CLEARFIELD CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
8:00 AM WORK RETREAT MEETING
January 16, 2026

City Building
55 South State Street
Clearfield City, Utah

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PRESIDING: Mayor Mark Shepherd

PRESENT: Mayor Mark Shepherd, Councilmember Karece Thompson, Councilmember Nike Peterson, Councilmember Megan Ratchford, Councilmember Dakota Wurth, Councilmember Danielle King

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager JJ Allen, Assistant City Manager Spencer Brimley, City Attorney Stuart Williams, Assistant City Attorney Amy Jones, Human Resources Manager Ricki Miller, Community Services Director Eric Howes, Community Services Deputy Director Curtis Dickson, Police Chief Kelly Bennett, Assistant Police Chief Devin Rogers, Public Works Director Adam Favero, Public Works Deputy Director Braden Felix, Finance Manager Rich Knapp, Finance Department Lee Naylor, Community Development Director Stacy Millgate, Community Relations Director Shaundra Rushton, City Recorder Nancy Dean, Deputy City Recorder Chersty Titensor

TEAMBUILDING, FUTURE PLANNING, AND PRIORITY-BASED BUDGETING

**Breakfast & Ice Breaker Activity**

**Council's Big Picture – Priorities/Goals/Objectives**

JJ Allen, City Manager, opened the discussion by thanking participants for engaging in an introductory activity and explained that the next portion of the meeting would focus on the Council's big-picture priorities. He invited members of the City Council to share their individual and collective goals, objectives, and priorities so staff could document them for future planning. Mayor Shepherd invited councilmembers to begin sharing their priorities.

Councilmember Karece Thompson stated that one of his primary priorities was gaining a clearer understanding of the City's finances and revenue structure. He explained that he had been reviewing financial documents, including the Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports (ACFRs), and using analytical tools to better understand revenue sources and budgeting trends. Councilmember Thompson expressed concern that many cities and local governments operate reactively when budgeting rather than proactively. He emphasized the importance of shifting toward a more proactive budgeting approach so residents understood why financial decisions were made and feel confident in the City's planning over the long term. He noted that budget issues could become politicized when the underlying drivers of costs—such as public safety expenditures—were not clearly communicated to the public. His goal was to help depoliticize budgeting and ensure residents understood the long-term financial planning behind City decisions.

Councilmember Dakota Wurth stated that he approached the discussion by reflecting on the priorities that motivated him to run for office and what he hoped to accomplish during his current term. He identified a key priority as delivering on promises related to downtown redevelopment. Specifically, he emphasized moving projects such as Lakeside Square and the City's transit-oriented development (TOD) initiatives from concept to reality. While acknowledging that economic conditions could slow development, he encouraged the Council and staff to continue working toward tangible results in those areas. Councilmember Wurth also expressed concern that much of the City's recent investment had focused on downtown redevelopment while some neighborhoods had received less attention. He suggested that the City should also invest in neighborhood amenities such as improved lighting, transportation access, and infrastructure improvements that residents experienced daily. Additionally, he expressed interest in policies that preserved existing housing stock and reduced displacement while still encouraging reinvestment. Finally, he stated a desire to participate more actively in business recruitment and development, including attracting entertainment or dining destinations that could serve as regional attractions for the community.

Councilmember Danielle King discussed public safety issues, particularly the rising number of domestic violence cases reported to the police department. She explained that domestic violence continued to be raised in meetings with Police Chief Bennett and in discussions at the state legislature. Councilmember King noted that the issue also had financial implications for the City due to the loss of grant funding for a domestic violence advocate position, as well as additional costs related to police response and medical examinations such as strangulation exams. She expressed interest in working with the City's domestic violence advocate and the Communities That Care program to develop policies or educational initiatives aimed at addressing domestic violence in the community. Councilmember King also proposed organizing community cleanup events that would engage residents, particularly youth, in improving neighborhoods. She suggested programs such as community murals or neighborhood cleanup days to foster pride and involvement among junior high and high school students. Additionally, she expressed interest in supporting small businesses by using the downtown Form Based Code area to host activities such as First Friday events or seasonal markets where small and home-based businesses could interact with the community. Councilmember King also stated that she would like the City to consider supporting union labor and contractors that provide fair wages and benefits when awarding City contracts.

