as outlined in the bylaws. She emphasized that active participation across committees is a core expectation.

She cautioned that dominating discussions or failing to leave space for differing viewpoints can weaken the board's effectiveness, as can straying from agenda topics. While acknowledging that off-agenda issues may still be important, she emphasized that maintaining focus helps build public trust and ensures productive meetings. She also underscored the importance of avoiding conflicts of interest, noting that even the appearance of personal benefit can damage the board's credibility.

Ginger then discussed ways board members can add value. She encouraged members to leverage their professional expertise, lived experience, and personal networks to inform discussions, advocate for public lands, and educate others. She highlighted committee work as a particularly effective way to apply these skills and reminded members that they may propose and form new committees through an established board process.

She noted that board members often serve as informal ambassadors in the community, citing everyday interactions such as conversations about off-leash dogs in parks—as opportunities to represent the board's role and reinforce existing policies. She emphasized the importance of constructive feedback, noting that both she and Kerri Nakamura welcome input and view it as essential to improving board operations and effectiveness.

Ginger also highlighted the importance of championing diversity and inclusion, ensuring that a wide range of voices and perspectives are represented in decision-making. She noted that this commitment strengthens the board and supports recruitment of members with diverse skills and viewpoints, something already evident among newer board members.

In closing, Ginger summarized key takeaways, stating that effective board service combines knowledge, commitment, and collaboration in support of the department's goals. She emphasized the importance of understanding the board's powers and limitations, remaining focused on strategy rather than operational oversight, and supporting major planning, policy, and budget efforts that shape the future of public lands.

She reiterated the importance of preparation, participation, and continued learning, noting that the board is most successful when members are aligned and engaged. Reflecting on past challenges and controversial issues, she stated that the board has consistently demonstrated professionalism, respect, and strong character—qualities she believes will continue to serve the board well in the future.

Ginger Cannon concluded by thanking the board and expressing hope that the discussion provided useful guidance on governance, effectiveness, and the policy-related questions raised earlier.

Sarah Foran, Board Member, expressed appreciation for the discussion and noted that while the outline presented was helpful, it did not fully address her question. She explained that topics such as off-leash dogs are a useful example, particularly when a board member may be representing a group with a different perspective. Sarah asked how that type of input is most valuable to staff and the board, and how leadership would prefer such information to be communicated.

Sarah Foran, Board Member, commented that she observed that board members are often in a learning phase and that asking questions during meetings has been beneficial. However, she noted that discussions are frequently cut short due to time constraints, which may limit the opportunity to share questions, perspectives, or insights that could be useful. Sarah asked whether the board is engaging in the most effective way or if there are opportunities to improve, such as additional avenues for engagement or written input to ensure that the perspectives of represented groups are fully captured—potentially through written comments, follow-up submissions, or designated space in meeting minutes. She emphasized that her comments were offered as an open question.

Ginger Cannon, Vice Chair, responded that she had a great deal to say on the topic.

Kerri Nakamura, Chair noted that Steve has consistently kept the board informed while also taking initiative by working directly with staff on issues that are important to him. She emphasized that this approach—rolling up one's sleeves and collaborating with staff rather than using full board time—is often the most effective way to address pressing or complex issues. While the board may receive updates, much of the detailed work can happen outside of meetings. Kerri added that she and Tyler work on several side projects in a similar way and provide updates to the board as appropriate. She concluded that this would be her general approach and then invited Steve to speak, asking if he had a handout.

Steve Bloch, Board Member responded that an important consideration is whether there is a clear action item. He suggested that early consultation with staff—such as Kim, Tyler, or Cameron Johnson—is helpful, particularly if a proposal could involve an ordinance or formal policy change. He noted that doing so can help frame issues for action rather than discussion alone. As an example, Steve suggested that a topic like off-leash policy could involve both a departmental presentation and a longer-term strategy that might eventually lead to a proposed ordinance.

