

CITY OF OREM
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
56 North State Street Orem, Utah
February 24, 2026

2:30 P.M. WORK SESSION - CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM

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| CONDUCTING | Mayor Karen McCandless |
| ELECTED OFFICIALS | Karen McCandless, Crystal Muhlestein, Jeff Lambson, Jenn Gale, LaNae Millett, Quinn Mecham, Chris Killpack |
| APPOINTED STAFF | Brenn Bybee, City Manager; Ryan Clark, Assistant City Manager; Keri Rugg, Deputy City Manager; Steve Earl, City Attorney; Chris Tschirki, Public Works Director; Brandon Nelson, Finance Director; Marc Sanderson, Fire Chief; BJ Robinson, Police Chief; Gary McGinn, Community Development Director; Peter Wolfley, Communications Manager, PIO; Teresa McKitrick, City Recorder |

NOTE: The referenced report and presentation documents for each discussion may be viewed at orem.gov/meetings under “City Council Presentations”

Alpine Reach / Waterline Relocation Tour *Presenter: Chris Ellison, Central Utah Water Conservancy District*

City Council members and Orem staff took a tour of the Alpine Aqueduct tunnel and Kubota Pipeline. The Alpine Aqueduct serves 1.6 million Utahns and delivers water to three treatment plants. The pipeline crosses existing geohazards (Active landslide and Wasatch Fault Zone). The Kubota Pipe has 18 Hazard Resilient Ductile Iron Pipe sections and will be installed on the eastern strand of the Wasatch Fault Zone. The project involves boring a tunnel to move a critical water pipeline away from an active landslide area where the ground is too unstable for traditional mitigation.

The council emphasized the vital importance of this infrastructure, noting that 60% of Orem’s water flows through this specific line. Council members specifically praised the patience of residents living on streets like Floridian, who have already endured significant utility work. These neighborhoods face further disruption this coming spring when the road will be torn up again to install the massive pipe, which measures between 90 and 110 inches in diameter. Despite the heavy construction impact on local residents, the council framed the project as a necessary sacrifice to secure the city's water future.

Natural Resources Tree Initiative Presentation *Presenter: Sara Bateman, Natural Resources Advisory Commission member and Darren Hawkins*

The Natural Resources Advisory Commission, represented by Darren Hawkins and Sara Bateman, presented a detailed proposal to the Orem City Council to address a measurable decline in the city's tree canopy. Utilizing satellite imagery from the Department of Agriculture, Mr. Hawkins demonstrated that Orem's tree cover stands at a mere 9.3%, which is not only lower than neighboring cities like Salt Lake and Logan but is also the lowest among similar Intermountain West metropolitan areas. While surrounding communities like Lehi and Highland are seeing canopy growth, Orem's coverage has actually shrunk over the last five years. The Commission suggested this decline is likely due to the removal of aging trees in 1980s-era subdivisions and the historical loss of local orchards. To reverse this trend, they proposed a high-engagement, three-year planting initiative designed to increase urban beauty, mitigate the "heat island" effect of asphalt, and improve residents' mental well-being.

The proposed initiative is structured around a collaborative model that heavily involves Utah Valley University (UVU) and various city stakeholders. Ms. Bateman outlined a plan where UVU students from disciplines as diverse as graphic design, civil engineering, and botany would receive credit for helping with city mapping, fire-safe planting guides, and public outreach. The timeline suggests a Phase 1 launch this coming spring to identify viable planting locations and water-wise tree varieties, followed by a Phase 2 expansion to recruit business partners, and concluding with a major ceremony for Orem's 110th anniversary. The Commission also suggested a "booster" campaign every five years to ensure the progress doesn't fizzle out, citing the fact that Orem hasn't seen a major tree-planting push since its centennial nearly six years ago.

During the discussion, the City Council expressed support but raised practical concerns regarding water conservation and funding. Councilmember Mecham highlighted the "trade-off" between large, shade-providing canopies and water consumption, urging the city to be thoughtful about selecting species that thrive in a desert climate without excessive irrigation. Regarding costs, City Manager Bybee suggested that the city could potentially leverage savings from the Solid Waste Fund or utilize neighborhood grants to offset expenses. Councilmember Millett emphasized that while the city should focus its direct spending on public property, it should facilitate business sponsorships or discounts from local nurseries to help private homeowners plant their own trees.

Ultimately, the Mayor and Council reached a consensus that the program should remain a "carrot rather than a stick," focusing on voluntary participation and community education rather than mandates. The initiative will likely integrate with the city's new library greenhouse to offer public classes on tree health and maintenance. Mr. Bybee and the city staff were tasked with "putting flesh on the bones" of this plan by refining the budget and formalizing partnerships with organizations like Rocky Mountain Power and the local school district. The meeting concluded with a shared vision of using the tree-planting goal—potentially 250 trees to mark the upcoming American semi-quincentennial—as a way to unify the community through a shared investment in Orem's long-term environmental health.

Planning Commission Appointment Process Discussion

Mayor McCandless, focused heavily on establishing a transparent and sustainable appointment process for the Planning Commission following an urgent vacancy crisis. The Mayor revealed that the commission had recently suffered three resignations and two health-related absences, leaving the body at risk of failing to meet a quorum. While the Council recently appointed a liaison, Council Member Mecham, to lead the recruitment, a point of confusion arose regarding a procedural discussion held by the previous Council a year prior. Mayor McCandless and Council Member Mecham were unaware of those past suggestions. This prompted a deeper discussion on how to define the "advice and consent" role of the Council, ensuring that the selection of commissioners—who handle state-mandated duties like subdivision approvals—is more rigorous than that of standard advisory boards.

