

Town of Leeds

Town Council Meeting for Wednesday, March 11, 2026

1. **Call To Order/Roll Call:** 7:00pm

ROLL CALL:	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
MAYOR: WAYNE D. PETERSON	X	_____
COUNCILMEMBER: JEFFREY ALLEN	X	_____
COUNCILMEMBER: CHRISTINE HARVEY	X	_____
COUNCILMEMBER: AARON PRICE (VIDEO)	X	_____
COUNCILMEMBER: KOHL FURLEY	_____	X

Planner Scott Messel was in attendance as well.

2. **Invocation:** Leann Allen

3. **Pledge of Allegiance**

4. **Declaration of Abstentions or Conflicts:** NONE

5. **Consent Agenda:**

a. Tonight's Agenda of March 11, 2026

b. Minutes of February 25, 2026

Motion to approve consent agenda made by Councilmember Allen, 2nd by Councilmember Price

ROLL CALL VOTE:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
MAYOR: WAYNE D. PETERSON	X	_____	_____	_____
COUNCILMEMBER: AARON PRICE (Video)	X	_____	_____	_____
COUNCILMEMBER: JEFFREY ALLEN	X	_____	_____	_____
COUNCILMEMBER: CHRISTINE HARVEY	X	_____	_____	_____
COUNCILMEMBER: KOHL FURLEY	_____	_____	_____	X

6. **Announcements:**

a. March 17 County Commission Public Hearing at 4 pm.

On March 17th, next Tuesday, there will be a County Commission Public Hearing. This will be on their Title 10 Chapter 9 and the potential establishment of an I-15 corridor zoning for higher density housing with 18 units per acre within one mile of either side of I-15. If people are able to attend, it will be in the Washington County Building on the fourth floor.

b. March 20 Grillin' and Chillin' Cookout at 5:30 pm in the Peach Pit Pavilion

March 20th is going to be our grillin' and chillin', although basis the forecast it might be sweatin' at our Winter cookout at 5:30 PM in the Peach Pit Pavilion. People are asked to bring with them just whatever they'd like to cook out on the grill and a side dish or dessert to share with others. We'll have a hot fire ready for people.

7. **Public Hearing:** NONE

8. **Public Comments:**

Battalion Chief Matt Butterfield: Last month, as a department, we ran 525 calls, 408 of those were EMS related, 117 were other calls which could have been fire related. We're about 15% above where we were last year as far as call volume goes. We've been super busy with training. We have a couple guys up in Salt Lake doing USAR training with Task Force One. They're doing road rescue this week. Next week they'll be doing confined space and then next month, they're going to be doing some trench rescue with Task Force One. We have Hazmat going on down at Station 6, we're now on our third week. They'll finish up this week, do their certification testing on Saturday. We have 10 people enrolled in that. When finished, we'll be sitting about 40 hazmat technicians within the district. I was pulled aside here earlier and asked to talk about lot cleanups. It sounds like a lot of people have been proactive in doing lot cleanups, which is great, lessening your fire liability. We have to figure out a way to get rid of those piles. Chief Harmon, who is our wildland chief, he's over here at Station 7 here in Leeds, he'd be a good resource. Sometimes some of that stuff can be chipped, once you cut all that stuff down and piled it up, now you've created a different sort of hazard. I don't know what your plan is as far as dumpsters go or haul all it off, but people should have a plan, not just a place where they make a big pile.

Michelle Peot: I have a general comment for those in the room that might be able to affect change here. I noticed on the public hearing for the zoning corridor there's still no attachment to the proposal. It would be very helpful if that was posted that way the public is able to read in depth and comment in an informed way.

Susan Savage: I tend to like to speak to people at the post office, I had a brief conversation with a man who said, I've lived here for three years, and this is the first time I've had a conversation with someone in town. I just thought how much nicer it is to be invited to something than to be new and make your way in. Maybe people could look around at their neighbors and invite people.

