

**SANTA CLARA CITY COUNCIL WORK MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2026
MEETING MINUTES**

THE CITY COUNCIL FOR SANTA CLARA CITY, WASHINGTON, UTAH, met for a Work Meeting on Wednesday, February 25, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers located at 2603 Santa Clara Drive, Santa Clara, Utah. The meeting will be broadcasted on our city website at <https://santaclarautah.gov>.

Present: Mayor Jarett Waite
Councilman Justin Caplin
Councilwoman Janene Burton
Councilwoman Christa Hinton
Councilwoman Dave Pond
Councilman Mark Heindrickson

Staff Present: Selena Nez, City Recorder
Matt Ence, City Attorney
Jim McNulty, Planning Director
Cody Mitchell, Building Official
Dan Cazier, Fire Chief
Ryan VonCannon, Parks Director
Jaron Studly, Police Chief
Casey Stratton, Public Works Assistant Director

1. Call to Order

Mayor Jarett Waite called the Santa Clara City Council Work Meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Present from the council were Councilman Justin Caplin, Councilwoman Janene Burton, Councilwoman Christa Hinton, Councilman Dave Pond, and Councilman Mark Hendrickson.

2. Working Agenda

A. General Business:

1. Council Procedure, Robert's Rule of Order. Presented by Matt Ence, City Attorney.

City Attorney Matt Ence presented updates to the City Council Meeting Policies and Procedures document, which was last enacted in 2013 and amended in 2014. Mayor Waite explained that he had reviewed the document and highlighted sections that may need updating due to changes in practice or state code requirements.

Ence walked through the highlighted sections, noting that Mayor Waite had done the initial review work. The first item discussed was section 3.4 regarding recognition by the mayor, which currently requires formal recognition of staff and public members. The council agreed this should be modified to reflect current practice of simply recognizing council members present, as staff indicated they did not want to be formally recognized in the minutes each meeting.

The anchor location requirement for electronic meetings was also discussed, with Ence noting that current state code only requires someone to be at the physical location where the public can attend, not necessarily the mayor or a council member.

Order of business sections needed updating to reflect the current meeting schedule rather than the outdated schedule from 2013. The council discussed simplifying the agenda format requirements, particularly around opening comments and citizen communications which are not done at every meeting. Councilwoman Hinton requested that language be maintained for interfaith council members who typically provide opening comments.

The mayor pro tem selection process was extensively discussed. Ence clarified that contrary to his initial understanding, the mayor pro tem is elected by the council, not appointed by the mayor. The council debated whether the position should be elected annually or every two years to align with other council assignments. After discussion, the council settled on annual elections, with Councilman Pond initially favoring two years to match other assignments but accepting the one-year term.

Ence also noted that the mayor pro tem position can be important beyond just running meetings in the mayor's absence, citing his experience signing an emergency declaration during the dike failure when he served as mayor pro tem.

Item continuation procedures in section 7.5 were discussed, with focus on whether the mayor or council should have authority to continue agenda items when applicants request continuance less than seven days before a meeting. The language currently creates some inconsistency between subsections. Councilman Caplin noted this provides important checks and balances, while Ence raised concerns about the practicality of having the council make such decisions via email versus calling a special meeting.

Public hearing procedures were reviewed, with discussion about whether the council should vote to close public hearings or if the mayor should simply declare them closed. The council preferred the current practice of the mayor closing hearings with council retaining the option to reopen them.

Requirements for public comment were discussed, with Ence recommending that only names be required from speakers, not addresses or residency status. This followed training from former City Attorney Brock indicating that requiring additional information could create inappropriate barriers to public participation.

Rules of conduct sections were reviewed, including disorderly citizen provisions that require a two-thirds council vote to expel someone from a meeting. Ence suggested adding language about signs and other potentially disruptive items that might be brought to meetings.

The discussion touched on recent council interactions, with some members expressing concerns about how disagreements should be handled between council members, emphasizing the importance of maintaining professionalism and addressing issues privately when possible.

Time limits for public comment were mentioned as potentially needing to be added to the document, referencing previous ordinance updates on public hearing procedures.

2. Discussion regarding Graveyard Wash Reservoir. Presented by Jim McNulty, Planning Director.

Planning Director Jim McNulty provided an update on the future Graveyard Wash Reservoir project. The reservoir will be located on property that is currently unincorporated Washington County land and BLM property, but falls within Santa Clara City's annexation policy plan and map.

McNulty explained that Saint George City and the Conservancy District will build and operate the facility, but Santa Clara City intends to annex the property to maintain land use control. He presented maps from Alpha Engineering showing the reservoir location in relation to Highway 91, Pioneer Parkway, and the city shops.

The annexation process is moving forward with the updated annexation policy plan going to Planning Commission for public hearing, followed by a 14-day comment period for affected entities before coming to the City Council, likely on March 25th. The actual annexation process is expected to take 90-120 days once initiated, with completion targeted for July.

There has been discussion about the "Graveyard Wash" name, which appears to derive from the historic Graveyard Hill in the area. Staff indicated they may have input on the naming but will need to coordinate with Saint George City and the Conservancy District.

City Attorney Matt Ence explained that the primary benefit of annexation is land use control, which would allow the city to have input over potential recreational opportunities and surrounding development. Without annexation, the city would have no influence over these decisions.

Councilman Caplin asked about costs associated with annexation, and Ence clarified that the city would not be responsible for reservoir maintenance, which remains with Saint George City and the water district. However, the city could potentially develop recreational agreements with BLM for park facilities around the reservoir.