The Council reached a consensus on a more collaborative vetting model to ensure high-quality appointments moving forward. Council Member Mecham described the current successful strategy of having multiple eyes on the portal applications, noting that Council Member Muhlestein and Community Development Director McGinn participated in recent interviews to provide diverse perspectives. Moving forward, the Council expressed a desire to see a "shortlist" of candidates that doubles the number of available seats. This would allow the full Council to review the top contenders and provide ranked feedback to the Mayor. They discussed using professional email exchanges to share the "why" behind their preferences—such as a candidate's geographic location or specific professional expertise—while remaining mindful that such communications are public records.

A significant portion of the debate centered on the level of formality required for this new process. While some members initially considered an ordinance, City Attorney Earl cautioned that such a move might be too restrictive. Instead, the Council opted for the creation of a "Guidebook" or a formal understanding documented via a memorandum or email from the Mayor. This approach provides a clear roadmap for future councils without the legal rigidity of a binding policy. There was also a push to ensure that the process remains focused on positive qualifications of applicants. Council Member Millett emphasized that the ultimate goal is to foster a back-and-forth dialogue that leads to a well-rounded consensus on the best leaders for the city's future.

Finally, the Council addressed the technicalities of term lengths and the immediate timeline for the Planning Commission. Although Council Member Lambson suggested staggering the terms to avoid mass turnover every three years, the City Attorney clarified that the current city ordinance mandates specific three-year terms, meaning an ordinance change would be necessary to alter that cycle. For the immediate future, Mr. McGinn assured the Council that the appointment of the three individuals on the current agenda would provide enough members to hold their upcoming meeting. This allows the Mayor and Council additional time to fill the remaining two vacancies using the refined, collaborative process they established during the session.

CITY COUNCIL / STAFF REPORTS (BOARDS & COMMISSIONS, NEW BUSINESS, ETC.)

Councilmember Gale provided an update on her recent outreach efforts and committee assignments, highlighting several key initiatives aimed at community engagement and organizational accountability. She invited the council to attend a local medical facility’s open house on March 13 to celebrate the installation of a new MRI machine and noted that she will soon begin her work with the UVU Business Resource Center in early March. In her role with the CARE tax commission, she and Councilmember Mecham have recommended two new appointees; she is currently collaborating with city staff to develop a standardized evaluation matrix. This new system is designed to provide clear expectations for participating organizations and ensure that evaluators are measuring success based on concrete outcomes and fulfilled promises rather than subjective impressions.

Regarding regional partnerships, Ms. Gale reported on a February meeting with the Utopia fiber-optic network where new officers were elected, though she expressed a desire for a follow-up meeting with the chair to gain a deeper understanding of the organization's complexities. She also highlighted the "America 250" initiative, a patriotic community program where residents can earn badges and prizes—including recreation center memberships and Library Hall tickets—by completing tasks such as walking 250 miles, volunteering, or engaging with American history. Ms. Gale encouraged the council to participate in the badge program and noted that the city is coordinating its event schedule with County Commissioner Skyler Beltran to ensure Orem’s activities are represented in the broader regional celebration.

AGENDA REVIEW & PREVIEW OF UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS

ADJOURN TO A CLOSED SESSION IN THE SUMMIT CONFERENCE ROOM

To discuss pending or reasonably imminent litigation; the character or professional competence of an individual; the purchase or lease of real property.

Mr. Killpack moved to adjourn to a closed meeting in the Summit conference room to discuss pending or reasonably imminent litigation; the character or professional competence of an individual; the purchase or lease of real property, **seconded** by Ms. Gale. Those voting yes: Karen McCandless, Chris Killpack, Crystal Muhlestein, Jeff Lambson, Jenn Gale, LaNae Millett and Quinn Mecham. The motion **passed**.

6:00 P.M. REGULAR SESSION - COUNCIL CHAMBERS

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| CONDUCTING | Mayor Karen McCandless |
| ELECTED OFFICIALS | Karen McCandless, Crystal Muhlestein, Jeff Lambson, Jenn Gale, LaNae Millett, Quinn Mecham, Chris Killpack |
| APPOINTED STAFF | Brenn Bybee, City Manager; Ryan Clark, Assistant City Manager; Keri Rugg, Deputy City Manager; Steve Earl, |

City Attorney; Chris Tschirki, Public Works Director; Brandon Nelson, Finance Director; Marc Sanderson, Fire Chief; BJ Robinson, Police Chief; Bryce Merrill, Library and Recreation Director; Gary McGinn, Community Development Director; Peter Wolfley, Communications Manager, PIO; Teresa McKitrick, City Recorder

CALL TO ORDER

INVOCATION / INSPIRATIONAL THOUGHT – Nick Komen

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE / FLAG CEREMONY – Madeline Komen

MAYOR’S REPORT/ ITEMS REFERRED BY COUNCIL

New Police Sergeants Introduction Presentation *Presenter: BJ Robinson, Police Chief*

Chief Robinson addressed the Mayor and City Council to formally announce the promotion of seven new police sergeants, a strategic expansion made possible through the support of the city administration. This initiative effectively doubles the leadership presence on the front lines by increasing the number of patrol sergeants on each team from one to two. Chief Robinson explained that this structural change is designed to improve the "span of control" within patrol teams, allowing for more oversight and direct leadership during active shifts. Beyond tactical management, the increase is intended to foster a culture of professional development, creating greater opportunities for one-on-one mentoring and high-level discussions between supervisors and officers.

