

**MINUTES**  
**TOWN OF ALTA**  
**SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING - TOWNHALL**  
**Wednesday, March 11, 2026, 5:00 PM**  
Our Lady of the Snows Center, 10185 E. Highway 210, Alta, Utah

**PRESENT:** Mayor Roger Bourke  
Councilmember Carolyn Anctil (attended virtually)  
Councilmember Craig Heimark  
Councilmember Elise Morgan  
Councilmember Dan Schilling

**STAFF PRESENT:** Chris Cawley, Town Manager  
Mike Morey, Town Marshal  
Jen Clancy, Town Clerk  
Molly Austin, Assistant Town Manager  
Brooke Boone, Deputy Town Clerk

**ALSO PRESENT:** Cameron Platt, Legal Counsel (attended virtually)

**NOT PRESENT:** N/A

1. **Call the meeting to order**

Mayor Bourke called the special March 11, 2026 Alta Town Council “Townhall” meeting to order. The meeting convened council members, town staff, and community members to discuss ongoing and future planning initiatives, municipal infrastructure, and the operational needs of town facilities and services.

2. **Mayor Bourke opening remarks**

Mayor Bourke started by providing some historical context for the Town’s infrastructure. Mayor Bourke explained that prior to 1970, Alta functioned as a small ski area with limited facilities, but growth in the area, particularly development associated with Snowbird, created the need for a sewer system and municipal services, which led to the incorporation of the Town of Alta. Mayor Bourke described how early civic leaders established core facilities, including taking over a building previously brought to Alta from Fort Douglas to serve as Alta Central, and adapting an existing structure for fire protection services. Mayor Bourke noted that these facilities, originally developed in the 1970s, had aged and were now in need of significant repair or replacement. Mayor Bourke framed the current discussion as a major financial and infrastructure decision, emphasizing that the Town does not frequently undertake projects of this scale and must carefully evaluate whether to repair or replace existing assets. Mayor Bourke stated that the process would require thoughtful planning and substantial community involvement.

3. **Presentation on Capital Improvement Planning with public comment throughout**

Chris Cawley, Town Manager presented an overview of the condition of Town facilities and infrastructure, recent planning efforts, and potential funding mechanisms for future capital improvements.

The presentation reviewed the Town's facilities planning process, which began in 2024 as part of a broader strategic planning effort. The strategic planning process identified a key concern that the Town's facilities and infrastructure are aging and that the municipality will be unsustainable in the long term without significant investment. In Fall 2024, the Town initiated a Facilities Master Plan that included facility condition assessments and an evaluation of current and future departmental needs.

Cawley summarized findings related to several Town-owned buildings. The Post Office building, originally constructed in the mid-1980s with later additions, currently houses the U.S. Post Office, Alta Marshal's Office storage and fleet space, employee quarters, UDOT equipment storage, and a multipurpose community space. Cawley explained that the building has several structural deficiencies, including roof systems not designed for current snow loads, separation of wood-framed annexes from the original concrete structure, and failed erosion control that has exposed the building to rockfall hazards. Due to these conditions, the Facilities Assessment recommended demolishing the building and replacing it with a new facility that would house existing functions and potentially relocate the Alta Marshal's Office.

The presentation also reviewed the condition of Alta Central, which was originally moved to Little Cottonwood Canyon from Fort Douglas in the 1950s and has served as the Town's public safety facility since the Town acquired it in 1973. Although the building remains functional and exhibits significant sentimental value, Cawley explained that it does not meet current building code requirements for essential facilities, including seismic standards, and faces major accessibility challenges that can affect emergency response. Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems are also outdated. The Facilities Assessment recommended that Alta Central no longer be used as a police or emergency services facility, though it could potentially be repurposed following substantial renovation.

Cawley also discussed the Town Office, and the Our Lady of the Snows building, which the Town acquired in June 2025 and was not assessed in the study. Both buildings were constructed in 1994, were designed for avalanche exposure, and are generally in good shape, although they both exhibit significant accessibility challenges, especially the Town Office. Both buildings require ongoing maintenance and replacement of wear items such as roofs, windows, and finishes.

A comparison of estimated repair costs and replacement costs indicated that replacement of certain facilities, particularly the Post Office building and Alta Central, may be more cost-effective than undertaking major repairs.

The presentation then outlined potential concepts for a new Town facility. A new building would replace the functions currently located in the Post Office building, including the post office, garage bays, employee quarters, and multipurpose meeting space, while also relocating the Alta Marshal's Office. Additional options include expanding Marshal's Office space, relocating Town administrative offices to the new building, and converting the existing Town Office building into a dispatch center. Depending on the program and size, preliminary estimates identified in the study indicate a potential

cost range of approximately \$8 million to \$17 million, which would include all costs required to address deficiencies identified in the study.