Sarah Foran, Board Member responded that this was fair feedback but clarified that she was not seeking to request action. Using off-leash policy as an example, she explained that she would not propose such a change because it is an operational or legislative action rather than an advisory matter. Instead, she described her intent as sharing information and



perspectives that represent the views of certain community members, including comparative information about how other cities approach similar issues. She emphasized that this type of input is grounded in the expertise and background board members bring and is meant to inform the city's decision-making, rather than direct it. Sarah reiterated that she was offering information for consideration, not advocacy for a specific outcome.

Steve Bloch, Board Member, added that, from a legal perspective, the board's ordinance and powers are broad and allow for providing advice on a wide range of topics. He noted that issues like off-leash policy could appropriately be introduced for discussion, which would allow the department to consider concerns and determine potential next steps. He emphasized that this advisory role fits squarely within the board's established authority.

Ginger Cannon, Board Member agreed with Steve Bloch, Board Member, and emphasized the importance of board members being familiar with the board's powers and duties. She observed that over the past year, there has been an increase in personal opinions and anecdotal experiences being shared during meetings. While she noted that this is not a judgment and can be a valuable part of learning, she emphasized the importance of grounding representation in thoughtful consideration of whom members represent and whether their perspectives are supported by data or broader community input. Ginger reflected that Sarah Foran's question seemed to center on how to best represent community voices within existing board norms and structures. She acknowledged that there are agenda spaces for this type of input, but noted that personal framing has been more prevalent than in previous years.

Kim Shelley, Public Lands Director added that, while she does not yet have the long-term perspective of other board members, she has observed that board members often engage directly with staff on specific topics of interest. She suggested that focused briefings or discussions on targeted issues could occur with staff first and then be brought back to the board for broader discussion, allowing the board to meet its objectives while remaining efficient.

Sarah Foran, Board Member closed by clarifying the intent behind her question. She expressed appreciation for the thoughtful responses and emphasized that her goal is not simply to seek more information, but to ensure that the information and perspectives she brings are useful and valuable to staff and the city. She underscored her desire to contribute in a way that improves city effectiveness and meaningfully represents the people she serves. Sarah reiterated that learning alone is not the objective; rather, she wants her contributions to support actions that are beneficial to the city and, by extension, to the communities she represents.

Eric McGill, Board Member, added that Item 11A, the "request for future agenda items," has historically been a valuable opportunity for board members to ask questions, request information, or get up to speed on issues, particularly for newer members. He noted that this agenda item allows board members to request departmental updates, whether those updates later appear as formal agenda items, informal briefings, or follow-up communications such as email responses. Eric emphasized that there are many avenues for both giving and receiving feedback, including direct updates from staff, and referenced the value of the "roll up your sleeves" approach discussed earlier. He acknowledged that certain issues may warrant additional attention but reiterated that there are multiple effective ways to engage with staff and the department.

Tyler Murdock, Deputy Director, echoed Kim Shelley's earlier comments and stated that requesting an agenda item is often an effective starting point. He suggested that, for example, the board could request a presentation from the planning team on the current status of off-leash dog parks, including what is being discussed in long-term planning efforts over the next ten years. He explained that this type of presentation could help identify gaps between community feedback and current planning. Tyler Murdock also noted that, while still a relatively new and somewhat underutilized process, establishing a board-requested working group with the department could be an effective approach for complex topics such

<p>as off-leash dogs. He referenced the Foothills working group as the first example of this model and suggested it could serve as a useful template going forward, while acknowledging that staff capacity would limit how many topics could be addressed in this way.</p> <p>Austin Whitehead, Board Member, Board Member, asked for clarification on the distinction between a working group and other smaller commissions or subgroups.</p> <p>Ginger Cannon, Chair in response, it was noted that working groups are defined within the board's bylaws. Board members were encouraged to review the bylaws for additional context, and Austin Whitehead was advised to contact Aaron Wiley, Board Member, for further clarification if needed.</p>	
<p>B. Staff Update. – Maria Romero</p>	<p>5 min</p>

<b>9. 2025 Reflection and 2026 Goals</b>	<b>7:50 PM</b>
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## A. Group Reflection and Board Goals Discussion – Kerri Nakamura

30 mins

Kerri Nakamura, Chair opened her remarks with a lighthearted reflection, noting that only a few hours earlier she had planned to present a text-heavy slide deck. After seeing Ginger's presentation and being encouraged to use AI for design support, she revised her approach and shared that the experience significantly improved her presentation process.