Chief Robinson emphasized that this investment in leadership is a critical component of the department's mission to maintain Orem's reputation as a premier place to live, work, and play. He praised the caliber of the department's personnel, stating that the newly promoted sergeants—including Roland Burke, Eric Howard, Anneliese Lang, Alfredo Guevara, Logan O'Brien, Lief Bybee and Nick Simpson—represent the very best of both the local force and the law enforcement profession at large. By strengthening the middle management of the department, the city aims to enhance its overall public safety response while ensuring that newer officers have the guidance and support necessary to serve the citizens of Orem effectively.

Justice Court Report *Presenter: Reed Parkin, Justice Court Judge*

Judge Parkin's annual report served as a reflection on the nature of public service and a detailed operational review of the Justice Court. He began by emphasizing the solemnity of the oath of office, noting that while judges and city officials share the same foundational pledge to uphold the Constitution, they must operate in distinct "lanes." For the judiciary, this means strictly interpreting and applying the law while remaining independent of the executive and legislative branches. He reminded the Council that the Orem Justice Court, established in 2010,

is a state-authorized body that, despite being funded by the city, must maintain its impartiality and independence to protect the rights of every citizen against personal or political bias.

The court's operational data for 2025 illustrates a high-volume workload managed by a small team of seven judicial assistants and one administrator. In the 2025 calendar year, the court handled 10,408 traffic citations, 1,033 criminal filings, and 569 small claims cases. While these figures are slightly below the court's 15-year annual averages, they contribute to a massive total volume of over 167,000 traffic cases and 20,000 criminal cases since the court's inception. Common criminal charges heard in the court include DUIs, domestic violence assaults, retail theft, and drug possession. Judge Parkin noted that the court's activities are robust, resulting in the collection of \$2.5 million in 2025 alone, with \$1.6 million of that retained by the city after state surcharges were dispersed. He clarified that while the court is not run for profit, its revenue has consistently exceeded its operating costs, providing a surplus for Orem's general fund.

Finally, the report highlighted the critical importance of language access within the judicial system to ensure Orem's diverse population can participate fairly in their defense. Although all business is conducted in English, the court provides interpreters at no cost to defendants, a service mandated by both state and federal law. Since 2010, the court has utilized interpreters for over 7,900 cases in Spanish, by far the most frequent language. However, the judge emphasized the multicultural makeup of the city by noting that the court has provided services in 29 other languages over the years. Judge Parkin concluded by expressing his gratitude for the opportunity to serve as Orem's judge for the past 16 years, urging all city officials to continue acting with integrity and fidelity to their oaths.

SCERA and Zion Indie Film Festival (ZIFF) Presentation

Adam Robertson, the executive director of the SCERA Center for the Arts, and Michelle Moore, co-director of the Zions Indie Film Fest, presented a detailed overview of the festival's milestone 25th anniversary. Having grown from a modest two-day event into a major six-day festival, the event now features over 160 films and draws actors and filmmakers from across the globe, including representation from Canada, Mexico, and the United Kingdom. The festival directors emphasized their commitment to maintaining a family-friendly atmosphere that aligns with local community values; specifically, they noted that the festival does not program any R-rated content, ensuring that all screenings are suitable for "co-viewing" and family attendance.

Michelle Moore highlighted the deep industry expertise behind the festival, noting that her co-director husband previously served as the head of the Utah Film Commission and currently runs a studio in Park City, while she serves as a program director for Living Scriptures. This professional background has allowed them to curate a diverse lineup of rom-coms and dramas from established local partners like Angel Studios and TC Christensen, as well as socially significant content such as the "Pathways to Hope" project with Jane Clayson Johnson. The presentation concluded with an invitation for the City Council and the public to attend the upcoming festivities at the SCERA, celebrating a legacy of uplifting and entertaining cinema that has been rooted in Orem for nearly a quarter of a century.

CONSENT ITEMS

Meeting Minutes Approval - February 10, 2026

Events Advisory Commission Appointment - Suzanne Whitaker

Cultural Arts Advisory Commission Appointment - Gina Cavallo, Jeremy Hall, and Shelby Killpack

CARE Advisory Commission Appointment - Dawson Richman and Giovanna Alisa

Ms. Muhlestein moved to approve consent items, **seconded** by Mr. Killpack. Those voting yes: Karen McCandless, Chris Killpack, Crystal Muhlestein, Jeff Lambson, Jenn Gale, LaNae Millett and Quinn Mecham. The motion **passed**.

SCHEDULED ITEMS

Planning Commission Appointment - Susan Madsen, Darren Hawkins, and Karl Radmall

Mayor McCandless and Council Member Mecham spoke on the appointment of Susan Madsen, Darren Hawkins, and Carl Radmall to the Orem Planning Commission, filling vacancies created by recent health-related resignations. During the session, the Mayor emphasized that the Planning Commission holds a unique status among city boards because state law grants it specific administrative authorities over land use and zoning. Council Member Mecham, serving as the City Council liaison, detailed the selection process in which multiple council members interviewed a pool of highly qualified candidates and provided collective feedback to ensure a consensus. He expressed deep gratitude for the volunteers' willingness to take on the demanding schedule and technical complexities associated with city code and zoning oversight.