Councilmember Nike Peterson explained that she organized her priorities around what she views as the four core roles of the City Council: money, laws, connections, and information. Under the "money" category, she supported exploring ways the City could responsibly implement artificial intelligence or similar technologies to reduce time-consuming administrative tasks and allow employees to focus on higher-value work. She noted that personnel costs represented a significant portion of the City's budget, and improved efficiencies could have long-term financial benefits. Under the "laws" category, Councilmember Peterson emphasized that Council actions should remain focused on matters directly affecting the local community. She stated that while many broader issues are important, the Council's responsibility should be to focus on local policies and ordinances that directly affect residents. Regarding "connections," she supported continuing Council initiative projects that fund neighborhood-level improvements, which might not otherwise rise to the top of departmental priority lists but are meaningful to specific neighborhoods. She also emphasized maintaining strong relationships with community partners such as Communities That Care, public safety agencies, and the School District. Under the category of "information," Councilmember Peterson expressed interest in improving training and leadership development opportunities for councilmembers so they could better understand City operations and be prepared to serve in different roles if needed. She noted that the City had strong leadership development structures for staff but fewer opportunities for Council training and succession preparation.

Councilmember Megan Ratchford stated that her priorities focused on addressing basic community needs as the foundation for a strong city. She emphasized the importance of affordability, including the ability for residents to afford housing, utilities, and basic services. She also highlighted the importance of safety and a sense of connection within neighborhoods. Councilmember Ratchford explained that when residents felt connected to their community through friendships, employment opportunities, and shared spaces, they were more likely to stay and invest in the community. She stated that the City should focus on core services such as reliable infrastructure, effective sewer systems, quality internet access, and well-maintained roads. Once these basic needs were consistently met, she said the City could then build on that foundation by expanding amenities and cultural opportunities.

Mayor Mark Shepherd stated that he wanted the Council to remain intentional and proactive in guiding the City's direction. He explained that elected officials should not simply attend meetings and vote on issues but should actively guide policy and long-term planning. He emphasized that the Council had previously been deliberate in adopting the City's Form Based Code, which helped attract redevelopment and investment along major corridors. However, he expressed concern that while major corridors such as State Street and other entrances to the City had improved significantly, many neighborhoods still faced challenges related to property maintenance and community pride. Mayor Shepherd noted that life had become more expensive for many families and acknowledged that financial pressures could affect property upkeep and neighborhood conditions. He stated that the City should continue addressing property maintenance issues through code enforcement when necessary while also encouraging residents to take pride in their neighborhoods.

Mayor Shepherd cited a recent example where the City used code enforcement authority to address a property that had fallen into significant disrepair, eventually requiring a firm enforcement deadline to resolve the issue. He emphasized that the City must be deliberate in maintaining community standards while balancing respect for residents' circumstances. He also discussed future economic development opportunities, including development potential at Legend Hills. He suggested the City might need to consider rezoning or establishing specific development expectations in order to attract the types of entertainment and commercial uses the community wanted to see. He also discussed the need to continue pursuing investment in areas such as Clearfield Station and Lakeside Square, acknowledging that developers were currently facing challenges securing investment capital. Additionally, he discussed ongoing efforts to improve City infrastructure and appearance, including plans to reapply for grant funding related to bridge improvements.

Mayor Shepherd also discussed broader concerns regarding property tax policy at the state level. He explained that he recently met with realtors and legislators and observed that many policymakers did not fully understand how municipal property tax systems functioned or how differences in property values affect tax revenues between cities. He noted that cities with similar populations might generate significantly different tax revenues due to differences in property values and development capacity. He emphasized that Clearfield had limited remaining growth opportunities and must be intentional about attracting new development that would strengthen the City's long-term tax base.

After all councilmembers shared their individual priorities, Mr. Allen asked the group to identify common themes from the discussion that staff could focus on.

Councilmember Ratchford suggested that the Council should identify a primary priority that would help guide decisions across multiple policy areas. Councilmember Peterson observed that two themes appeared repeatedly in the discussion: continued economic development—particularly filling business opportunities in redevelopment areas—and increased attention to neighborhoods and residents. She also emphasized that funding strategies and fiscal planning would be necessary to support those goals. Councilmember Wurth added that intentionality and responsiveness to residents' concerns were key themes, particularly when addressing neighborhood conditions.

The Council then discussed ways to encourage residents to care for and invest in their neighborhoods. Councilmember King suggested community cleanup events and neighborhood leadership initiatives that would encourage residents to work together to improve local areas. Councilmember Peterson cautioned against creating excessive new government programs and suggested the City instead focus on serving as a catalyst that connected community organizations, schools, faith groups, and volunteer organizations to neighborhood improvement efforts. Mr. Allen referenced a program operating in Ogden called "My Hometown," which involved partnerships between the city, volunteers, and community organizations to complete neighborhood improvement projects several times per year.

