

KAYSVILLE CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
January 23, 2025

Minutes of a special Kaysville City Council work session held on Monday, January 23, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in Kaysville City Hall at 23 East Center Street, Kaysville, Utah.

Council Members present: Mayor Tamara Tran, Council Member John Adams, Council Member Mike Blackham, Council Member Abbigayle Hunt, Council Member Nate Jackson, Council Member Joshua McBride

Staff Present: City Manager Jaysen Christensen, Finance Director Maryn Nelson, Asst. Finance Director Paker Godwin, City Recorder Annemarie Plaizier

OPENING

Mayor Tran opened the work session by welcoming participants.

REVIEW OF CITY FINANCIALS AND DISCUSSION OF BUDGET STRATEGY AND COUNCIL PRIORITIES

City Manager Jaysen Christensen outlined the budget schedule and process for the upcoming fiscal year, explaining that the meeting served as the City’s annual budget kickoff. He stated that the purpose of the kickoff was to review prior-year financial performance, examine the current year-to-date financial position, and discuss high-level strategy and priorities for development of the FY 2027 budget. He explained that staff would begin detailed budget development with departments following the meeting, including distribution of budget packets and meetings with department heads from February through early March to review needs, anticipated costs, and operational priorities. That information would be used to prepare a draft FY 2027 budget.

Mr. Christensen explained that the city council would hold additional budget work sessions once more complete revenue and expenditure projections were available, noting that more precise financial information would be developed as cost estimates and revenue forecasts were refined. He reviewed statutory deadlines, stating that state law requires adoption of a tentative budget by the end of May, which was planned for the May 21 council meeting. He indicated that a public hearing was anticipated for the first June council meeting, with final budget adoption scheduled for June 18. He added that if the city pursued a Truth in Taxation process, the final public hearing and budget adoption would occur in August, with August 6 identified as the anticipated Truth in Taxation hearing date.

Finance Director Maryn Nelson then addressed the Council, noting that she intended to begin the budget season process with a higher-level, strategic discussion rather than immediately focusing on detailed line items. She referenced recent organizational changes, including a new finance team, a new council member, and a new mayoral term, and described the timing as an opportunity to align budget discussions with long-term goals and Council priorities. She emphasized the importance of establishing direction and priorities before reviewing detailed budget numbers.

Ms. Nelson presented a high-level review of the City's FY 2025 financial position based on the audited financial report presented in December, explaining that the information reflected the auditors' findings and opinions. She reviewed enterprise fund balances and stated that the auditors' overall conclusion was that the City's financial position was healthy. She noted that the pressurized irrigation fund reflected an unrestricted fund balance of zero and explained that it was the only utility rate not increased in the prior year, identifying it as a potential area for consideration during the FY 2027 budget process. She also reviewed restricted enterprise fund balances, including water and electric impact fees, which are limited to impact-fee-eligible projects under the City's 2019 impact fee study.

Ms. Nelson then reviewed governmental fund balances and explained the distinction between unrestricted, assigned, and restricted funds. She noted that assigned fund balances included funds designated for specific purposes, such as capital projects, redevelopment, and debt service. She further explained that restricted fund balances consisted primarily of impact fees and other legally restricted funds, including library endowment funds, perpetual care and cemetery funds, RAMP projects, and road project funds, all of which are limited to use for their designated purposes.

Council Member Jackson asked why the road impact fee fund balance was zero. Finance Director Maryn Nelson explained that the city completed several major road projects during FY 2025 and fully expended the available road impact fee revenues on those projects.

Council Member Hunt asked which projects were eligible for fire impact fee funding. Ms. Nelson responded that the primary eligible project is the west side fire station, along with general fire station improvements. Council Member Hunt also asked how impact fees are allocated among categories such as parks, police, fire, and roads. Ms. Nelson explained that impact fees are allocated through a defined process at the time they are paid by a developer, based on the adopted impact fee structure.

Mayor Tran asked whether allocation percentages vary by project, and Ms. Nelson stated that they generally remain consistent. Mr. Christensen added that the City relies on professional consultants to conduct impact fee studies that identify future infrastructure needs and establish fee levels, noting that the current study was completed prior to COVID-19 and may need updating due to increased construction costs.

Council Member Blackham noted that state law requires impact fees to be supported by a formal study and tied to specific future projects. Staff confirmed that impact fees may only be used for eligible projects. Council Member Jackson asked whether existing impact fee balances could be used in the upcoming fiscal year, and Ms. Nelson confirmed they may be used for eligible projects.