The discussion also highlighted the critical nature of these appointments, as the commission had reached a point where it lacked enough active members to maintain a quorum for its meetings. Council Member Muhlestein joined the Mayor in thanking the broader resident base for their high level of interest in serving, noting that the city relies heavily on such volunteerism to function. Council Member Mecham noted that additional appointments are anticipated in the future to fully round out the commission.

Ms. Millett moved to approve the appointment of Susan Madsen, Darren Hawkins and Karl Radmall to the Planning Commission, **seconded** by Ms. Gale. Those voting yes: Karen McCandless, Chris Killpack, Crystal Muhlestein, Jeff Lambson, Jenn Gale, LaNae Millett and Quinn Mecham. The motion **passed**.

PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Opened at 6:35 PM

Richard Jackson expressed sharp criticism regarding an unfinished residential structure on Palisade Drive, characterizing the property as a significant legal hazard. He highlighted a lack of safety measures. Beyond safety concerns, he asserted that the incomplete house is severely devaluing adjacent properties by at least \$200,000, urging the Planning Commission and the building department to intervene and compel the owners to complete the construction.

Mary Jackson acknowledged the value of a democratic system where residents can bring concerns to their elected officials; she urged the council to personally visit a problematic site in Orem to better understand the issues at hand. She concluded by advocating for potential changes to city ordinances to prevent similar problems from recurring in the future, emphasizing that even if a current project technically meets existing rules, the standards should be updated to protect the community.

David Sims expressed frustration over a long-stalled construction project, characterizing the lack of progress as a deliberate exploitation of the city's permitting process. He argued that the project has abused the "good faith" of the Planning Commission and the community. While acknowledging that economic hardships can occur, Mr. Sims expressed a collective dissatisfaction with what he views as an open-ended use of permits without a sincere intent to finish the structure in a timely manner. He ultimately urged the city to find a legal mechanism to ensure that future construction is tied to a commitment to completion, rather than allowing projects to remain in a state of indefinite limbo.

Tracy Pereira expressed deep distress over a massive, unfinished construction project on Palisade Drive. She described the structure as a "three-story block square" that resembles an office building rather than a home. Ms. Pereira questioned the consistency of city enforcement. She voiced urgent concerns regarding the loss of privacy from a potential rooftop viewing deck and the overall decline of neighborhood property values, appealing to the Council for a meeting to discuss mitigation strategies and seek help for the impacted residents.

Blake Pereira focused his comments on the severe economic impact the Palisade Drive construction is having on the surrounding community. He expressed deep empathy for his neighbors. Mr. Pereira argued that while the builder may have meaningful personal reasons for the project, the resulting structure is significantly devaluing adjacent properties. He highlighted the discouragement felt by homeowners and aspiring buyers alike. He urged the Council to consider the long-term financial devastation this project has caused for the families in his neighborhood.

Tim Williams expressed deep concerns regarding neighborhood safety, infrastructure strain, and the long-term disruption caused by the three-and-a-half-year construction timeline. He highlighted significant parking issues which he fears will obstruct emergency vehicle access once the building is fully occupied. Mr. Williams criticized the apparent lack of consistent code enforcement. He concluded by describing the ongoing nuisance of late-night construction noise

and the "disaster" of the site's physical condition, calling for a more equitable application of city permits and oversight.

Edison Pereira voiced his frustration regarding the Palisade Drive project from an investment and property appreciation standpoint. He described the massive, unfinished structure as a "big box" that appears more like a future hotel than a residential home. Admitting he is unclear on the specific legal tools available to the Council, Mr. Pereira called for the city to exercise its enforcement powers to either compel a change in the project's direction or resolve the ongoing construction stalemate. He emphasized that the situation has become a collective burden for the entire neighborhood.

Shelby Russell presented a letter signed by over 100 residents expressing deep concern over a property on South Palisade Drive that they believe is architecturally incompatible with the neighborhood and has languished in a state of construction for too long. The petition calls for strict adherence to R8 zoning, a moratorium on interior permits that could facilitate illegal apartment-style units, and more rigorous regulation of cul-de-sac parking to ensure emergency vehicle access. Ms. Russell urged the city to implement aesthetic compatibility standards and overhaul its construction timeline policies by imposing substantial consequences for inspection violations or requiring a new permit with a strict completion deadline. She asked for changes to city ordinances to prevent this from occurring in other Orem neighborhoods.

Rebecca Armstrong expressed frustration of her neighborhood regarding a nearly four-year construction project, questioning how a structure so architecturally incompatible was ever permitted and who bears responsibility for the prolonged nuisance of a dangerous, unsightly site. While clarifying that the neighbors want the project finished rather than stopped. Ms. Armstrong formally requested a meeting between neighborhood representatives, the Director of Community Development, and the Mayor to discuss the specific concerns of over 140 constituents and to enact ordinance modifications that would protect other Orem neighborhoods. She reminded the Council that they have a fundamental responsibility to regulate and demonstrate care for the integrity and property values of the community.