Councilmembers also discussed possible tools for supporting neighborhood improvement, including shared tool libraries or equipment lending programs that could help residents complete home and yard projects. Councilmember Ratchford emphasized that providing access to tools or resources could remove barriers for residents who want to improve their property but cannot afford equipment. Councilmember King mentioned that some library systems provided equipment lending services, which could potentially serve as a model. Councilmembers also discussed engaging youth and students in volunteer service projects that benefited the community.

Mr. Allen summarized the discussion by noting that two major themes emerged from the Council's priorities: neighborhood improvement and business recruitment/economic development. He indicated that staff would continue researching potential strategies and incorporate relevant initiatives into future budget discussions.

**FISCAL YEAR 2027 Budget**

The meeting then transitioned to a discussion of the City's upcoming budget process. Rich Knapp, Finance Manager, explained that the meeting marked the kickoff of the annual budget development process. Staff would first gather internal requests for capital projects, vehicles, equipment, and departmental needs. He noted that although the City typically planned capital needs for three years, staff currently tracked projects further into the future due to the large number of pending projects, including approximately $3 million in projects that were delayed from the previous year.

Mr. Knapp explained that the Budget Committee—consisting of the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, Finance Manager, and Senior Accountant—would meet with each department to review budget requests, upcoming challenges, and operational needs. These meetings would take place over several full-day sessions. Councilmembers were invited to attend portions of those meetings if interested, provided that attendance did not create a quorum requiring formal meeting notice. Mr. Knapp reviewed the projected budget development timeline, explaining that after departmental meetings, staff would begin narrowing down budget proposals and identifying areas requiring policy decisions from the Council. These decisions could include property tax considerations, service level adjustments, or project prioritization. He noted that the Council would continue refining the budget through the spring, with the goal of adopting a tentative budget in May and a final budget later in the process.

Mr. Allen also explained that the budget process timeline could be affected by pending legislation at the state level that might require earlier notice to the public if a city intended to increase property taxes. He stated that if such legislation passed, cities might be required to adopt a preliminary or baseline budget earlier in the year and notify residents of potential tax increases before final adoption later in the summer.

Following the overview of the budget timeline, staff transitioned to a detailed review of the Mayor and City Council budget line items for the upcoming fiscal year. Staff indicated the purpose of the review was to identify any desired adjustments before entering final figures into the proposed budget. While reviewing the Membership & Dues line item, Mayor Shepherd mentioned the need to fill a position with Kiwanis. Councilmember Peterson volunteered to take the position.

Mayor Shepherd and councilmembers discussed the City's participation in community organizations and youth engagement activities. Mayor Shepherd referenced the City's involvement with the Kiwanis organization and the need for a new representative from the City to participate. He explained that Kiwanis supported youth initiatives such as providing coats, shoes, and books for students and sponsored recognition programs for sixth-grade students. Staff noted that Kiwanis also assisted with operating the Key Club at the local high school. The discussion included the Mayor Shepherd's participation in youth-focused activities such as "Lunch with the Mayor," which staff noted played an important role in leadership development and connecting City leadership with local youth. Mayor Shepherd emphasized the importance of continuing efforts that reinforced the City's "Everyone Matters" message and provided opportunities for youth engagement.

Mr. Allen then directed the discussion to the City Council's memberships in various organizations. He asked whether councilmembers felt the City should add or remove any memberships. Councilmember Peterson expressed interest in evaluating whether the City should pursue additional memberships that aligned with the Council's goals, particularly those related to business and economic development. Staff clarified that some organizational memberships related to economic development were included in other areas of the City's budget. Mayor Shepherd and staff also reviewed the City's membership in the Association of Defense Communities, which supported communities connected to military installations such as Hill Air Force Base.

The Council then reviewed training and conference attendance included in the Mayor and City Council budget. Staff explained that the current budget included funding for the mayor to attend the spring conference of the Utah League of Cities and Towns (ULCT) in St. George, while the fall ULCT conference in Salt Lake City was available to the entire Council. Staff noted that previous budget decisions prioritized sending the entire Council to the National League of Cities (NLC) Congressional City Conference in Washington, D.C., and therefore reduced funding for attendance at the ULCT spring conference.