Cawley also reviewed the condition of the Town's water and sewer infrastructure, much of which was constructed in the early 1970s. The drinking water system includes approximately 16,000 feet of pipeline, a single water source, two storage tanks, and two pressure reducing valves. Several hydrants do not currently meet recommended fire flow standards, and the system lacks sufficient emergency storage and redundancy. The wastewater collection system includes approximately 10,700 feet of pipeline and 47 manholes. Recent analysis indicates that approximately 11 percent of the system requires urgent replacement and an additional 14 percent will require replacement within the next five to ten years. While overall system capacity is generally adequate for anticipated buildout, both systems lack long-term funding mechanisms for replacement and upgrades.

The presentation also discussed preliminary capital improvement planning for water and sewer systems, including an estimated long-term pipeline replacement cost of approximately \$3.75 million for the water system and more than \$5 million in sewer system replacement needs over time.

Cawley then outlined several potential strategies for funding capital improvements. Options discussed included continuing to accrue balance in the Town's Capital Fund, which currently holds approximately \$1.6 million; increasing certain revenue sources such as the municipal property tax or implementing a local option transient room tax; adjusting fees such as business license or building permit fees; and increasing water and sewer rates to support necessary infrastructure investments. The potential role of philanthropic funding was also discussed, though Cawley noted that philanthropic contributions may depend on the nature of the project and whatever other funding options are considered.

The presentation introduced the concept of a General Obligation (GO) bond as a potential financing tool. A GO bond is a form of municipal debt backed by property tax revenue and must be approved by voters through a bond election. Cawley explained that GO bonds typically provide the lowest available interest rates and are a common method used by municipalities to finance large capital projects. Advantages include lower borrowing costs and demonstrated voter support, while disadvantages include the uncertainty of voter approval and the requirement that bond elections can only occur once per year.

Chris Cawley presented a chart outlining key project timelines for the next several years. Cawley acknowledged that the chart was aspirational but considered it reasonable, noting that the first quarter of 2026 was already underway. Cawley discussed the potential design pathway for new town buildings, which could be completed in phases or as a single comprehensive effort, with preliminary design anticipated to begin in the summer of 2026. The initial phase includes procurement for architects and collaboration with partners to ensure that building designs meet community needs. Cawley noted that funding for the design phase could come from the town's capital projects fund, highlighting that preliminary expenditures would allow the town to shape project requirements while keeping costs reasonable. Cawley stated that construction could tentatively begin in summer of 2028, contingent on voter approval for any associated bond measures.

Cawley also mentioned a grant from the Wasatch Front Regional Council to fund a comprehensive general plan update. This process, expected to begin in the next fiscal year, would involve public engagement to improve understanding of town assets, sustainability, and long-term planning. Cawley emphasized the proposed Citizens Committee, which would include both primary and non-primary residential property owners, taxpayers, voters, and business or commercial property owners. The committee would serve as a conduit between the council and the community, providing recommendations on project funding, budgeting, and community priorities. Committee members would participate throughout the design process and provide continuity into future budget discussions and potential bond measures.

Cawley noted that the Town is considering discussing a potential GO bond because the need to replace facilities are too urgent to wait until the Town can save enough money to pay for them on current projected revenue. Depending on future planning and Council direction, a bond election could potentially occur in November 2026 or November 2027.

Finally, Cawley outlined potential next steps. These include forming a citizen advisory committee to help increase awareness of the Town's infrastructure needs, discuss potential funding strategies, and provide recommendations to the Town Council. The committee would include residents, property owners, and business representatives and would meet periodically to review information and assist with community outreach.

Additional steps discussed include incorporating water and sewer capital projects into the Fiscal Year 2027 budget process, beginning the design process for a potential new building, coordinating with the Utah Department of Transportation regarding possible facility collaboration, and continuing community discussion regarding potential funding mechanisms.

Dan Schilling emphasized the critical importance of community participation in decision-making processes, particularly in light of the town's small voter population. Schilling noted that with few registered voters and even fewer who typically cast ballots, outcomes on important measures could hinge on a very small number of individuals. Schilling stressed that broad engagement, input, and collaboration were essential to ensure that town initiatives, including potential building projects and bond measures, are successful and reflect the priorities of the community.