Jon Russell expressed deep disappointment over the "monstrosity" that has disrupted the serenity and beauty of one of the city's most sought-after locations. He noted that while his section of the neighborhood had been experiencing a period of tasteful renewal, the current unfinished project now draws visceral, negative reactions. Mr. Russell challenged the Mayor and Council to consider how they would react if this happened on their own blocks. Ultimately, he urged the city to take decisive action to restore the neighborhood's integrity and ensure that the area once again reflects the high standards of living.

Phyllis Bestor voiced her concerns regarding the architectural incompatibility and stagnant progress of the construction at 1060 East 260 South. Ms. Bestor highlighted the area's history as a prestigious neighborhood characterized by cherry orchards and spectacular mountain views, noting that homeowners pay a premium to live in such a location. She reported being frequently questioned by others about whether the structure is a business or an apartment

complex. Ms. Bestor called for the city to establish stricter zoning and architectural standards that require new builds to be aesthetically compatible with existing homes.

City Attorney Earl and Community Development Director McGinn addressed the residents' grievances by explaining that the controversial structure was permitted because it met the city's "laws of general applicability" within the RA zone, such as height limits and setbacks. Mr. Earl clarified that Utah state law expressly forbids municipalities from dictating architectural aesthetics or requiring that a new home match the character of an existing neighborhood, meaning the city was legally mandated to approve the permit once the technical standards were met. Regarding the nearly four-year construction timeline, officials explained that the state-imposed building code only requires a builder to show minimal progress every six months to keep a permit active—a standard that the property owner has technically satisfied. While the city cannot legally stop the project or force its demolition, they have issued citations for nuisance violations like trash and debris and encouraged residents to report after-hours noise to the police. Looking forward, the Community Development Department is drafting ordinance amendments, set for an April Planning Commission meeting, to redefine building standards and prevent similar "box-like" structures from being built in the future, though the Mayor noted that significant changes to architectural oversight would require residents to lobby the state legislature.

Lisa Lesser expressed strong opposition to the proliferation of short-term rentals (STRs), arguing that they are exacerbating the city's affordable housing crisis. Ms. Lesser noted that many homes in her neighborhood are now occupied by transient visitors rather than permanent residents. She estimated that if her area's average holds true across the city, Orem could be losing upwards of 1,100 housing units to short-term guests. She urged the Council to consider how these rentals displace young families and couples who wish to put down roots, calling for a prioritization of long-term residents over temporary visitors to maintain the social fabric and housing availability of Orem's neighborhoods.

Lisa Wilkey advocated for the long-term stability of Orem's neighborhoods, arguing that the expansion of short-term rentals risks transforming residential streets into "transaction-based zones." She emphasized that the city's strength lies in its invested, permanent residents. Ms. Wilkie raised specific concerns regarding the upcoming Olympics, warning that without strict regulations, outside investors will purchase single-family homes for profit. She urged the council to prioritize "pro-community" policies that ensure Orem remains a place for families to build lives rather than a collection of assets for investors to maximize.

Kristin Priddis shared a personal account of a distressing experience with a high-capacity short-term rental that operated in her cul-de-sac. She described the constant influx of strangers as a major safety concern. Ms. Prentice specifically highlighted an instance involving a massive party with approximately 25 people, which resulted in overwhelming noise and extreme parking congestion that spanned three blocks and even prevented residents from putting out their trash. She urged the Council to protect the quiet residential atmosphere of Orem's neighborhoods and prioritize the needs of permanent residents over short-term lodging.

Steven Astle addressed the council to express his concern that short-term rentals are undermining the city's "Family City USA" brand. He shared a troubling experience from a few years ago involving the "Goat House," a property in his eight-house cul-de-sac that operated more like a business venue than a home. Mr. Astle highlighted safety hazards, noting that the resulting traffic and double-parked buses. While clarifying that he is not anti-business, he argued that the proliferation of short-term rentals directly conflicts with the city's goals for affordable housing and residential stability, ultimately urging the council to protect Orem's identity as a place where families can put down roots in a secure environment.

James Eager argued that short-term rentals are commercial entities unfairly operating in residential zones without being subject to the same taxes or regulations as traditional businesses. He pointed out the inherent contradiction in allowing these properties to benefit from lower residential tax rates while they simultaneously reduce the housing supply and drive up costs for permanent homeowners and renters. Mr. Eager described the decline of his own neighborhood that was designated for the "My Hometown" revitalization initiative. He concluded by warning that when more than half of a neighborhood's occupants are transient, the ability to build stable, supportive community relationships is lost, undermining the very efforts intended to strengthen the city.

Marlene Goodrich shared her positive experience living next door to a short-term rental owned by her longtime friend. After nearly 50 years as neighbors, Ms. Goodrich observed the neighbors' transition from long-term rentals to a short-term model significantly improved the property's impact on the neighborhood. She noted that while previous long-term tenants had been disruptive and caused damage to the home, the short-term rental is now professionally landscaped, well-maintained, and equipped with security lighting and cameras that enhance local safety. Ms. Goodrich emphasized that her neighbors remain a "hands-on" owner who frequently supervises the home. She argued that property owners should have the flexibility to choose short-term rentals, asserting that an owner's level of care and personal involvement is more important than the length of a tenant's stay.

Curtis Gladden defended short-term rentals (STRs) based on his experiences as both a frequent traveler and a local who values data over anecdotes. He corrected previous estimates of STR volume, noting that his research indicated approximately 500 listings in the Orem area. Ms. Gladden emphasized that Airbnb's often provide a cleaner, safer, and more family-friendly alternative to hotels. He countered the "pro-community" argument by asserting that STR guests contribute directly to the local economy by shopping and recreating in the areas they visit. He highlighted the self-regulating nature of the industry, pointing out that the reciprocal rating system between hosts and guests naturally filters out bad actors, which results in STRs typically being the best-kept homes in any given neighborhood.