9. Discussion and Possible Action Items:

a. Town Financial Report for FY2025 by Steve Palmer

Steve Palmer: Discussion of the results of the agreed upon procedures which were applied for fiscal year 2025. This would cover the period from July 1st of 2024 through June 30, 2025. There is an important designation to make here in that we did not complete a full audit. For entities that have revenues or expenses lower than \$1,000,000, the State Auditor's Office has provided agreed upon procedures for CPAs to perform in lieu of conducting a full audit of the entity's financial statements. Where the Town falls into that category, that's what the Town elected to do, was to have us complete the agreed-upon procedures instead of a full audit. An audit is substantially more in scope, takes more time, and is therefore more expensive. We completed our procedures and we issued our report. Just a few items came to our attention as we completed these procedures that I think are important. First of all, the Town's purchasing policies were not applied consistently. There were some disbursements that we noted did not have evidence of proper approval or a PO issued. The Town's purchasing policies presently requires that any purchase of \$1,000 or more has a purchase order and that was not consistently applied. It's important that we note that we did not notice anything that came to our attention that appeared to be inappropriate or something that obviously wasn't done for the benefit of the Town. Another one of the procedures that the State has us look at is to select one month of credit card activities. We selected the month of February, and we noted that there were two very small purchases, which there was not a receipt accompanying the credit card statement to back up that expenditure. Another is that each month when the town completes the bank reconciliation, there should be a second individual reviewing that reconciliation for accuracy. We did not notice evidence that secondary review was occurring. Again, it may have occurred, but if it's not documented, we cannot state that it did happen. Another thing, we noted that the highways and streets department of the Town was over budget by \$165,000. Now what happened here is you recall last year, the Town spent approximately \$200,000 on the chip seal project. The original budget did not reflect that expenditure, and the Town did not amend the original budget for that project. Therefore, that particular department ended up being over budget. What should have happened is the Town should have gone back and amended the budget when they decided to incur that project. Again, not saying that those funds were used inappropriately, but the budget should have been amended to reflect those expenditures. Another item we noted is the State places limitations on the amount of unassigned fund balance that can be carried forward in the general fund. The Town is in the fortunate situation that they have too much unassigned fund balance in the general fund. What I would recommend you do, because I know that the Town has lots of projects which this money could be used for, the Town also has a capital project fund. I would recommend the Town identify projects that these funds may be used for in the future and transfer these monies to the capital project fund. It's important to note that the capital project fund is not just a place where you hold money because there's too much in the general fund, but it is a place where you can accumulate those resources for needed future capital improvements. It's important that you're able to justify why those funds are being held in the capital improvement fund or capital project fund. there's no specific time restriction. The Town did not complete a fraud risk assessment as required by the State Auditor. This is a form that's available on the State Auditor's website. Every municipality, every

government in the State is required to complete this and submit it to the State Auditor's office each year. We did not see a complete fraud risk assessment for 2025. Each year, the mayor and council are required to take training on the Open and Public Meetings Act. We did not document any documentation that occurred for the fiscal year under the audit.

Kayla Koeber: How do we stack up compared to most other towns with these in fractions, are we average?

Steve Palmer: It's hard to compare because the municipalities are so different.

b. Washington County I-15 Corridor Zoning Proposal (Title 10, Chapter 9)

Mayor Peterson: This item will be discussed at the Washington County Commissioners' meeting at 4:00pm next Tuesday, the 17th of March. This is the same draft as we have seen previously. This is just conversation.

Planner Scott Messel: There was concern of:

- Height
- The Ordinance and map

Mayor Peterson: I would like to see what changes to the ordinance or items you think should remain in the ordinance.

Councilmember Allen: Expressed support for affordable housing and its potential to diversify the community, he emphasized the need to carefully consider impacts on the town services, such as traffic and policing. He noted that although the proposed zoning does not directly affect annexed Town areas, its proximity means the Town cannot ignore it. He stated the importance of proactive annexation planning to maintain local control and recommended a graduated approach to development intensity, reducing impacts closer to Town boundaries to create a buffer.

Mayor Peterson: Suggested that the proposed zoning area should begin at least ½ mile away from existing municipal boundaries. This would buffer and prevent new, taller developments from immediately impacting nearby Town areas and would align better with current town height limits. If the development is successful over time, and the town grows outward, the area could eventually be annexed, the setback would allow for more gradual transition.