Kerri Nakamura, Chair, then reviewed the board's 2025 goals, noting that only four or five current members were present when those goals were originally set. The first goal was to triage hot topics, which she explained was intended to ensure the board heard about emerging or sensitive issues directly from the department, through meetings or email, before learning about them through the media or community reactions. The second goal was to collectively support committee's goal execution. The third focused on expanding methods to support the department, including through the Reimagine Nature Master Plan. The final goal asked board members to individually assess their capacity for advocacy outside of formal board and committee meetings.

Kerri Nakamura shared that one of her motivations for serving on the board is her ability to actively and enthusiastically advocate for the department. She expressed her belief that the department plays a critical role in making the city a desirable place to live and stands apart from similar departments in other communities. To assess alignment between goals and outcomes, Kerri Nakamura reviewed all board minutes from 2025 and highlighted several accomplishments. These included participation in hiring a new executive director, onboarding six new board members, nearly half of the board participation in selecting new board members, and successfully navigating significant leadership and staffing transitions. She noted that the board is now more stable and positioned to rebuild institutional continuity.

Kerri Nakamura emphasized the importance of the mayor's office seeking the board's input on a draft homelessness plan the previous year. She described this as a meaningful moment, noting that the board was trusted to provide feedback based on community experience during a time when state intervention was a real concern. She also highlighted the strengthened relationship with the board's assigned attorney, Cameron Johnson, noting his consistent presence and engagement at meetings. Additional accomplishments included onboarding a new executive assistant and board facilitator, nearly completing 100% of required open public meetings training, and approving nine formal board actions during the year. Kerri credited Maria with reviewing and documenting these actions.

Kerri Nakamura then reviewed progress toward each goal. She noted that the board successfully addressed a range of hot topics throughout the year, enabling members to stay informed ahead of broader public discussion. She stated that committee support was strong, citing board representation on SCAMP, the establishment of the Foothills Working Group, operationalizing the Urban Trails Committee, issuing a letter supporting Indigenous representation in city decision-making, and providing support to new communications committee members despite unexpected staff turnover. Regarding increased departmental support, Kerri pointed to frequent verbal and written updates, the implementation of a structured written update program from divisions, closed-session discussions, assistance with policy development, budget input to the mayor, and CIP project rankings. She also highlighted how the board received early information on initiatives such as innovative trash cans, which later became public. On advocacy outside of meetings, Kerri noted that board members attended most department events when possible. She credited the inclusion of an "upcoming events" link on every agenda as a helpful tool for encouraging participation and stated that staff expressed appreciation for board member presence at events.

Kerri Nakamura concluded that board activities throughout 2025 consistently aligned with the goals that had been set, even if unintentionally. She suggested that having clear goals helps guide decisions about how information is shared and discussed. Before transitioning to a discussion of 2026 goals, she restated the board's purpose and powers, emphasizing

stewardship, advocacy, public education, and community involvement across parks, natural lands, urban forestry, and trails. She highlighted the board's primary responsibilities, particularly budget review and CIP prioritization and noted that the board played an effective role in shaping the department's budget, with most board-supported items funded. She explained the timing and limitations of the general fund budget process and reaffirmed the board's role in fees, policies, master plans, and open space acquisition should the city reenter an active phase.

Aaron Wiley, Board Member, emphasized the importance of activation and advocacy, noting that his role has largely focused on advocating for community alignment rather than reactive triage. He referenced a past baseball-related issue that escalated quickly due to a lack of early involvement and alignment, resulting in significant community frustration. That experience highlighted for him how critical proactive coordination is between the Parks Department, cities, and community stakeholders. He shared a specific example from the west side, where substantial investments were made to improve Sherwood baseball fields. While the improvements were high quality, they did not meet required guidelines for certain tournaments, resulting in unnecessary expenditures. Aaron noted that earlier collaboration and alignment with subject-matter experts could have prevented this outcome. He expressed a desire for a more structured way for parks staff to identify and engage board members based on their experience, expertise, or district involvement particularly when projects arise that could benefit from early input. For him, stronger alignment would allow him to be more effective and supportive.