Trisha Barris shared her experience with a neighborhood property that transformed into a high-traffic event center. She described the disruption and safety concerns caused by family reunions and weddings. While acknowledging the diverse range of experiences shared by other speakers, Ms. Barris suggested that the city should research how other Utah municipalities

successfully regulate short-term rentals. She concluded by proposed that the city look at the issue from new perspectives, even suggesting that a decision on short-term rental policy could be put to a public vote on a future ballot.

Tawny Merrill shared how using VRBO allows her family to maintain her late mother's estate as a home base for relatives while offsetting taxes and maintenance costs. As a "premier host" living next door to the property, Ms. Merrill enforces strict rules against street parking, smoking, and alcohol to ensure the neighborhood remains peaceful. She argued that well-managed rentals benefit Orem by generating tax revenue and supporting local businesses like restaurants and grocery stores. She urged the City Council to consider solutions that set higher operational standards while allowing responsible, high-quality rentals to continue operating.

Stephen White spoke in opposition to short-term rentals (STRs), reporting that the consensus of the neighborhood advisory commission is not for regulation, but for full prohibition. Mr. White shared a cautionary tale of how STRs can erode a community's social fabric, transforming once-safe streets. He argued that true safety is built on "social cohesion" rather than police response times, asserting that the "Family City USA" identity is fundamentally incompatible with running hotels out of residential cul-de-sacs. Mr. White concluded by urging the Council not to "compromise for the sake of compromise," framing the decision as a pivotal moment to preserve Orem's character and protect housing affordability from the "love of money".

Jordyn Kauwe shared how her perspective on short-term rentals shifted from indifference to strong opposition after living next to one for a year. She argued that these rentals drive up housing costs by removing supply from the long-term market, noting that an LLC purchased the home next to hers. Ms. Kauwe emphasized the loss of community stability and the specific safety concerns that arise because hosts cannot truly vet transient tenants. She highlighted the "unfair burden" placed on neighbors, who are forced to act as the primary enforcement agents, urging the Council to prioritize housing affordability and safety.

Brandon Henrie offered a nuanced perspective based on his professional background and personal experiences. While he acknowledged that 90% of STR guests are respectful, he described the remaining 10% as "unbearable," citing incidents of drug use, parties, and frequent police calls. Mr. Henrie advocated for a hybrid policy that distinguishes between owner-occupied rentals and purely investment properties owned by non-residents. He suggested that while owner-occupied rentals should face less strict regulations, investment-based STRs should be confined to specific, dedicated zones.

Joe Hillstead expressed his firm opposition to short-term rentals based on his recent experiences. He described the disruptive impact of a nearby "party house." While he acknowledged that many guests were respectful, Hillstead emphasized that the small percentage who were loud and intoxicated created an "unbearable" environment for the permanent residents. He urged the Council to consider the heavy toll these properties take on families and he stated his opposition to allowing short-term rentals in Orem's residential areas.

Collynn Hillstead raised a question regarding the city's current enforcement capabilities. She noted that while short-term rentals are currently illegal in her area, it still took her neighborhood over a year of effort to successfully shut down a single non-compliant property. Ms. Hillstead expressed deep skepticism over any proposal to expand or formally permit short-term rentals, questioning how the city could possibly manage a larger, legal market when it already struggles to regulate the existing prohibited ones.

Amanda Maulder shared a personal account of how operating a short-term rental served as a financial "lifesaver" after her husband was laid off. As an owner-occupied host, she expressed gratitude for the flexibility the platform provided during a crisis and noted that her large home now hosts families for BYU graduations and weddings. Addressing neighborhood friction, Maulder pointed out that complaints can sometimes stem from personality clashes rather than transient guests. She concluded by advocating for the continued allowance of short-term rentals, suggesting that the city should focus on regulation and holding owners accountable to "keep the peace" rather than a total ban.

James Walker shared a personal evolution from a supporter of short-term rentals to a frustrated neighbor dealing with a large-scale "event center" in his cul-de-sac. He described a high-end property that hosts frequent photo shoots, weddings, and parties, leading to dozens of cars congesting the street and even a trespasser entering his private pool. While Walker acknowledged that some owners manage their properties so well he didn't even realize they were rentals, he emphasized the severe loss of security that led him to install 15 cameras and restrict his child's movement in the neighborhood. He urged the Council to recognize that "calling a non-emergency number" is an insufficient solution for those who have invested their lives and dollars into the stability of Orem.

Kriss Hammond argued that the impact of STRs is statistically overblown, noting that her group identified only about 100 individuals operating them. She contended that current enforcement efforts are unnecessarily dividing the community. After spending \$60,000 to repair her home following damage from long-term tenants, Hammond transitioned to a short-term model which she manages via cameras and professional maintenance to ensure it remains "immaculate" and quiet. She suggested that the city's focus should be on the broader issues within the rental market rather than targeting a small group of responsible owners.