Councilmember Price: Suggests narrowing the proposed zoning corridor around the Town from one mile to about half mile and using a tapered approach to density. As development moves farther away from Town boundaries the Town should still have input on density or zoning decisions, even if the land remains in the county.

Councilmember Allen: Has concern that the current proposal does not adequately address how increased population would be managed. Regarding traffic, policing, and garbage services. Leaving traffic access and infrastructure planning to individual developers could create significant challenges for the Town and there should be more thought to this.

Mayor Peterson: Expressed that employment should be added to that list as well.

Councilmember Harvey: How do we get more on their page so when we say we don't want this or we would like to see something different.

Planner Scott Messel: Explains that the County's approach combines both an ordinance and a map, even though they could conceptually be viewed separately. Ongoing pressure from developers seeking higher-density projects along with increasing State requirements to act. The County already has a PD code for short-term rentals, commercial, and residential uses, a new PD Multifamily category was created to address this demand. The location of the corridor was influenced by factors such as proximity to sewer infrastructure, which make higher-density development more feasible. Utilities were discussed as part of the consideration as well.

Councilmember Allen: What is really driving this proposal, State policy goals to increase access to low-cost or higher-density housing, or the interests of property owners along the I-15 corridor who want to develop their land at higher densities?

Planner Scott Messel: County-wide, a variety of housing types should be considered and believes that these should be blended and distributed throughout the County, rather than concentrated in a single area, to create a more balanced and integrated approach to housing.

Don Fawson: They would have to come in and purchase the property or work with BLM to be able to get the property, to be able to develop. Was it a mile on each side from I-15?

Planner Scott Messel: Yes, that is what the proposed map is right now.

Don Fawson: What about access, you could go a long way without accessing an off ramp or on ramp. Are they looking at providing any additional?

Planner Scott Messel: The County has not conducted studies identifying which specific properties are appropriate for higher-density development; instead, individual property owners may pursue their own analyses and request zoning changes accordingly. While acknowledging the complexity of land-use planning and strong State support for property rights and developers, there is concern that municipal efforts to shape community character are often lessened by subsequent State legislation.

There is a State housing shortage. The U.S. has largely stopped building traditional “starter homes” that used to be common. Starter homes once made up a significant share of the housing market. Washington County faces added challenges because it is a destination area, creating strong demand across the full housing spectrum. From lower-wage workers to middle class. Many home purchases in the County are made with cash. As a result, there is limited supply of lower- cost housing, which contributes to high housing and rental costs throughout the County.

Michelle Peot: How does this proposal address that? I understand that it's geared at 80% of median, for example there's nothing on how much it could be rented out for. Could it be a second home? There's a whole lot of other things that are missing from the guidelines that would prevent that housing to be used for vacation rentals. I understand you can't do short-term, but it seems to be missing a lot of guardrails. It says moderate income housing in that proposal.

Chris Bevan: When they say high density, are those apartments and condos?

Planner Scott Messel: The density numbers do get up into that and yes it would be apartments.

Question online: Could the Cove be the next high-density development?

Planner Scott Messel: They could request it, right now no ordinance is adopted.

Mayor Peterson: Concerned about wildfire risk and building standards within the proposed corridor, he noted that most Leeds residents will be designated as living in a high-risk Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) area and will be assessed fees to support wildfire risk studies and mitigation planning. He argued that current ordinance language such as requiring 50% masonry exterior materials does not adequately address fire-hardening needs in high-risk WUI zones. Stricter standards for fire-resistant construction and defensible space should be prioritized. Leeds faces a higher wildfire risk than much of the County and should not be treated the same. Additionally, the ordinances subjective design standards, particularly regarding building height variation, lack clear, measurable limits. They suggested establishing objective criteria such as capping the percentage of buildings exceeding certain heights and aligning maximum heights with neighboring communities. The importance of stronger wildfire protections and clearer enforceable design standards to prevent development that maximizes density and revenue at the expense of safety, community, character, and long-term resilience.

Martha Ham: Is the County required to identify so many square miles?

Rochelle Gardner: Has anybody in the county done any sort of an estimate of how much of the land on both sides is vacant and that could possibly be put into the five acre, which would be 90 units for total of five acres, and projection of how long it would take to build that out and what the numbers would be? Would there be any possibility of them thinking about doing that prior to putting this in?