Paul Maeder raised two main questions regarding the town's financial and infrastructure planning. First, Maeder addressed the existing town buildings, which are approximately 60 years old and were likely provided by the Forest Service or acquired long ago. Maeder noted that municipalities rarely set aside funds for maintenance or depreciation, meaning the community has effectively received a "free ride" on these buildings for decades. Maeder asked whether the town council has a philosophy or plan for establishing reserves for ongoing maintenance and eventual replacement, so future generations are not burdened with the same problem. Maeder's second question came from a neighbor who could not attend. Maeder summarized the neighbor's concern about the distribution of local tax revenue. Using the tax bill as an example, Maeder noted that a large portion of taxes flows "downhill" to the county or other entities, with only a small percentage remaining in Alta for local services. After excluding school funding, the proportion staying in town rises modestly but still represents a minority.

of tax dollars. The neighbor's question was whether the county or other outside entities would contribute to local efforts, or if the town's funding obligations are effectively a one-way outflow.

Mark Haik commented on property taxation and infrastructure issues, noting that most private property in Alta is state-assessed rather than county-assessed, which limits revenue generation for the town. Haik suggested that petitioning for county assessment could significantly increase the town's budget numbers. Haik also addressed the need for more water and sewer ratepayers and proposed the idea of annexing into existing service areas to expand access and improve funding capacity. Haik inquired about the town's willingness to accept private investment for sewer infrastructure, noting that previous offers had been rejected by elected officials and staff.

Steve McIntosh provided some technical insights into the condition of existing municipal buildings. McIntosh noted that facilities, including Alta Central, the post office, and the fire station, were poorly designed for snow shedding, had roofs prone to ice and mold issues, and had been insufficiently maintained over the years. McIntosh argued that replacement would be more cost-effective than extensive renovation. McIntosh also expressed skepticism regarding the potential for private entities to manage town utilities, citing challenges in small, isolated communities. McIntosh praised the council and staff for addressing these issues proactively and stressed the importance of maintaining municipal control to ensure long-term sustainability.

Creighton Hart highlighted potential funding opportunities through federal and state programs, particularly for rural communities and areas adjacent to National Forest lands. While Alta's location within the Wasatch Front statistical metro area limits some rural development funds, Hart noted that targeted programs, including low-income housing initiatives, could support local projects. Hart also raised fire safety concerns, particularly related to summer campgrounds and wood-burning activities, suggesting infrastructure improvements to mitigate fire risks.

Mike Morey offered an extensive overview of law enforcement challenges in Alta. Morey described the unique operational requirements of the Alta Marshal's Office, including its evolution from a communication center with dispatch capabilities to a fully functioning municipal law enforcement agency. Morey emphasized the limitations of a small police force in meeting state and federal mandates, handling complex criminal investigations, and maintaining community safety. Morey discussed nationwide recruitment and retention challenges, the need for specialized training, and the importance of hiring individuals committed to Alta's community values. Morey stressed that compliance with legal mandates and safe operations require adequate facilities, including secure interview rooms, evidence storage, and fleet management. Dan Schilling added that Alta faces additional safety challenges, including avalanche response, rescue operations, and other emergencies where local expertise is essential.

Additional questions from the public addressed project prioritization, bond measures, and utility rates. Mayor Bourke and Chris Cawley explained that while a single debt instrument could theoretically fund multiple projects, separating funding for building projects and water/sewer infrastructure is more practical due to political, ethical, and ratepayer considerations. Jen Clancy explained that water and sewer rates are calculated based on equivalent capacity units (ECUs) and system operating costs, with rate increases sometimes reflecting pass-through costs from downstream service providers. Questions

regarding usage-based water rates were addressed, noting that Alta's seasonal population and small customer base make tiered usage rates less practical.

The meeting concluded with staff emphasizing transparency and public engagement. Council members encouraged continued participation and dialogue to ensure that community priorities are met, infrastructure is appropriately maintained, and the town's facilities and services remain safe and sustainable.

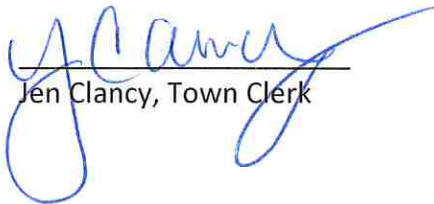
4. **Motion to adjourn**

**MOTION:** Craig Heimark motioned to adjourn, and Dan Schilling seconded.

**VOTE:** All in favor. The meeting was unanimously adjourned.

**RESULT: APPROVED**

Passed this 8<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2026

  
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Jen Clancy, Town Clerk