Ryan Walker spoke in favor of maintaining STRs in Orem, primarily citing their role in keeping family gatherings affordable and accessible. He shared a personal example from a recent family reunion where an Airbnb cost significantly less than half of what a hotel would have charged (\$372 versus \$840). Mr. Walker expressed concern that over-regulation or high taxes would drive out middle-class families in favor of hotel chains. While acknowledging that noise and neighborly disruptions should be addressed reasonably, he emphasized that his own experiences with local hosts have been positive and urged the Council to consider the economic and familial benefits of keeping STRs.

David Pastana shared a cautionary tale of how a lack of clear short-term rental (STR) regulations allowed "unyielding self-interest" from neighbors to force him out of business. Mr.

Pastana claimed the neighborhood "colluded" to file over 750 complaints against his property in just 10 months, most of which resulted in only minor citations. He argued that the relentless pressure eventually forced him to sell his property at a significant financial loss. Mr. Pastana concluded by asserting that property owners have a constitutional right to use their homes as they see fit and urged the Council to establish clear, fair regulations that protect responsible hosts from neighborhood harassment.

Marissa Harris advocated for a data-driven, balanced approach to regulation rather than a "blanket prohibition." She noted that short-term rentals (STRs) represent a mere 1–2% of the local housing market and argued that many owners originally entered the market in good faith based on the city's previously relaxed enforcement. Ms. Harris shared her personal motivation for purchasing the property next to her home. She expressed support for clear licensing, occupancy limits, and strict parking rules. She concluded by submitting a 26-page packet of positive testimonials from local neighbors and hosts.

Cameron Walker argued that finding middle ground is possible and necessary to protect both property rights and Orem's "Family City USA" identity. He emphasized that for many Utah families with three or more children, staying in a traditional hotel is often logistically and financially impossible, requiring multiple separate rooms. Mr. Walker asserted that 90% of guests are families visiting relatives, and a blanket ban would effectively "force families to split" or stay elsewhere. He urged the Council to pursue reasonable regulations that eliminate "party houses" while preserving the fundamental right of homeowners to host visiting families.

Sean Southerland described the "daily burdens" placed on neighbors that often go unnoticed by city officials. He highlighted frequent security concerns. Mr. Sutherland also detailed physical disruptions that force neighbors in wheelchairs into the street. He raised concerns about the lack of enforceable safety screenings for transient guests and the lack of oversight on STR platforms effectively circumvents these community safeguards. He concluded that the current model creates a "burden of the many to benefit the few," where residents pay the price for a business's lack of accountability.

Linda Van Cott offered a historical perspective on the city's evolution from a one-stoplight town to a bustling community. She identified the core issue of the short-term rental debate as a lack of "heart" and accountability when owners do not reside on-site or within the city. Ms. Van Cott shared an example from her own cul-de-sac, where a home was divided to house as many as 17 men in a single basement. She admitted that many residents often feel "helpless" or hesitant to report illegal activity. Her plea is to find a delicate balance between the revenue generated by progress and the "heart" of the community, urging them to prioritize the quality of life and safety of permanent residents over the financial gains of absentee landlords.

Tracy Pereira provided a perspective shared by many Orem families: the desire for owner-occupied flexibility. She explained that her basement apartment, connected to the main house, is primarily for her visiting sons, but she would like to rent it out on weekends when it's vacant. Ms. Tracy emphasized that as an owner who lives on-site, she has every incentive to be a "rule-follower" and watch over her property. She urged the Council to create regulations that

distinguish between professional investors and residents simply trying to use their extra space to stay afloat.

Amy Green provided negative side effects of short-term rentals (STRs). She argued that STRs are essentially commercial hotels operating in residential zones. Ms. Green emphasized a "real public safety concern," noting that blocked driveways can impede emergency vehicles. She challenged the idea that STRs provide meaningful revenue, asserting that the administrative and public safety costs borne by taxpayers often offset any local tax gains. She raised concerns about housing affordability. Ms. Green cautioned the Council against being swayed by organized pro-STR advocacy groups, stating that the majority of residents are unaware of the proposed changes and would prefer to keep the current prohibition in place to protect the city's residential character.

Larry Gleim shared his positive experience living next to a short-term rental for the past seven years. He emphasized that his neighbors obtained city permission before starting their STR, hold current landlord licenses, and diligently pay all required taxes. Mr. Gleim noted that their guests are typically respectful families who support local businesses, and the property is well-managed that it is often indistinguishable from any other quiet residence. He advocated for a licensing program that protects "good operators" while providing the city with a clear mechanism to quickly shut down problematic "party houses" managed by absentee landlords.

Matthew Beetle offered a unique perspective on the "family" value of short-term rentals (STRs). He explained that for a family of his size, traditional hotels are unaffordable forcing them to split across multiple rooms or floors. He argued that the "magic" of a family gathering requires the "one roof" experience that only a home can provide. Contrasting his experience with 120 long-term rental units, Mr. Beetle claimed that STRs are actually better for the neighborhood's aesthetics; while long-term tenants often neglect yards and cause turnover damage, STRs must be kept in "immaculate" condition to attract guests and maintain insurance coverage. He concluded that Orem does not have an STR problem, but rather a specific "event center" problem that can be solved with targeted regulations.

Laura Zamora framed the short-term rental debate as a matter of personal accountability. She shared that she chose to become a responsible long-term landlord for her parents' former home specifically to preserve its legacy and prevent it from being bought by outside investors. She argued that permanent residents are the only ones who truly face the long-term consequences of neighborhood changes. She noted that the guests at the Airbnb near her home often use Orem only as a home base to visit other areas.