Kerri Nakamura, Board Chair, sought clarification, asking whether Aaron Wiley was suggesting a system similar to a CRM that tracks board members' areas of expertise and interests so staff could reach out strategically. Aaron confirmed this was exactly what he meant, adding that it could extend beyond expertise to include awareness of what is happening within individual districts.

Eric McGill, Board Member, expanded on this idea, agreeing that alignment should not be limited to expertise alone. He emphasized the importance of knowing what projects are coming up in advance such as the planned Fairmont improvements over the next 18 months to avoid frustration and inefficiencies. Eric acknowledged that while the department can improve communication, board members also share responsibility for staying engaged by attending meetings, asking questions, and participating in community discussions. He noted that when projects intersect with areas outside his own expertise, such as sports fields, it is valuable to rely on fellow board members with relevant experience.

Melanie Perhson, Board Member, reflected on the earlier discussion about organizing board work into "buckets," expressing appreciation for the abundance and flexibility of that framework.

Ginger Cannon, Vice Chair, built on this idea by suggesting a structured set of buckets—such as oversee, steward, educate, advocate, involve, and activate—that align with the board's purpose. She noted that committee work and SMART goals could feed into these buckets, helping support departmental goals, simplify annual reporting requirements, and create clearer alignment between board activities and outcomes.

Sarah Foran, Board Member, cautioned against relying too heavily on committees, noting that siloing work can lead to missed context and inconsistent understanding across the full board. She suggested that the bucket framework could help capture cross-cutting goals, expectations, or smaller projects that do not fit neatly into a single committee but still contribute meaningfully to the board's overall work.

Steve Bloch, Board Member, acknowledged that there was not sufficient time during the current meeting to fully develop the idea, but suggested that between now and the next meeting the board could work toward defining an outward-facing, shared objective. He

emphasized that such a goal should be focused externally rather than inwardly on board operations, and that it could help ground the board around a common purpose and direction.

Steve noted that identifying and stewarding an overarching goal is largely within the purview of board leadership, including the Chair, Co-Chair, and Vice Chair, given the additional responsibilities they assume. He suggested that a clearly defined, collective objective could help bring the full board together and ensure everyone is moving in the same direction.

Ginger Cannon, Vice Chair, asked how Steve envisioned committee work integrating with a single overarching board goal, given that much of the board's work occurs within committees. She specifically asked how committees might align their efforts with a broader, measurable objective.

Steve Bloch explained that the structure would depend on the nature of the goal itself. He suggested two possible approaches: either the goal exists entirely outside of committee structures as an overarching umbrella, or it emerges organically from existing committee work. He expressed a preference for a broader, umbrella-style goal that allows the board to collectively focus on larger issues while maintaining clarity and cohesion. He noted that such a goal would likely need to be sufficiently focused and achievable for the board to collectively claim ownership and success.

Aaron Wiley, Board Member, observed that there appeared to be more alignment in the discussion than initially assumed. He noted that a clearly defined goal such as "activation" could be measurable if the board collectively defined what that term means. He explained that progress toward such a goal could be tracked at multiple levels, including committees, subcommittees, and individual board members, allowing the board to document actions taken and outcomes achieved. Aaron suggested that introducing more structure through simplified buckets could help clarify alignment and measurement.

Thomas Merrill, Board Member, proposed that the board consider adopting a bold, externally focused theme that sits above committee work. As examples, he suggested positioning Salt Lake City as known for family-friendly outdoor spaces or as the most dog-friendly outdoor city in the country. He emphasized that such a theme would help distinguish the year's work as more than just efficient board operations and give the board a defining focus. While acknowledging that not every committee's work would align perfectly, he suggested that the board could collectively agree on a unifying goal that sets the year apart.