Planner Scott Messel: That hasn't been done and that has not been talked about.

Kayla Koeber: Do you feel, because I concur about thoughtful development instead of leapfrogging. It feels like they are just putting it in there. We kill two birds with one stone. Let's just put it there, there is an opportunity still to infill within our County. Are there smaller developments where we are not putting all of the low-income people along this corridor where they can't get to work, it's hard to get to school, anybody with children out here knows what a pain it is to get their kids to activities. There's still an opportunity for infill in your professional opinion.

Planner Scott Messel: There is opportunities for infill development, but he explained that local governments are limited in what they can control. While zoning can regulate land use, municipalities cannot prevent property owners from requesting zoning changes or dictate who buys land. County general plans tend to be broad and less parcel specific. With sprawl and leapfrog development, he noted that despite professional planning principles opposing these patterns, State laws and strong property-rights protections limit local authority. Stopping sprawl would require systemic changes at the State level. Municipalities lack the power to fully control development outcomes under the current framework.

Kayla Koeber: Would it be a fair statement to say thoughtful planning would require an incredible amount of collaboration between municipalities, which from way back in the old Vision Dixie days, which was the biggest issue. We are trying to plan as a County, but each municipality has its own thoughts. It would take more dollars, time and effort to plan thoughtfully than to just stick a swath along the corridor.

Planner Scott Messel: The planning principles behind Vision Dixie and similar smart-growth concepts but he noted that such ideas have become politically charged. Some people strongly oppose even mentioning Vision Dixie viewing them negatively.

Doris McNally: You may want to consider addressing some aesthetics. For example, dark sky lighting, in general, just the aesthetics of the buildings, not allowing people to create car lots in their front, the aesthetics from one development to another development. I think you can put some guardrails in or at least talk about some concerns in those areas.

Rochelle Gardner: Maybe mentioning the income that comes in from tourism. Tourism is one of Washington County's largest economic drivers and contributes significantly to the local economy. It helps us with our taxes, the local people, keeps our taxes down, and this southern Utah's landscape is a scenic gateway corridor and its part of the region's identity. That's why people come here. At least maybe we could get some aesthetics north of us so that when they come into town, they think this is what I came for.

Jim Thomas : When it comes to culinary water, we have to run out of it or have ran out of it, but we keep issuing building permits and will serve letters. I know they're running a straw out somewhere in Powell, but from what I've heard, where the straw is supposed to tap into the lake is above the water level. There is no water coming through that straw. At some point the City, the County, the State have to recognize you can put the buildings up, but you are not going to have water in them.

Planner Scott Messel: The I-15 corridor serves as a major gateway into Washington County from both the north and south. Unchecked development such as excessive billboards can negatively affect the visual character of the area and the experience of visitors, he noted that billboard regulation is difficult due to strong industry influence at the State level.

Susan Savage: I wish that our commissioners would lobby the State to allow us to consider the uniqueness of our area. Right here, water is one of the things. Along this corridor is Hill Country. A mile on each side of the freeway, this type of housing isn't going to be built on hillsides. It's going to be built on flat land. So, we used to think the hills protected us, but now there's nothing to taking out hills. Here through the Leeds area and also north of us up to Pintura, all that hill country, how is that useful for this kind of housing, unless they take out the hills? There's an aesthetic thing as well. Besides the fact that this is as you come off the Black Ridge into Washington County, this is where the scenery bursts open.

Martha Ham: The allowances developments of 50 units to 300 units. Why not consider smaller developments like 25 or even 18. Smaller developers could participate in this, smaller investors. Was that considered?

Planner Scott Messel: A line was drawn and 50 was picked.

Martha Ham: What I have seen over in Hurricane, is some lower income housing, about 12 units but it was interspersed and there were other levels, heights and priced homes around that.