Ms. Nelson explained that impact fee revenues are accounted for during budget development and typically applied before other funding sources. Mayor Tran asked whether minimum balance requirements apply, and Ms. Nelson stated that, unlike the General Fund, impact fee funds have no required minimum balance, though maintaining healthy balances is advisable.

Ms. Nelson reviewed changes in the General Fund balance and explained that although the City budgeted approximately \$1.1 million in fund balance use for FY 2025, the audited unrestricted fund balance decreased by only \$136,000. She attributed the smaller-than-expected decrease

primarily to higher-than-budgeted interest revenue, which exceeded projections by approximately \$235,000.

Ms. Nelson cautioned that interest revenue should not be relied upon as a long-term funding source. She noted that the Public Treasurers' Investment Fund (PTIF) interest rate declined from 5.48% in 2024 to approximately 4.01% by December 2025 and that the City's PTIF balance decreased by about \$12 million due to major road projects, which will further reduce future interest earnings. In response to Council questions, staff clarified that PTIF is a government-only investment fund that functions similarly to a savings account for public entities.

Ms. Nelson explained that some General Fund revenues, particularly building-related revenues, came in lower than budgeted, which was consistent with recent trends and not unexpected. On the expenditure side, she reported that departments were fiscally conservative, with approximately \$813,000 of the General Fund budget remaining unspent across departments.

Ms. Nelson stated that employee benefits accounted for a significant portion of the underspending, noting that the City has historically budgeted health insurance assuming family coverage for all full-time employees as a conservative approach. She indicated that staff have discussed budgeting closer to actual benefit elections for FY 2027. She also explained that, based on auditor recommendations, approximately \$34,000 in Fourth of July event expenses incurred in May and June were accrued forward and recognized in FY 2026 rather than FY 2025.

Ms. Nelson reported that Public Works expenditures were approximately \$100,000 under budget due to a mild winter that resulted in reduced snowplowing overtime and salt usage. She emphasized that staff does not recommend reducing these budgets because winter severity varies and adequate funding is needed for heavier snow years. Mr. Christensen added that snow events significantly increase costs due to overtime, equipment use, and materials. He also explained that Utah's proximity to salt suppliers allows the City to purchase salt as needed rather than stockpiling large quantities.

Council Member Blackham asked whether similar savings occurred in the Police Department, and Ms. Nelson confirmed that the department was approximately \$350,000 under budget due largely to staffing vacancies during part of FY 2025. Council Member Jackson asked how unspent funds affected the General Fund, and Ms. Nelson explained that while some fund balance had been budgeted for specific projects, the underspending resulted in less fund balance being used than anticipated, with remaining funds staying in the General Fund.

Ms. Nelson noted additional underspending of approximately \$20,000 in City Manager and Council travel and training expenses due to conferences being held locally or not attended, and she explained that ambulance delivery was delayed until FY 2026, deferring the first lease payment to the following fiscal year.

Mr. Christensen initiated a discussion regarding Council attendance at National League of Cities (NLC) conferences and asked whether Council members found participation valuable. Mayor Tran explained that attendance has traditionally been encouraged for new council members and clarified that the primary annual NLC conference is typically held in Washington, D.C., with smaller regional or specialty events hosted elsewhere. She noted that the recent local event held in Salt Lake City was an NLC Summit rather than the main annual conference. Council members

discussed past attendance, noting disruptions in 2020 and that the annual conference was scheduled for March of the current year. Mayor Tran stated that several nearby cities attend as full councils and described the experience as beneficial primarily for team building and shared exposure to municipal issues. Council Member Hunt agreed, stating that team building was the most valuable aspect of her experience.

The Council acknowledged that a decision on future attendance would be needed. Mr. Christensen asked whether NLC travel was included in the current budget, and Ms. Nelson stated she would review the budget and follow up. Council Member Hunt indicated she would not be able to attend regardless.

The discussion then broadened to budget priorities and tradeoffs. Mr. Christensen noted that both Council and staff regularly face decisions about allocating limited resources and suggested that some expenditures may provide more direct value than others. He raised the question of whether the city should provide cellular data plans for Council-issued iPads to support council work conducted remotely and outside traditional settings.

Council Member Blackham explained that he had been provided with a data plan early in his tenure due to limited Wi-Fi access and described it as one of the most useful tools for performing council duties. Mayor Tran and Council Member Jackson agreed, noting that much council work is done on mobile devices. Mr. Christensen explained that the issue arose during a recent audit of City wireless plans aimed at identifying cost savings and underused services, which revealed inconsistencies in how wireless access was provided. Council Member Adams clarified that the discussion concerned cellular data plans rather than general Wi-Fi access.

Ms. Nelson asked about the cost of a data plan, and Mr. Christensen stated it was approximately \$20 per month per device. Mayor Tran and other Council members indicated the cost appeared reasonable given the demands of council service. Mr. Christensen added that some cities provide monthly stipends. Council Member Blackham also raised concerns about relying on unsecured public Wi-Fi networks, and several Council members agreed that a consistent and secure data plan would improve efficiency and preparedness.

Ms. Nelson continued the FY 2025 review by presenting a high-level summary of governmental fund activity. She explained that the General Fund represents approximately 75% of total governmental fund revenues and expenditures, which is typical for a municipality. She reviewed the primary General Fund revenue sources, identifying property tax and sales tax as the two largest contributors, and noted that public safety comprises the largest portion of General Fund expenditures, with Police accounting for approximately 32% and Fire approximately 19%.

Council Member Jackson asked about proposed state legislation that would reduce the residential property tax percentage and whether staff was monitoring its potential impact. Mayor Tran responded that the issue had been discussed at a recent Utah League of Cities and Towns meeting and stated that some cities were estimating potential revenue impacts of \$1.5 million to \$2 million. She explained that the proposal under discussion would reduce the residential property tax portion to approximately 40%, shifting a greater share of the burden to commercial and business properties. Council Member Blackham noted that commercial properties are currently taxed at full value and expressed concern that reducing the residential portion without allowing cities to adjust their certified tax rate could result in an immediate loss of revenue, particularly for cities with

limited commercial tax bases. Council Member Jackson asked about the timing of implementation, and Mayor Tran indicated that earlier discussions suggested a possible delay, though the legislation remained under consideration and subject to change. Mr. Christensen added that the impacts would vary by city depending on commercial development levels. Council Member Hunt acknowledged the intent to provide resident relief but emphasized the need to consider the full fiscal impact on cities. The discussion reflected uncertainty regarding the final structure and timing of the legislation.

Ms. Nelson then reviewed FY 2025 enterprise fund operating performance, noting that four of the City's six enterprise funds experienced operating losses during the year. She reminded the Council that rate increases were approved for FY 2026 for all enterprise funds except pressurized irrigation and explained that water and electric rate adjustments were largely pass-through increases based on the Waterworth financial model. She stated that these changes were expected to improve operating performance in FY 2026 but emphasized that enterprise fund strategies, including pressurized irrigation, would need to be revisited as part of the FY 2027 budget process.

Council Member Adams asked when FY 2026 financial results would be available. Ms. Nelson explained that audited FY 2026 results would likely be available in December and noted that year-to-date performance would be reviewed later in the presentation. She added that early indicators showed improved performance, with rate increases helping to reduce operating deficits.

Council Member Blackham raised questions regarding pressurized irrigation, noting that the city does not own the system and does not control water rates. He asked how operating losses could be addressed under those circumstances. Ms. Nelson explained that although the City does not set usage rates, it incurs administrative and operational costs related to billing, staffing, and service support for pressurized irrigation.

Council Member Blackham asked if the city is being reimbursed by the pressure irrigation company for the cost of the administrative services the city provides. Ms. Nelson stated that an administrative fee is charged to the residents by the City but acknowledged uncertainty as to whether it fully covers expenses. She indicated she would research the issue and report back. Mr. Christensen suggested comparing Kaysville's approach with other cities to determine whether adjustments may be appropriate. Council Member Blackham emphasized the need to ensure the city is not subsidizing pressurized irrigation operations. Council Member Jackson asked whether administrative costs should vary based on system size or usage, and Ms. Nelson noted that upcoming changes, including usage-based billing, would require further analysis.

Ms. Nelson then provided a high-level overview of FY 2025 and FY 2026 financial performance. She stated that FY 2025 results reflected a strong overall financial position and that FY 2026 activity had not shown any unusual trends to date, with staff focusing primarily on planning for FY 2027. She reviewed sales tax activity, explaining that data is provided to the city two months after the fact, and that November revenues had not yet been received. Based on prior-year comparisons, she noted that FY 2026 sales tax revenues were tracking slightly above budget, though overall growth appeared relatively flat. Council members discussed monthly fluctuations, with Ms. Nelson noting that August receipts reflected June activity and that seasonal factors may contribute to variability.

Ms. Nelson also presented a comparison of 2025 calendar-year property tax rates, including the

city's rate following denial of the Truth in Taxation proposal. She stated that the final City rate was 0.001455 and explained that, had the proposal been approved, the City's rate would have fallen between Syracuse and Centerville among Davis County cities. Council members noted that comparisons can change over time due to valuation shifts and differing tax strategies.

Mr. Christensen commented that cities with larger commercial and retail bases tend to rely more heavily on sales tax revenues. Council members noted that redevelopment activity and sales tax distribution methods can significantly influence how revenues are generated and used across cities.

Ms. Nelson reviewed a historical chart of the City's property tax rate, noting that the 2025 rate is lower than the rate in 2013. Council Member Blackham asked how this aligned with multiple Truth in Taxation actions in recent years. Mr. Christensen explained that Truth in Taxation adjusts the total dollar amount collected rather than directly increasing the tax rate, and that rising property valuations can result in a lower rate even when additional revenue is approved. He noted that several years of relatively flat rates reflected efforts to maintain revenue neutrality as values increased.

Council members discussed how valuation growth, inflation, and statutory tax structures can make tax rate trends difficult to interpret. Mr. Christensen added that when viewed strictly as a rate, the City's property tax is lower than it was in the late 1990s, while acknowledging that taxpayer experience is influenced by multiple factors. Mayor Tran commented on the City's lean operations relative to service levels, and Council members noted that ongoing infrastructure needs, including roads and sidewalks, remain a key consideration.

Ms. Nelson then transitioned to FY 2027 budget strategy and reviewed the General Fund unassigned fund balance as a percentage of revenues. She explained that state law requires the balance to remain between 5% and 35% and noted that the city was near the maximum at approximately 34.7% in FY 2025. She stated that after accounting for the \$1.7 million Truth in Taxation denial and the budgeted use of approximately \$949,000 in FY 2026, the projected balance would decline to about 18%.

Mr. Christensen noted that the Government Finance Officers Association recommends maintaining a balance equal to at least two months of operating expenditures, or roughly 16.7% of revenues. Ms. Nelson stated that the city would be approaching that benchmark. In response to Council questions, she explained that the projection began with approximately \$7 million in fund balance, less the Truth in Taxation revenue loss and the planned FY 2026 fund balance use. Mr. Christensen emphasized the need for caution, noting that fund balances can decline quickly if not carefully managed.

Ms. Nelson also reminded the Council that the FY 2026 Truth in Taxation request was intended to fund ongoing operational items rather than one-time expenses, providing context for the upcoming FY 2027 discussion.

The Council recessed at 9:57 a.m. and reconvened at 10:03 a.m.

Jaysen Christensen reviewed the City's mission statement in the context of FY 2027 budget strategy, noting that it emphasizes improving quality of life for both current and future residents. He stated that this perspective is critical when considering infrastructure investments, as deferring

maintenance or improvements can create long-term challenges. He addressed the use of the term “equitable,” explaining that it refers to objective, data-driven decision-making and avoiding favoritism when allocating City resources.

Mr. Christensen explained that detailed budget numbers were not yet available, as finance staff would soon distribute budget packets and begin collecting updated revenue and expenditure data. He stated that staff was seeking Council direction on high-level strategy and priorities before developing a draft FY 2027 budget. He reviewed the City’s long-standing budget objectives, beginning with operations, which focus on managing City assets and resources efficiently while maintaining service levels.

He identified several strategic focus areas, including maintaining a healthy General Fund balance within statutory limits while preserving sufficient reserves for unexpected needs. He cautioned that pending state legislation, including potential revenue or fund balance limitations, could affect how reserves are used. He also emphasized the importance of ensuring that ongoing expenses, particularly in enterprise funds, are supported by ongoing revenues, noting that utility rates must keep pace with costs and inflation to avoid long-term structural deficits.

Mr. Christensen discussed the City’s continued focus on cost management and efficiency, providing examples where staffing needs were addressed through reallocation rather than growth. He noted that one locator position had been eliminated to fund an additional water operator position needed for increased system demands, and that a power department vacancy was not refilled after a retirement, with duties restructured instead. He stated that staff continues to evaluate cost-saving opportunities, including a review of fleet services to determine whether vehicle leasing could reduce long-term costs.

Ms. Nelson clarified that a potential fleet leasing approach would not eliminate mechanic positions but would allow mechanics to focus more on maintenance while reducing repair costs through newer vehicles. Mr. Christensen emphasized the importance of clearly communicating such discussions, noting that employees closely follow budget deliberations. He also referenced prior evaluations, such as outsourcing park mowing, and explained that retaining in-house seasonal staffing had proven more cost-effective and operationally flexible.

Mr. Christensen identified tangible, visible improvements as a key FY 2027 priority, noting that Council members have expressed interest in being able to point to measurable outcomes—such as facilities, infrastructure, or amenities—that demonstrate progress and value to residents. He emphasized that the loss of the FY 2026 Truth in Taxation revenue creates a significant challenge, as that funding had been intended to support ongoing operations, staffing, and inflationary costs. He stated that this revenue loss, combined with potential state-imposed limits on revenues or fund balances, would require careful and strategic decisions during the upcoming budget process.

Mayor Tran emphasized the importance of clearly documenting and communicating the cost-control measures already undertaken by departments, including examples of staffing adjustments, restructuring, cross-training, and efficiency efforts. She stated that demonstrating fiscal responsibility in a clear, resident-friendly way would help residents better understand the City’s budget decisions. Council Member Jackson agreed, noting that an overall picture of responsible financial management would be helpful for public understanding.

Mr. Christensen said that although departments have identified numerous staffing needs over time, only a limited number have been funded, requiring staff to manage increasing workloads as service demands grow.

Mayor Tran noted that many residents are unaware of the full scope of City services and suggested improving communication through short, informal videos highlighting departmental work. She explained that while the city does not have a dedicated public information position, departments could share their stories in simple ways to improve transparency and understanding. Council members discussed alternatives to traditional newsletters, including postcard-style mailers with QR codes linking to brief videos, as a more cost-effective communication tool.

Council members acknowledged staff capacity concerns and discussed options such as limited assistance from the Police Department's public information staff, basic training for department heads, or partnerships with organizations, youth, or interns to help create content. Several members emphasized that the intent was educational rather than promotional and that improved communication could help counter misinformation, build community understanding, and support future discussions around infrastructure needs and funding. The Council expressed general support for using brief, authentic videos as a practical way to better inform residents as FY 2027 budget discussions continue.

Mr. Christensen continued the FY 2027 budget strategy discussion by addressing personnel costs, noting that the City functions primarily as a service organization and that employee-related expenses comprise a substantial portion of the General Fund. He stated that staffing and compensation have long been central budget considerations and that clearer alignment between Council and staff on compensation philosophy would be helpful as the budget process advances.

He explained that the City's goal is to remain competitive enough to attract and retain qualified employees, while recognizing that some turnover is expected. He noted that the loss of experienced employees can create operational challenges, as replacing institutional knowledge often requires additional staff or resources. As part of the FY 2027 strategy, he proposed using Davis County cities as the primary benchmark for market compensation. He stated that past comparisons included cities across a broad geographic area, but staff is seeking a more practical and consistent approach focused on identifying the local labor market.

Mr. Christensen explained that Davis County provides a geographically relevant and manageable comparison group, simplifies data collection, and allows for more consistent analysis. He acknowledged differing viewpoints among staff and stakeholders but noted that expanding comparisons to additional counties often introduces wide variations that tend to offset each other, without significantly improving the accuracy of market assessments. He stated that Davis County offers a reasonable snapshot of compensation conditions for City positions.

Council Member Hunt asked whether limiting comparisons to cities within Davis County adequately accounts for competition from employers in Salt Lake and Utah counties, given regional commuting patterns. Mr. Christensen acknowledged that employees do leave for positions outside the county but stated that cities within Davis County still provides a representative sample and that broader comparisons would add complexity with limited additional benefit.

Council members generally expressed support for the Davis County benchmarking approach.

Council Member Adams noted that Davis County cities' comparisons are more comparable due to similar property tax structures, community size, and service expectations. Council Member Jackson observed that competition among nearby cities can drive wages upward but stated that compensation decisions should also consider quality-of-life factors and non-monetary benefits. Council Member Blackham supported the approach, noting that many City services operate collaboratively at the county level and that employees perform similar duties across jurisdictions, making county-based comparisons practical and defensible.

Mr. Christensen addressed how the City positions itself within the market once benchmark data is established. He explained that after identifying market levels using data from cities with Davis County to compare to, the city must determine its target position within that range. He noted that in recent years the city has aimed to keep salaries within approximately 5% of the market average, many positions of which are 5% below market average. He stated that department heads have emphasized that residents expect service levels comparable to neighboring cities and that compensation should at least be competitive with the average Davis County city to support recruitment and retention. He clarified that this target serves as a framework rather than a commitment, with actual decisions dependent on FY 2027 financial capacity.

Mr. Christensen then reviewed the City's merit pay structure, explaining that confusion has arisen around its purpose and terminology. He noted that prior to 2017 the city used a step-based system that provided annual increases of approximately 4.5% until employees reached the top of their range. In 2017, the city transitioned to a merit system that provided a 3% increase with a potential bonus, though the bonus was later eliminated during COVID-19, leaving what was supposed to be a consistent 3% increase. He stated that the term "merit" is misleading, as the increase primarily functions to move employees through their pay ranges in line with other municipalities rather than as a selective performance reward.

Several council members expressed frustration with repeated annual debates over the 3% increase. Council Member Adams supported reclassifying the increase as a step to eliminate confusion, and Council Member Jackson agreed that the increase should be predictable, so employees clearly understand pay progression. Council Member Blackham sought clarification that the discussion centered on the 3% increase and emphasized the importance of maintaining appropriate salary caps.

The Council discussed retention challenges associated with salary caps, noting that employees who reach the top of their range may be more likely to leave. Mr. Christensen acknowledged that capped-out senior employees are among those the City has lost. Council members discussed potential retention strategies, including incentives tied to years of service rather than permanent increases to base pay.

Council Member Blackham shared historical perspective, stating that under the prior step system employees typically capped out within 10 years but often remained with the city for decades, suggesting that pay caps did not previously drive turnover. Ms. Nelson responded that current challenges differ, noting a gap between long-tenured employees nearing retirement and newer hires, with higher turnover among mid-career employees who would normally replace retirees. Council Member Adams stated that this gap suggests the need for retention incentives at milestones such as five and ten years of service.

Ms. Nelson and Council Member Adams discussed examples of longevity incentives, including structured bonus programs tied to service anniversaries. Council Member Adams suggested a voluntary program in which employees contribute small amounts per paycheck that are matched by the City upon reaching a service milestone. Mayor Tran raised concerns about program continuity under future councils, and Council Member Adams suggested grandfathering existing participants.

Council Member Blackham emphasized that protecting employee take-home pay should be a priority, particularly considering rising benefit costs. He cautioned against discussing specific percentage increases before revenues, potential tax changes, and cost-of-living adjustments are known and stated that employees should not experience reductions in take-home pay year over year.

Mr. Christensen acknowledged that some turnover is inevitable and stated that while market pay is a key factor, it is not the only driver. He noted that research shows below-market pay can discourage retention, but above-market pay does not necessarily increase satisfaction. He emphasized that workplace culture, job satisfaction, and feeling valued are critical, and stated that some employees have returned to the city after leaving higher-paying positions elsewhere due to cultural factors.

Mr. Christensen concluded that the City's goal should be to maintain competitive pay while fostering a positive work environment. He clarified that reclassifying the increase as a step does not remove accountability, noting that employees who are not meeting expectations may have increases withheld and be subject to disciplinary processes. Council Member Hunt stated that compensation discussions have been challenging due to recent economic conditions but expressed support for moving toward a clearer, more stable compensation framework as part of the FY 2027 budget process.

Mr. Christensen introduced cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) as the mechanism used to adjust salary ranges after those ranges are established. He explained that while COLA is often associated with inflation, it also serves to keep salary ranges competitive over time. He stated that COLA decisions are informed by several factors, including inflation measures such as the Consumer Price Index, adjustments made by the Utah Retirement Systems, and surveys of compensation practices in other cities. He emphasized that without periodic COLA adjustments, salary ranges that are competitive today would fall behind the market as other jurisdictions adjust their pay structures.

Mr. Christensen noted that COLA is not intended to be automatic or fixed and would continue to be discussed by the Council during the budget process. He stated that the goal is to balance competitiveness with financial sustainability. Ms. Nelson characterized the discussion as identifying an appropriate starting point for COLA consideration for the upcoming budget year, based on competitor data and economic indicators.

Council Member Blackham cautioned against relying solely on general inflation measures, noting that employee benefit costs, particularly health insurance, can increase faster than inflation. He expressed concern that inflation-based COLA adjustments could result in employees taking home less pay if benefit costs rise significantly and emphasized the importance of avoiding year-over-year decreases in take-home pay.

Mr. Christensen agreed that declining take-home pay is a significant concern and stated that such outcomes warrant closer review of compensation and benefit structures. He acknowledged that some cost increases are outside the City's control but agreed that avoiding negative paychecks is an important guiding principle.

Council members noted that uncertainty around future revenues, potential tax changes, and insurance costs makes it premature to commit to specific COLA percentages. Mr. Christensen stated that more reliable information would be available later in the budget process. Ms. Nelson reiterated that no specific numbers were being proposed and that the purpose of the discussion was to establish strategic direction. Council Member Blackham stated that, given current uncertainties, the overall approach outlined by staff was appropriate.

Mr. Christensen continued the FY 2027 strategy discussion by addressing potential new staffing positions. He stated that over the past several years, approximately 15 staffing requests have accumulated across departments and that staff continues to seek ways to meet service demands through efficiencies and restructuring rather than adding positions. He explained that this same approach would apply to any new staffing proposals.

Mr. Christensen identified filling the Deputy Fire Chief position as his top staffing priority for the upcoming fiscal year. He explained that the absence of this position has created operational strain, with the Fire Chief covering a wide range of responsibilities and limited continuity when the Fire Chief is unavailable. He noted that the City is not currently participating in the Davis County Emergency Management Group due to staff capacity constraints, despite the group holding frequent trainings and exercises. He explained that other cities typically assign emergency management responsibilities to a dedicated position and that this function, along with other duties, would be assigned to the Deputy Fire Chief. Mr. Christensen explained that emergency management activities include regular drills and exercises, such as earthquake simulations and communications training, with the expectation that participants will relay that information back to City staff. He emphasized the importance of preparedness and coordination.

Mr. Christensen stated that although the Deputy Fire Chief position is his highest priority, the discussion was intended to outline strategy rather than commit to specific hires. He noted that staffing decisions would depend on revenue projections, potential state-imposed limitations, and overall budget capacity. Council Member Adams stated that he supported identifying the position as a priority but wanted to review full financial information before committing. Council Member Blackham noted that positions approved in the prior year had not yet been fully funded, underscoring the need for caution.

Mr. Christensen acknowledged that potential state legislation, including a possible 5% cap on proposed tax increases, or on spending, could significantly affect staffing decisions. He stated that even if the position could not be funded in the upcoming fiscal year, it would remain a long-term goal. Mayor Tran noted that the Deputy Fire Chief position had been requested for several consecutive years, and Mr. Christensen added that it had been discussed and deferred in prior years.

Mr. Christensen transitioned the discussion into major capital projects, noting that several items under consideration fall outside the annual operating budget. He stated that staff is proceeding with plans to place the proposed west-side fire station on the November ballot as a general obligation

bond, operating under the assumption that the question will go before voters. He identified the old library building as another significant capital issue but noted that it would require a separate, dedicated work discussion due to its complexity. Council members agreed that the library should be scheduled for a future work discussion, with staff prepared to present options and conceptual information.

Council Member Blackham emphasized the need for transparency regarding the fire station proposal, stating that public information must clearly distinguish between the cost of constructing the facility and the ongoing staffing and operational costs. He explained that while the bond payment for construction may be approximately \$1 million annually, operating and staffing the station would add more than an additional \$1 million per year. He stressed that voters should understand the full financial impact, including tax implications, when considering the bond.

Mr. Christensen clarified that vehicles would not be included in the bond, as existing apparatus could be reassigned, and that personnel costs would be the primary long-term expense. Council members raised questions about the proposed station's size, design, and estimated cost, including whether it could be designed for future expansion and whether construction costs could be reduced. Concerns were expressed about the projected cost of approximately \$16 million for a roughly 10,000-square-foot facility. Discussion included comparisons to recent fire stations in other cities, the impact of increased construction and material costs, and the higher seismic and structural standards required for essential facilities. Council Member Blackham explained that these requirements significantly increase costs and that current estimates are based on professional cost projections provided to architects.

Mr. Christensen acknowledged the concerns and stated that a more detailed review of fire station design, costs, and comparisons with other cities would be appropriate as a separate work discussion. He confirmed that staff is actively preparing ballot language and that the Council would have additional opportunities to review details. He also confirmed that the library would return as a work session item to allow the Council to determine a clear direction.

Council Member Jackson expressed hesitation about scheduling a discussion regarding the old library building without having any new information, noting concern about revisiting unresolved discussions. Mr. Christensen responded that the purpose would be to reach a definitive policy decision, explaining that the City has not formally decided whether to pursue a ballot proposal, demolish the building, leave it unchanged, or defer action. Mayor Tran clarified that the intent of a work discussion would be to establish and communicate clear direction, noting that no formal decision has yet been made.

Mr. Christensen then discussed the Operations Center project, explaining that the current proposal focuses on renovating and expanding the existing Public Works, Parks, and utility operations facility, which was constructed in the early 1990s. He noted that this approach differs from earlier concepts that contemplated a new facility with estimated costs near \$40 million. Instead, the current plan involves a more limited renovation and addition, with an updated estimated total cost of approximately \$6.2 million.

Ms. Nelson clarified that the \$6.2 million estimate includes the building renovation and addition, site improvements, replacement of the fuel island, and full design costs. Mr. Christensen explained that approximately 80–90% of the project would be funded through enterprise funds, as the facility

primarily supports water, power, and other utility operations, and that the project would be incorporated into future Waterworth financial modeling.

Mr. Christensen stated that a key driver of the project is the City's fuel island, which is currently out of compliance with state requirements. He explained that the city is under a regulatory deadline to replace the fuel island and that the estimated cost for that component alone is approximately \$500,000. Staff has determined through multiple evaluations that the existing fuel system cannot be economically repaired and would need to be fully replaced regardless of whether the broader operations center project proceeds.

Additional project needs discussed included providing covered storage for costly City equipment currently exposed to the elements, addressing overcrowded workspaces, and improving site security. Mr. Christensen confirmed that fencing and security upgrades would be included, with consideration given to more durable fencing materials to reduce repeated damage and ongoing maintenance costs experienced at other City facilities.

Mr. Christensen outlined a proposed change to how the city plans and tracks long-term capital needs. Rather than maintaining multiple reserve accounts for individual projects, he recommended adopting a rolling five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Under this approach, each fiscal year would be shown with projected revenues, planned capital expenditures, and a running fund balance, allowing staff and Council to view year-by-year impacts and ensure balances remain positive. He stated that this method has been effective in other cities and provides a simpler and more transparent framework for long-term planning.

Mr. Christensen then reviewed next steps in the budget process. Department heads and Finance staff will develop detailed revenue and expenditure projections and return to the Council in March. Upcoming work will include capital project discussions, updated Waterworth modeling for enterprise funds, and continued monitoring of state legislative actions related to property tax and revenue limits.

Council discussion followed regarding the structure of future budget work sessions and the role of department heads. Council Member Adams stated that while department input can be valuable, having multiple meetings with department heads present in the prior year limited Council discussion and made it more difficult for some members to participate fully. Several council members expressed support for limiting department head attendance, particularly given anticipated budget constraints.

Ms. Nelson explained her initial plan to structure March work sessions by fund type, beginning with the General Fund and followed by enterprise funds, consistent with the prior year. She suggested that department heads could attend enterprise fund discussions and potentially be excused afterward. Council Member Blackham questioned whether department head attendance would be necessary at all this year, given the limited flexibility expected in the budget.

Council members discussed alternative formats, including having staff and department heads resolve priorities internally and present a consolidated recommendation to the Council. Several members emphasized the need for time for Council-only deliberation after receiving technical information. Mr. Christensen agreed that it is staff's responsibility to reconcile departmental requests and present a unified proposal, with department heads attending selectively to address

technical questions. A hybrid approach was discussed, involving initial Council-only discussion, followed by limited sessions with department heads for clarification, and then Council deliberation.

The discussion concluded with acknowledgment that pending state legislation, including a proposed 5% property tax increase cap, could significantly limit available options and affect the level of prioritization required. Several members noted that staff may ultimately need to return with a budget shaped primarily by external constraints, with Council providing high-level direction.

Mr. Christensen thanked the Council for the discussion and feedback. Mayor Tran informally adjourned the meeting at 11:43 a.m.