3. Continued discussion regarding parking at Frei's Fruit Market requested by Mayor Waite.

Mayor Waite requested this item be removed from the agenda but noted it was already published, requiring council to table or continue it. Since work meetings don't allow motions, the council agreed to skip this item. Mayor Waite explained they're hoping to get more information from a traffic engineer before having further discussion on the parking issue.

4. Discussion regarding Rural Communities Opportunity Grant. Presented by Jim McNulty, Planning Director.

Planning Director Jim McNulty and Colette Cox from the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity presented an update on the Rural Communities Opportunity Grant. Santa Clara City was awarded \$194,013 on January 2, 2026, representing 55% of the original \$350,000 request for a \$665,000 multi-faceted historic downtown retail refresh project.

The city was one of eight communities awarded grants out of 29 applications. The grant is intended to ensure the historic district retail area remains vibrant, accessible, and attractive for local commerce, regional visitor economy, and community engagement.

Phase 1 of the original proposal focused on parking improvements to address dangerous blade parking in front of Fry's Fruit Market, creation of new accessible public parking areas, landscaping, additional display areas, outdoor seating, and demolition/remediation of Jenkins oil tanks.

Other elements in the original application included improved signage and wayfinding, walkability improvements, building facade improvements, and historic district maintenance, but these were scaled back due to the partial funding award.

Cox explained that all other grant recipients have already accepted their awards and are implementing projects, while Santa Clara's situation requires amending the original proposal due to legal disputes involving multiple Frei family properties that may make the original plan unviable.

The timeline is critical, with contracts needing to be finalized by March 15th. Cox emphasized that amendments must stay within the original intent of the grant, and projects must be completed within two years, though preferably within one year to maintain eligibility for potential Phase 2 funding in the next application cycle.

The grant operates as a pass-through to businesses, meaning funds can be used to enhance private property including parking, signage, lighting, or digital content promotion. There is no requirement for property owners to compensate the city, as improvements are viewed as investments in their properties.

Mayor Waite expressed enthusiasm for the opportunity, noting his business experience in downtown Saint George and the value such grants provide. He suggested focusing on elements like oil tank removal and website development featuring audio tours of downtown historic properties, incorporating data from resident Denise Webster.

Council members supported keeping the Jenkins oil tank removal as a priority and exploring website/digital marketing options. Staff was directed to work on an amended application for the

March 11th council meeting, with the understanding that two council members would be absent but could provide input after reviewing the packet.

McNulty noted that transportation engineering work would provide additional information for parking decisions, though this would be separate from the grant application process.

3. Staff Reports

Various department heads provided updates:

Police Chief, Jaron Studley reported:

- Preparing department budget with March deadline
- Monitoring four legislative bills (license plate readers, victim identity protections, unmarked car enforcement limits, e-bike regulations)
- New dispatch contract expected to save \$55K–\$60K annually
- Public safety contract negotiations ongoing with positive outlook
- Animal shelter kennels completed; low intake numbers continue
- Successful interdiction operation with federal partners; seizure of ~100 lbs of methamphetamine
- Officer training enhanced through freeway interdiction work

Parks Director, Ryan VonCannon reported:

- Three burials scheduled this week
- Large baseball tournament Friday and Saturday utilizing six
- University volunteer groups visiting Black Rock area for project work
- Parks Director, Ryan VonCannon reported:

Power Director, Gary Hall reported:

- Updating capital facilities plan and impact fees (costs have roughly doubled since 2022)
- South Hills transmission line and substation nearing completion
- Ongoing maintenance: tree trimming, pole replacements, regulator upgrades
- Staffing updates: one apprentice on leave (new baby), testing and advancement activities underway
- Offered follow-up on utility resources from recent UAMP meetings

Assistant Public Works Director, Casey Stratton reported:

- Staff attended state water conference for certification training
- Riverfront waterline replacement nearly complete; Tamarisk replacement underway
- Road maintenance prep: extensive crack sealing ahead of slurry seal project
- Satellite leak detection identified numerous leaks; most distribution leaks repaired
- Coal West sewer project expanded beyond scope but on track for completion and road reopening

Fire Chief, Dan Cazier reported on:

- High call volume month with two significant rescues (Snow Canyon and stranded contractors in heavy snow)
- Ongoing training: wildland air operations, hazmat technician courses, autism awareness
- Public safety contract negotiations nearing completion
- Working toward county reimbursement agreement for outlying area responses
- Legislative update: potential fire mitigation funding via TRT tax set-aside
- Conducted city and station tours with councilmember

Building Official, Cody Mitchell reported:

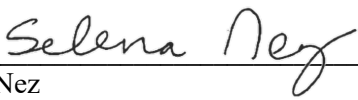
- 56 homes permitted; 5 pending (total 61)
- Upcoming mixed retail/townhome project expected soon
- Solus Townhomes preparing to begin first phase (21 units)
- Continued heavy workload including code enforcement

Planning Director, Jim McNulty reported:

- Heritage Commission approved sign update for Jacob Hamblin Home Visitor Center
- Approved design review for new home in historic district overlay
- Upcoming Planning Commission meeting: annexation policy public hearing and subdivision review
- Multiple development items in progress; several on TRC agenda

4. Adjournment

Mayor Waite adjourned the work meeting at 5:38 p.m., noting they would reconvene at 6:00 p.m. for the regular meeting.



Selena Nez
City Recorder

Approved: March 11, 2026