Chuck Bentley: Because the County reserves over half of their revenue from sales tax, not property tax, and most of that sales tax is generated by tourism, the corridor and the beauty of it, that's a real selling point. They all understand

when you say we don't want it to look like Santaquin. If we get a 50-50 mix on two-story and three-story apartments, that's about as good as you can get with aesthetics. The County's adopted a hillside ordinance that's similar to ours, which will protect the hills, because you can't move them if they're more than a 30% incline. We have some protection there. We have some protection on BLM. Except there's a lot of pressure to transfer some of that BLM to the states. Someone made a comment that doesn't happen, it does happen. All of Mesquite on the west side, the north side of the freeway, was BLM ground that was transferred to Mesquite. All of the growth in Mesquite was done on BLM ground that got transferred to the City. We've got a little problem with traffic. The County's not going to mandate traffic studies that protect Leeds, and UDOT doesn't recognize Leeds. That's their road. Their job is to move traffic, and they're going to move all the traffic they can on it, because without that, they don't have connection to the interchanges. They'll make it 4 lanes. I don't think we'll get a lot of leverage there because the county's just going to ignore us. We have no say over it because it's UDOT's road. Fourteen units on density is something that they will accept. That's still quite liberal. When people say we're not really building, they're not really pushing affordable housing, in some ways they are because the more density you have, the more affordable it is under any criteria you look at. This needs to be evenly dispersed in the County, not in just one 16-mile corridor. They now have a hard time not listening to that, because they don't even have a study to know if this addresses them for 20 years or 10 years or 50 years. Just a blanket, all of it in one spot, needs to be dispersed in the County for lots of reasons. For employment, for medical services, for schools, for transportation, for the impact on the different communities, evenly dispersed makes quite a bit of sense to me. Then I think Leeds, if we said, from Leeds South, we could support that. There's a couple of reasons I say that we're protected on the west side of the freeway because it's a turtle habitat. That's not going to be part of it. There won't be a corridor on that side. On the East side, we have quite a few mountains, which will be over the 30%. We have two big chunks of BLM ground, and we have a barrier in the freeway in the median on a lot of it, so it won't be nearly as visible. It's prime ground for them to develop because there's sewer, there's power, there is three accesses because you can get to this interchange, you can go past Quail Creek if you're going that way, or you can go down the paved frontage road. Anything north of here, there's no access. You have to drive to Anderson Junction or back to this one. It requires two separate entrances on any development over 50. You're not getting two entrances going that way because there's the freeway that blocks on one side and there's mountains on the other. A lot of the property north fulfils their mandate with the State, it's not going to be usable, a lot of it. It's not going to be affordable because just the two accesses is a huge problem for them. Access to a pipeline won't be a problem.

Patrick Collins: I grew up in Phoenix, Arizona, and I was raised in a house that my parents bought for \$7,000. It was a three-bedroom, one-bathroom home with a carport, and it was what they called affordable housing. It was on the western outskirts of Phoenix. The land was very cheap to build on. You hardly had to excavate at all. It was easy to put sewers in, put in utilities. I do not see that happening here. It's very expensive to develop here, where we live in Silver Reef, for example, to remove all of those granite boulders. It's part of the Great Basin. We live in an area that some call the Triple Junction. We have the Colorado Plateau to the east of us, the Great Basin to the north of us, and the Mojave Desert. It is more likely to be able to build in the Mojave Desert than you are on to this Pine Valley Mountain, that's not affordable. Those are expensive high-end homes. I mean, we don't own the home in Coral Canyon. My understanding is the developer had to file chapter 11. Those are nice homes. However, we might be saving the developers from themselves.

Mayor Peterson: To summarize:

Support for affordable housing

- Leeds supports affordable housing in principle.
- Housing should be commutable for employment, schools, and medical services.
- Planning must address not only housing units, but also traffic, services, and infrastructure impacts from increased population.

Scale and population impact.

- Leeds has a population under 900.
- A development of 300 units could add approximately 600 residents, a 2/3 population increase, which would be significant.
- and noticeable.

Setbacks and transitions from town boundaries.

- Higher-density development should be set back from municipal boundaries.
- A graduated transition in density, potentially including a ½ mile buffer, should be considered to reduce impacts on existing towns.

Municipal perspective

- Leeds's concerns are not unique and should apply county-wide.
- The intent is not to shift development pressure onto other towns, but to promote standards that benefit all municipalities.