Mayor Karen McCandless concluded the public hearing by thanking the residents for their respectful and diverse contributions, emphasizing that the Council has been taking extensive notes. She clarified the city's current timeline, noting that they are purposely holding off on a final "Orem-specific" decision until the end of the Utah State Legislative Session, which concludes this Friday, March 6, 2026. This cautious approach ensures that any new city ordinance aligns with potential state-level changes—though none have surfaced yet this session—to avoid future legal conflicts.

Closed at 8:23 PM

SCHEDULED ITEMS (Continued)

PUBLIC HEARING - ORDINANCE - FY 2025-2026 Budget Amendments Presenter:

Brandon C. Nelson, CPA, Finance Director

Mr. Nelson outlined a series of necessary budget amendments for the current fiscal year, primarily driven by the need to manage an excess fund balance and integrate various grants and donations. A central focus of the report was the city's General Fund, which auditors determined had exceeded the state-mandated maximum allowable balance. To rectify this and remain in legal compliance, Mr. Nelson proposed transferring approximately \$3.68 million from the General Fund into the Capital Projects Fund. This transfer also serves to cover a significant and unexpected \$455,000 invoice from Provo City for consolidated dispatch services. Mr. Nelson noted that while the city remains committed to the partnership with Provo, they are currently reviewing the contract to ensure greater transparency and prevent such large, unpredicted billing discrepancies in the future.

The amendments also formally recognized several revenue streams and departmental needs. Mr. Nelson highlighted the receipt of federal HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) grant funds, which will support the Major Crimes Task Force across the calendar year. Additionally, the budget was adjusted to reflect community donations for the Gold Star Families Memorial Monument and the "Lights On" celebration, ensuring these funds are correctly positioned within the Capital Projects Fund for their intended use. Other adjustments included a \$80,000 reimbursement from the Mountainland Association of Governments (MAG) for a cross-year project and the allocation of reserve funds for capital improvements at the Senior Citizen Center, specifically for the replacement of building door locks.

Finally, Mr. Nelson addressed the Police Department's budget, noting a high volume of overtime work performed at Utah Valley University (UVU). Because UVU reimburses the city for these hours, the budget amendment serves to balance the police overtime account so it does not appear to be in a deficit. The presentation also accounted for interest earned on the 2024 Sales Tax Revenue Bonds, which Mr. Nelson confirmed would continue to be directed toward public safety-related capital projects. Following the presentation, Council Member Millett sought clarification on the viability of the dispatch agreement, to which Mr. Nelson reaffirmed that despite the recent billing hurdles, the partnership with Provo remains the most efficient and effective option for Orem's public safety needs.

Public Hearing open at 8:35 PM

No comments

Public Hearing closed at 8:35 PM

Mr. Lambson moved to approve the FY 2025-2026 budget as shown in Exhibit “A” as presented, **seconded** by Mr. Killpack. Those voting yes: Karen McCandless, Chris Killpack, Crystal Muhlestein, Jeff Lambson, Jenn Gale, LaNae Millett and Quinn Mecham. The motion **passed**.

CITY MANAGER INFORMATION ITEMS

In his administrative update, City Manager Bybee shared several updates on city projects and upcoming events, beginning with a collaborative landscaping effort for the roundabout north of University Parkway. Using designs created by UVU students, the city plans to begin planting this spring to finalize the long-awaited project. Mr. Bybee also announced that the Water Reuse Facility is ready for its ribbon-cutting on March 10, and reminded the community that nominations are open for the Spirit of Orem Awards, which features a patriotic "Red, White, and Blue" theme this year.

Mr. Bybee praised the "exceptional caliber" of city staff. He shared how a group of employees recently rallied to support the city's HR Director during a health crisis with meals and gifts—an act of kindness Mr. Bybee noted he personally experienced from staff during his own son's cancer treatments. He emphasized that this culture of internal support directly translates to the high-quality service provided to the public.

Mayor McCandless concluded the session by confirming the city's modified City Council schedule. Due to regional conferences and the "Pillar of the Valley" event, Orem will hold only one City Council meeting in March and one in April. She also teased a unique "State of the City" address for March 12.

ADJOURN TO A CLOSED SESSION IN THE SUMMIT CONFERENCE ROOM

To discuss pending or reasonably imminent litigation; the character or professional competence of an individual; the purchase or lease of real property; or the deployment of security personnel, devices or systems

Mr. Killpack moved to adjourn to a closed meeting in the Summit conference room to discuss pending or reasonably imminent litigation; the character or professional competence of an individual; the purchase or lease of real property; or the deployment of security personnel, devices or systems, **seconded** by Ms. Muhlestein. Those voting yes: Karen McCandless, Chris Killpack, Crystal Muhlestein, Jeff Lambson, Jenn Gale, LaNae Millett and Quinn Mecham. The motion **passed**.

(These minutes were created with the help of AI)

PASSED and APPROVED on this 10th day of March 2026.

Karen McCandless

Karen McCandless, Mayor

ATTEST:

Teresa McKittrick

Teresa McKittrick, City Recorder



COUNCIL MEMBER

AYE NAY ABSTAIN ABSENT

| | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mayor Karen McCandless | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Chris Killpack | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Crystal Muhlestein | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Jeff Lambson | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Jenn Gale | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| LaNae Millett | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Quinn Meham | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |