Murray City Municipal Council
City Council Workshop
Meeting Minutes of Thursday, February 5, 2026
Murray City Hall, 10 East 4800 South, Poplar Meeting Room, Murray, Utah 84107

Attendance:

Council Members:

Paul Pickett	District #1 – Telecom
Pam Cotter	District #2
Scott Goodman	District #3
Diane Turner	District #4 – Council Vice-Chair
Adam Hock	District #5 – Council Chair

Others**:**

Brett Hales	Mayor	Jennifer Kennedy	City Council Executive Director
Kim Sorensen	Chief Administrative Officer	Pattie Johnson	Council Administration
G.L. Critchfield	City Attorney	Crystal Brown	Council Administration
Emily Barton	Finance	Brenda Moore	Finance Director
Robyn Colton	HR Director	Chad Wilkinson	Community and Economic Dev. Director
Ryan Madsen	IT Supervisor	Erica Brown	Chief Communications Officer
Isaac Zenger	IT Support		

Conducting: Council Chair Hock – 3:00 p.m.

Discussion Items:

City Council's FY (Fiscal Year) 2026-2027 budget priorities. – Mr. Hock presented Council Members with four questions to help guide upcoming budget decisions. The questions were: What are the City's strengths? What are the City's weaknesses? What problems are anticipated over the next budget year? And what does the City need to improve? Mr. Hock explained that Council Members' answers would be used to determine policies and procedures for analyzing the budget.

Highlighted strengths of the City's included central location, strong services, community support, and solid commercial base, while noting weaknesses such as ongoing downtown revitalization challenges, the future of the old City Hall property, and the need to attract new businesses to modernize the economy.

Council Members agreed that many weaknesses and improvements blended together so those answers were related to environmental sustainability policies and procedures, a tendency to undervalue property and undersell the City. Also the absence of a natural city center and ongoing pressure to increase density despite already having a significant number of high-density apartments. It was felt that the City has now flipped too many commercial zones to multi-family residential zones and there was a new need to add more commercial zoning opportunities. Maintaining Class A office space while monitoring existing office occupancy was felt to be important. High density planning mistakes in the north end of the City, outdated zoning, housing affordability and a lack of smaller parks east of 900 East were also presented as weaknesses that needed improving.

Council Members discussed updating the Future Land Use Map, utilizing a citizen survey more for downtown planning and improving areas like quality of life, park amenities, art, and the City's manufacturing zone.

Anticipated budget concerns include a significant loss of revenue referred to as.02% optional sales tax revenue. It was believed that the City needs to prepare now, the City was used to having this income and the City could not cut enough spending or just keep budgets flat this year to offset the loss of revenue. There was consensus that the loss in funding would limit any new project such as purchasing land for a potential library or senior center and other needs. Additional concerns were shared about the possibility of having to spend reserves, if the economy weakens while already operating within razor thin margins.

Council Members categorized their answers, thoughts and concerns by ranking them into high and low core values. There was consensus that Economic Development, Quality of Life, Financial Security and Traffic Mitigation would be the top four standards that would reflect budget policies and priorities.

<u>Elected official's salaries.</u> – Ms. Turner proposed that Council Members receive a pay increase this fiscal year. HR Director Robyn Colton was asked to research pay scales for other city councils in the area and shared her report. She stated that among the cities she compared, some shared Murray's form of government and others did not, so this resulted in no two cities having the same salary, allowances or benefits for council positions. Council Members analyzed the pay, allowances, and benefits for council positions in Sandy, Ogden, Provo, West Jordan, Logan, and Taylorsville and discussed cities that recently increased pay for elected officials.

Ms. Colten noted that the Council received an increase in January 1, 2000, the Mayor received a market salary adjustment in 2016 and a raise was not implemented in 2022 when a pay increase was last proposed.

From her research, Ms. Colton stated that the annual pay of the Murray Council was 11.79% lower than the average pay of other city council members. She confirmed that a pay increase to the Murray Council position would affect the total salary that included both base pay and their monthly allowance. Benefits would not change. She also confirmed that Council Members, for the past 10 years, have received the same annual COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) increase that City employees received.

Ms. Colton said it was hard to determine how often other councils received increases to their base pay, because ordinances were only updated periodically to reflect changes within the past four years. It was also unclear whether other city council pay increases were due to the COLA or just base pay raises.

Ms. Colton pointed out that the existing Murray ordinance did not reflect in the current pay. Council Executive Director Kennedy suggested the ordinance be updated to reflect the current pay.

Ms. Turner asked when should a pay increase be implemented. Ms. Colton said unlike City employees, a council compensation study was not conducted annually, but her research showed most cities evaluated council pay every three to four years. Ms. Colton also believed the comparison was difficult to outline because other cities structured council compensation differently, with varying combinations of base pay, allowances, health benefits and pensions.

Ms. Turner felt without a base pay increase in 26 years, both the council and mayor positions were due for a raise. She noted Council Members did not have to accept the raise if it was approved. City Attorney G.L. Critchfield confirmed that language must be codified as well. Mr. Hock felt there was inequality that should be balanced out comparatively. Ms. Cotter said benefits like retirement, health care, pension, and phone and travel allowances should be added to the Murray Council pay equation as well as the COLA.

She felt they should be cautious about increasing pay due to possible budget cuts this fiscal year and not being able to fund new projects in the future.

Mr. Bullen and Mr. Pickett agreed it was important to make the position accessible to those who might work two jobs and a higher pay would encourage others to run for council, allowing them to give up a second job. Ms. Turner proposed next steps to bring the proposal forward in a council meeting.

Mr. Bullen asked if the discussion could continue on in a Committee of the Whole meeting to dive deeper into the material and get additional information. He clarified that he wanted to look at populations of cities in the comparison, noting that higher salaries made sense for larger cities. Ms. Cotter requested they review the budget before considering a pay increase. Ms. Turner believed the increase would not affect the budget significantly. Mr. Hock confirmed raising their pay to $26,800 per year would align the Council with the average pay of comparable cities.

Ms. Colton confirmed the Murray Council annual pay of $24,052 was 11.79% below the average and that the proposed $26,800 amount included extra allowance pay.

Mr. Bullen requested a new spreadsheet to help him better evaluate pay comparisons, specifically asking for population data, and the extra allowances and benefits provided to council members in strong mayor cities with independent utilities.

Mr. Hock proposed they revisit the pay increase request in April 2026 during the budget review process. There was consensus to continue the discussion.

- <u>Public comment guidelines.</u> **–** Mr. Hock inquired about whether specific guidelines should be implemented for conducting the citizen comment portion of council meetings. He explained the goal would be to prevent large numbers of people from speaking on the same topic, taking over the meeting and turning a single agenda item into a three-hour discussion, which had happened in other cities' council meetings.

  Mr. Critchfield said a similar situation occurred during a Murray City Council meeting years ago and agreed that guidelines would be appropriate in cases where 50 to 100 people attend the council meeting to voice the same concern. Ms. Kennedy agreed that such comments typically involve issues outside the City's jurisdiction and are not connected to a public hearing or business item on the meeting agenda.

  Mr. Bullen suggested a sign-up sheet ahead of each meeting, for an allotted timeframe of 30 minutes, citing other cities that had tried this. Once the timeframe is over, a last comment is allowed, or by a show of hand, one more person would be called on to speak on behalf of others with the same concern.

  Mr. Critchfield discussed the importance of public business meetings being held in public, while realizing business meetings are not held for the public. council members are ultimately there to conduct city business and could limit citizen comments to complete their duties in the council meeting. He clarified that the citizen comment timeframe was not intended for citizens to make hours and hours of complaints because it was germane for the public to understand the authority of the Council, who would allow citizens input without dialogue. He discussed how the Council should remain polite if and when harsh words were spoken to them, and not to engage in conversation. The purpose of the citizen comment portion of a meeting, or public hearing, which was to listen, hear people them out, respect free speech and then moving on to the next business meeting agenda item.

Council Members agreed it seldom happened that 50 people came to speak about the same thing and there was consensus to have a procedure in place should the situation arise. Ms. Kennedy and Mr. Critchfield would research language, draft public comment guidelines and return to a Committee of the Whole meeting for further discussion.

- Art gallery – Mr. Hock proposed that since the City was not currently using the Mary Margaret house on 5th Avenue, the City should renovate the vacant house into an art gallery. He suggested keeping the historic exterior façade, updating the interior and hardwood floors and creating a venue for visual art, interactive displays, rotating artists exhibits. Rental costs would be determined per artist, and artists could sell their work, sharing a small portion of the proceeds with the City. Mr. Hock believed the gallery would attract more people to the downtown area, improve quality of life and serve as an economic driver. The space could also be rented at times to help support downtown activity. He estimated renovation costs to be about $1 million and grant funding may also be available. He acknowledged that an art gallery might generate enough revenue to cover utility costs, but not the full cost to renovate the building.

  It was confirmed that RDA funds could be used for the project; but no funding was available in the Central Business District of the RDA at this time. There was consensus for Mr. Hock to continue his research, explore possibilities further and revisit the idea in a future Committee of the Whole meeting.

- Educational interests and city department and/or facility tours. – Ms. Turner believed it would be helpful for Council Members to visit various City Departments to help them understand their job as council members, for example touring the City attorney's office or court house. Mr. Bullen thought visiting the City's utility divisions would be helpful for understanding inner workings of the enterprises and visiting top businesses in the City. There was consensus to visit the Central Valley Water Reclamation Facility and all City parks and that a quarterly schedule be created to set a specific date for tours.

- Council retreat. – Ms. Turner invited Council Members and their families to a summer barbeque at her cabin.

Adjournment: 5:38 p.m.

Pattie Johnson
Council Administrator III