Wildfire risk (WUI) concerns

- Much of the corridor near Leeds is in a high-risk Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)
- Proximity to I-15 increases ignition risk from freeway related fires.
- Fire-hardening standards and defensible space should be explicitly addressed, not assumed.
- Higher density reduces vegetation within developments but does not eliminate ignition risk along highways.

Design standards need objective criteria.

- Current language on aesthetics and variation is subjective.
- The ordinance should include measurable limits, especially for:
 - Building heights
 - Percentage of taller structures
- Maximum heights should align with neighboring communities.

Dark sky and parking considerations

- Require dark-sky lighting standards.
- Parking design should avoid developments resembling auto lots, especially at higher density.

Mapping clarity

- Corridor maps should clearly distinguish:
 - Municipal boundaries
 - BLM Land
 - Developable land
- A simple one-mile swath does not adequately reflect real development constraints.

Commercial land and services

- If residential growth is encouraged, commercial land should be designated alongside it.
- Over-reliance on mixed use zoning can eliminate opportunities for needed commercial services.

Tourism and scenic gateway

- The I-15 corridor is a major scenic gateway into Washington County
- Leeds's visibility from the freeway is a defining feature.
- Development should protect scenic views from both north and south approaches.

Water considerations

- Water availability remains uncertain but must be acknowledged as a real constraint.

Hillside ordinance protection

- The County's hillside ordinance should be explicitly tied to the corridor.
- Future changes should not weaken hillside protections within the corridor.

Smaller and local development

- Allow smaller developments, not only large 50 to 300 unit projects.
- Encourage local or regional developers who are more invested in long term community outcomes.

County wide distribution

- High density housing should be evenly dispersed across the county, not concentrated in one corridor.
- Dispersal helps address transportation, employment, services, and community impacts.

Leeds South vs. Leeds North

- Leeds South is better suited for potential development due to:
 - Access
 - Topography
 - Visibility
 - Infrastructure
- Decisions should be based on land suitability and community context.

Chris Bevan: Affordable is nice. This is a long drive down to St. George's and that's where all your stores are. If somebody doesn't have a lot of money, they have to factor in how much money, and gasoline doesn't go down, it keeps going up. They have to maintain their car, and you have all that traffic. It just seems to me that if you want to build affordable housing, you should put it where you have infrastructure to support people. They don't even have to drive a car; they can get on a bicycle and ride.

Ken Hadley: There's freeway noise how can we keep that down. Also, all the entertainment is in St. George or up in Cedar City.

Martha Ham: I just want to encourage the council to consider making that a clear recommendation south of Leeds and that's a good starting point they can always come back and add additional zoning.

Don Fawson: I do not know what the impact of crime has been connected to affordable housing. When we first lived here, we have been here since 1971, and I was principal out in Santa Clara of the school out there during the 80s. At that time, Ivins was a trailer park. There was a lot of crime out there, at some point they changed their vision and I'm not saying that you shouldn't have affordable housing because I really think that it's absolutely critical that we do have that. Concentrating everyone within a large area without dispersing is not good because people influence people and the kind of activities that people are doing within a certain community influence those people.

Mayor Peterson will work on the letter and share with the council when finished.

10. Staff Reports

Councilmember Harvey: Attended the Washington County Planning Commission

Mayor Peterson: Staff Report for Kohl Furley, he asked me to relay about fireworks discharge, we will be needing the Town Council to determine where we will permit them, so the Fire District knows. In the past, we have limited it to the basketball court in the park and limited certain hours close to the holidays. Given where we are in dryness right now, we want to be able to have that in place before people start thinking about making the purchase. The other items is ordering fireworks. Our budget year starts on July 1st; we end up buying them in the previous year. Sometimes we don't pay for them until the actual fiscal year. What is your general view on the tradition of Leeds?

Councilmember Allen: I think commemorating the 4th of July is an important deal.

Councilmember Harvey: I think it's an incredible experience.

11. Public Comment

Ken Hadley: I want to announce the Republican caucus will be held here on Tuesday, the 17th of March.

12. Closed Session: A Closed Session may be held pursuant to Utah Code Section 52-4-204 & 205 upon request.
NONE.

13. Adjournment 8:46pm

Approved this 25th Day of March 2026.

Wayne D. Peterson, Mayor

ATTEST:

Cari Bishop, Clerk/Recorder