Kerri Nakamura, Board Chair, expressed support for the family-friendly outdoor spaces concept, noting that it directly aligns with one of the Mayor's stated priorities of attracting families to the city. She shared that, within her own networks, she frequently hears from families who leave the city due to a lack of family-friendly spaces for young children. She acknowledged that measuring success would be challenging, but suggested that progress could be reflected through increased engagement, advocacy, and participation in department-led events. Kerri proposed that one way to assess the board's impact would be to look at improvements in departmental metrics, noting that if the department's outcomes improve in part due to board advocacy and support, that would be a meaningful measure of success.

Ginger Cannon, Board Member, expressed strong alignment with the idea of establishing an overarching board goal. She suggested that the board focus on maximizing its advocacy and participation in ways that directly support the Public Lands Department's 2026 goals. She noted that such a goal could help committees better align their work and ensure their efforts contribute meaningfully, whether through overseeing, educating, advocating, involving, or activating. Ginger emphasized that progress toward this goal could be measured and tracked through the department's existing metrics, with the director ultimately serving as the primary evaluator.

Kerri Nakamura, Chair, added that she had reviewed input from board members and saw strong alignment with departmental priorities around climate resiliency and family-friendly spaces. She identified these two areas as particularly well aligned with the board's role and interests.

Thomas Merrill, Board Member, emphasized that an advisory board composed of members of the public has a responsibility to reflect public sentiment back to the department. He noted that if the board collectively believes an important priority is missing from the department's goals, it is appropriate and necessary for the board to raise that concern and recommend its inclusion.

Kerri Nakamura, Chair reiterated that one of the board's core roles is to function as a public-facing focus group. She explained that board members are uniquely positioned to bring forward community perspectives, noting that feedback shared with the department often reflects broader public concerns rather than individual opinions. She cited hearing directly from families who feel unsafe in certain areas and have considered leaving the city as a result.

Sarah Foran, Board Member, shifted the discussion toward actionable, discrete goals. She suggested translating broader priorities into measurable objectives, such as board participation at department-led events and park openings. As an example, she proposed setting a target for board representation such as attending 80–90 percent of major events which could fall under categories like oversee, steward, or educate. Sarah also suggested aligning goals geographically or by event type to create clearer accountability. Additionally, she proposed expanding the use of short-term working groups, noting that forming additional working groups could be a practical and achievable goal that allows the board to respond more effectively to department needs.

Kerri Nakamura, Chair, reflected that, in hindsight, a working group focused on donations could have been particularly helpful, given the challenges the department has faced in that area.

Sarah Foran, Board Member emphasized that formalizing these ideas as goals would make them actionable and ensure they remain visible and prioritized.

Ginger Cannon, Vice Chair, noted that her perspective aligned closely with Sarah's, emphasizing that an overarching board goal focused on supporting the department's 2026 initiatives would serve as an umbrella for the specific actions and metrics being discussed. She explained that this structure would help committees assess whether their work meaningfully rolls up to departmental priorities.

Kerri Nakamura expressed strong support for intentionally increasing board presence at public events, noting that visible board engagement is meaningful both symbolically and practically. She emphasized that this presence helps demonstrate alignment and support for the department's work.

Kim Shelley, Public Lands Director, added that board participation at public events is valuable not only for community engagement but also for department staff and elected officials. She noted that seeing board members present reinforces a sense of alignment and shared purpose.

Kerri Nakamura, Chair, suggested setting a concrete, measurable goal—such as having board representation at 90 percent of the department's major events—and posed the question of how to formalize this as a SMART goal at the board-wide level.

Sarah Foran, Board Member, emphasized the value of defining specific, measurable goals as a way to demonstrate effective oversight. She noted that while the board has many broad

ideas and aspirations, translating those into measurable achievements allows progress to be clearly tracked. She stressed that the board's ideas and priorities can—and should—include concrete, measurable goals.

Steve Bloch, Board Chair, agreed with Sarah's approach, noting that framing tangible roles and goals makes sense and aligns with what the department director has indicated would be most helpful. He also observed that this approach appropriately shifts some responsibility from staff to individual board members, encouraging greater ownership and engagement.

Ginger Cannon, Vice Chair, proposed that she and Chair Nakamura draft several SMART goals that reflect these ideas and support the department's overall goals. She noted that the discussion pointed toward a focus on involvement and activation—encouraging board members to be more engaged within their communities and in support of the department. Ginger also highlighted that committees would continue to develop their own SMART goals, which could then be organized into the previously discussed buckets.

Sarah Foran asked for clarification on whether earlier goals were being deemed insufficiently SMART, signaling a desire for alignment and clarity in how goals are framed and evaluated. She later requested that finalized board goals be printed on the back of every meeting agenda to keep them visible and top of mind.

Kerri Nakamura, Chair, explained that the board did not break into committees during this meeting due to time constraints, noting that the broader goals discussion was more important to prioritize. She asked committee members to begin drafting subcommittee goals in the shared document and indicated that further work would be needed to narrow and refine them.

During committee-related discussion, Aaron Wiley, Board Member, confirmed terminology around committees, while Austin Whitehead, Board Member, asked how newer members could join committees. Eric McGill, Board Member, noted that the start of the new year felt like a natural time to revisit committee assignments.

Ginger Cannon clarified that no new committees were being proposed at this time, explaining that forming a new committee requires a formal process under the bylaws, including a written proposal brought to the full board. She suggested briefly reviewing the current committee list to identify members who are not yet assigned.

Kerri Nakamura then led a review of existing committees, updating membership to include newer board members.

Maria Romero, Board Manager, reminded board members to complete updates to their Workday profiles to ensure stipends are processed on time.

Looking ahead, Kerri Nakamura outlined preliminary agenda items for February, including a potential presentation on board powers and duties. Ginger Cannon noted that Sarah Foran had requested time to discuss bylaws.

Cameron Johnson, Senior City Attorney, advised that the board had already covered powers and duties thoroughly during the meeting and suggested using future meeting time instead to focus on bylaws, allowing for a more productive February agenda.

The board agreed to revisit bylaws and goals at the February meeting. Kerri Nakamura confirmed that she and Ginger would draft proposed goals and share them in a Google document in advance to streamline future discussion.



Steve Bloch requested time in an upcoming meeting for a presentation on the River Commission, noting that many board members lack familiarity with it despite frequent interaction with related trail systems. The request was supported.

Aaron Wiley suggested adding agenda items that better align the board with the Mayor's priorities, such as water conservation, and expressed interest in learning how the board can be more effective in supporting those initiatives.

Kim Shelley, Public Lands Director, emphasized the importance of advocacy and communication, particularly around changes such as drought-responsive landscaping and water conservation efforts. She noted that the department is preparing a detailed legislative intent document for City Council and suggested that sharing such materials with the board could improve understanding and alignment.

Eric McGill, Board Member, suggested that future agendas include presentations from different departmental divisions to help the board stay informed and proactive. He noted that hearing from areas such as Golf would be particularly valuable, especially given the significant work and planning occurring over the next several months. He also expressed interest in receiving updates from key external stakeholders, such as the Jordan River Commission, to better understand their perspectives and long-term plans. Eric emphasized that this type of forward-looking engagement would help the board stay ahead of emerging issues rather than operating in a reactive or triage-driven mode.

Sarah Foran, Board Member, proposed dedicating 10–20 minutes during the February meeting to build out the board's annual calendar. She noted that the board already knows certain topics, such as the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) will need to be scheduled in specific months, and that planning ahead would allow presentations and agenda items to be better aligned throughout the year.

Kerri Nakamura, Chair, shared that Maria would post a draft meeting schedule for the year. She noted that the schedule would not include a July meeting, explaining that, historically, the board has not met in July. Ginger Cannon, Vice Chair, confirmed. Kerri Nakamura reminded the board to complete the action items from the meeting.

<b>10. Break</b>	<b>8:20 PM</b>
A. Committee Goal Setting Exercise – Break into small groups to develop 2026 SMART Goals	30 min
<b>11. Reconvene</b>	<b>8:50 PM</b>
A. Request for future agenda items	10 min
B. Next meeting: February 5, 2026	
<b>12. Adjourn</b>	<b>9:00 PM</b>
<b>The board adjourned at 9:10 PM</b>	