Councilmember Peterson suggested that the Council consider establishing a clearer policy regarding participation in leadership roles and committees within organizations such as ULCT and NLC. She noted that participation in those organizations often involved additional travel and expenses, and the Council should clarify whether such involvement should be funded by the City or considered a personal commitment by individual councilmembers. Mayor Shepherd explained that his involvement with ULCT primarily occurred through his service on the ULCT Board and participation in the Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). He pointed out that there was an available voting position on the LPC. He explained that LPC met monthly during the legislative interim and weekly during the legislative session to review and recommend positions on proposed legislation affecting municipalities. Councilmember King expressed interest in serving as an LPC voting representative. Staff noted that the City currently had an available voting position and confirmed that Councilmember King could be designated to fill that role. Mayor Shepherd indicated there were no objections from the Council to appointing her to the position.

The Council also discussed participation in the National League of Cities (NLC) conferences, including the Congressional City Conference in Washington, D.C., and the annual City Summit. Councilmember Peterson expressed interest in ensuring that attendance at the conferences provided clear value to residents. She suggested that councilmembers document the outcomes and benefits of participation, including grant opportunities, policy knowledge, and partnerships developed during the conferences, so that the public could better understand the return on investment for conference travel.

Mayor Shepherd emphasized that the Congressional City Conference provided an important opportunity for the Council to meet directly with members of Utah's congressional delegation and federal agencies to advocate for projects and funding opportunities that benefited the City. Councilmember Thompson also discussed how participation in national conferences had helped expand his knowledge and professional network related to water policy and infrastructure issues. Councilmembers discussed the possibility of scheduling a work session in February to coordinate schedules, legislative priorities, and meeting requests with federal agencies and congressional offices prior to attending the Washington, D.C. conference. Mr. Allen confirmed that staff would schedule a future discussion to coordinate conference participation and planning.

The Council also discussed the City's membership in ULCT and the value of continued participation. Councilmember Peterson asked staff and Mayor Shepherd to explain the potential impacts if the City were to discontinue its ULCT membership. Mayor Shepherd and staff explained that the organization represented the collective interests of Utah municipalities during the legislative session and provided lobbying services on behalf of cities statewide. They noted that withdrawing from the organization could reduce the City's influence in legislative matters and would likely require the City to hire its own lobbyist to represent its interests. Councilmembers generally agreed that continuing participation in ULCT was beneficial to maintaining a unified voice for local governments at the State Legislature. Mr. Allen then transitioned the discussion to the City's legislative advocacy contract. Staff confirmed that the City's contract with lobbyist Steve Hiatt had not increased in cost and continued to provide significant value to the City. Staff and councilmembers noted that the lobbyist had helped secure grant funding and monitored legislative issues affecting the City.

The Council then reviewed the "Donations" section of the Mayor and City Council budget. Staff explained that the City provided annual donations to several organizations and community initiatives, including a donation to the Davis Education Foundation and support for Project Illumination, a mental health awareness organization. Mayor Shepherd noted that the Project Illumination event would be relocating to another city, though the Council generally supported continuing community-focused donations. Staff explained that if the Council chose to make additional donations beyond those listed in the budget, a public hearing might be required depending on the structure of the expenditure. Councilmembers indicated support for continuing the existing donation commitments.

The Council then reviewed the "Council Expense" portion of the budget, which included costs related to employee appreciation events, recognition programs, and other organizational culture initiatives. Staff discussed the annual employee holiday party and explained that rising catering costs had increased the estimated expense significantly compared to prior years. For example, a venue that previously charged approximately $8,000 had increased its estimate to approximately $12,000. Councilmembers discussed the importance of maintaining employee morale and workplace culture, noting that appreciation events could have a meaningful impact on staff satisfaction. Councilmember Peterson suggested that staff consider surveying employees to determine whether they preferred a traditional holiday party or alternative forms of appreciation, such as activities or different types of events. Councilmember Ratchford suggested exploring other venues or activity-based events as alternatives to traditional restaurant gatherings. Mr. Allen thanked the Council for prioritizing employee morale and recognition programs within the budget and noted that those efforts contributed positively to organizational culture. The Council also reviewed smaller budget items, including funds used for employee recognition such as "on-the-spot" appreciation awards that Councilmembers may provide to employees who assist them with City business.

The discussion then moved to the Youth Commission budget. Councilmember Wurth asked whether the Council wished to change the existing policy allowing Youth Commission members to attend the NLC conference in Washington, D.C. every other year. Councilmembers indicated general support for continuing the current approach, which allowed Youth Commission members to attend periodically rather than annually. Councilmember Peterson emphasized that the program provided valuable civic engagement opportunities for participating youth but should remain balanced given the limited number of participants and the costs involved. Mayor Shepherd also proposed modifying the Youth Commission advisor structure by designating two co-advisors rather than one advisor and one assistant advisor, ensuring both individuals were treated equally in responsibility and compensation. Staff indicated that the budget would be adjusted to reflect two advisors at the same compensation level.

**COUNCIL INITIATIVE PROJECTS AND PLACEMAKING EFFORTS**

Following the Youth Commission discussion, Mr. Allen introduced the next agenda topic related to Council initiative and placemaking projects funded through the Council's initiative budget. Shaundra Rushton, Communications Manager, provided an overview of the Council Initiative program, which funded special community projects selected by the Council each year. She explained that the Communications Division typically managed up to four initiative projects annually in addition to its regular workload. The initiative budget included approximately \$15,000 from the Communications budget and \$50,000 from the Council's budget. She reminded Council of the initiatives Council selected for Fiscal Year 2026, including apartment community engagement events, research into an AI chatbot for the City's website, the jet sculpture program, community murals, and holiday decorations.

Ms. Rushton reported that the apartment engagement initiative had been challenging because apartment managers had not responded to outreach regarding hosting community events. Staff attempted to contact apartment complexes through email and phone calls but received little response, and some complexes requested that the City not contact them. Staff indicated that additional in-person outreach might be necessary if the Council wished to continue pursuing the initiative.

Ms. Rushton then provided an update on the City's mural project. The mural committee was preparing revisions to the draft mural design so that it could be approved by Davis County prior to installation. Staff anticipated the mural could be completed by May 1, pending approval and design revisions. Grant funding associated with the mural project was expected to be received soon and would be used to compensate the artist.

Staff also provided an update on the City's jet sculpture program. The project included multiple jet sculptures displayed throughout the community, each sponsored by a private partner. Sponsors contributed approximately $5,000 per sculpture, and several local artists and businesses had participated in the design, fabrication, and installation process. Staff described the complexity of coordinating artists, sponsors, fabrication work, and installation logistics for the project. Ms. Rushton also reported that one of the jet sculptures had been stolen and that staff had been working with law enforcement and contractors to repair and restore the sculpture. The repaired jet was expected to be completed and reinstalled once restoration work was finished. She explained that the City experienced delays during the initial sculpture production due to unforeseen circumstances involving the sculptor, including health issues and scheduling challenges. As a result, the sculptures were delivered several months later than expected and had variations in size and details compared to the original design specifications. Based on those experiences, Ms. Rushton recommended changing sculptors for future jet sculptures in order to improve scheduling reliability and coordination. She reported that there were only a few sculptors commonly used for similar projects in the region and proposed working with a sculptor through Utah Tech University in St. George. She noted that preliminary pricing appeared comparable to previous projects, though final costs would depend on the type and size of aircraft selected.

Ms. Rushton reported that staff conducted research with the local Air Force museum and community volunteers to identify aircraft with historical connections to the Clearfield community and Hill Air Force Base. She presented several potential aircraft options from World War II, Vietnam-era, and modern aircraft. She noted that some of the historically significant aircraft were propeller planes rather than jets and asked the Council whether propeller aircraft would be acceptable within the jet sculpture program. She explained that propellers could present durability concerns if they were vandalized or damaged. Staff highlighted several aircraft with strong local historical connections. These included the B-24 bomber, which was heavily serviced and processed at Hill Air Force Base during World War II. Ms. Rushton explained that Hill Air Force Base had one of the nation's largest operations for disassembling and rebuilding B-24 aircraft during the war, with workers processing approximately one aircraft per day using one of the first progressive aircraft maintenance assembly lines. Another aircraft discussed was the A-1 Skyraider, which was flown by Clearfield resident Bernard Fisher during the Vietnam War. Fisher received the Medal of Honor after landing under enemy fire to rescue a downed pilot. Staff noted that Fisher's Medal of Honor was currently displayed at City Hall. Staff also discussed the F-105 Thunderchief, which was flown by local resident Jay Hess. Hess was shot down during the Vietnam War and held as a prisoner of war before later returning to the United States and serving as an instructor for the Clearfield High School ROTC program for approximately twenty years. Additional aircraft discussed included the F-4 Phantom, which represented a major portion of Hill Air Force Base's Vietnam-era aircraft maintenance workload, as well as the F-22 and F-35, which reflected the Base's modern aircraft maintenance and weapons system responsibilities. Ms. Rushton asked the Council to identify several preferred aircraft so staff could obtain cost estimates for sculpture molds and fabrication.

Mayor Shepherd expressed support for including the B-24 due to its strong historical ties to Hill Air Force Base and the large number of local residents who worked on that aircraft during World War II. Councilmember Ratchford also suggested considering aircraft such as the F-22 or F-4 due to their historical connection to the base and military operations. Councilmembers discussed whether aircraft selection should prioritize planes directly serviced at Hill Air Force Base or those connected to significant stories involving Clearfield residents. Mayor Shepherd noted that while some aircraft had compelling personal stories, others represented the larger workforce and historical mission of the Base. Councilmembers also discussed the B-21 Raider, noting that many current employees at Northrop Grumman in Clearfield were involved in manufacturing components for the aircraft. Mayor Shepherd noted that creating a sculpture of the B-21 could be challenging because the aircraft had not yet been fully deployed, but councilmembers indicated it could represent the City's current aerospace industry.

Councilmember Peterson suggested that the City consider two separate approaches for the sculpture program. She recommended that aircraft suitable for replication and display along State Street continue to be produced as part of the existing sculpture program. She suggested for aircraft with unique shapes or strong historical stories but less suitability for the furnishing zones along State Street, the City consider creating larger, one-of-a-kind sculptures in parks or other public spaces. She explained that those projects would likely require separate funding sources, such as grants or private sponsorships, because they would exceed the scope of the Council initiative budget. Mr. Allen agreed that the City could consider placing larger sculptures outside the State Street furnishing zones, including on private property with permission from property owners. This would allow larger sculptures to be installed where they were more visible and less constrained by sidewalk design requirements.

Councilmembers discussed the relative visibility and design challenges of various aircraft. Staff noted that some aircraft, particularly older propeller planes, had narrow or elongated designs that might not scale well as smaller sculptures. Councilmembers generally indicated interest in aircraft such as the F-4 Phantom, F-35, and F-16 because those aircraft had shapes that could be more easily adapted into sculpture form. Councilmembers also discussed potential engineering approaches to address propeller durability issues, including designing propellers with flexible or spring-mounted components that could withstand accidental impacts without breaking. Following discussion, staff indicated that they would research costs and feasibility for several aircraft options and bring additional information back to the Council.

**COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND CHATBOT RESEARCH**

Ms. Rushton then presented research regarding potential communication tools for the City's website and resident notification systems. She explained that staff had previously been asked to research three options: Citybot, TextMyGov, and the chatbot system currently used by Davis County.

Ms. Rushton explained that Citybot was an artificial-intelligence-based chatbot that integrated with a city's website and answered resident questions by reading the content available on the site. If a question could not be answered based on the website's content, the chatbot informed the user that the information was not available. She reported that the first year of implementation would require higher costs due to initial setup and training, followed by approximately $10,000 in annual maintenance costs. Ms. Rushton reported that Ogden City had implemented Citybot and generally reported positive experiences, though overall usage had been lower than expected. According to Ogden's data, approximately 3,700 unique users interacted with the chatbot during the previous year, generating nearly 6,000 total interactions. Ms. Rushton also reported that Denver analyzed the cost efficiency of chatbot usage compared to phone calls. Denver estimated that each phone call to city staff cost approximately $4.00 in staff time, while chatbot interactions cost approximately $0.34 per interaction. She also described an advanced feature available through Citybot that allowed an AI-generated voice to answer incoming phone calls using a recorded voice, such as the mayor's voice, to simulate an automated greeting and assist callers. She noted that this technology was available but might not yet be appropriate for the City.

Ms. Rushton then presented information about TextMyGov, a texting-based communication platform. The system allowed residents to send text messages to the City for information and also enabled the City to send notifications to residents without requiring them to sign up for alerts. The system relied on verified phone number databases that could identify approximately 17,500 phone numbers associated with residents in the community. Ms. Rushton explained that cities using the service could send targeted messages to specific geographic areas. For example, if a water leak occurred, staff could select a geographic area on a map and send a notification directly to residents affected by the service interruption. She reported that Woods Cross City currently used the service and reported high satisfaction among residents. Woods Cross staff indicated that approximately five messages per day required manual responses when the system did not automatically provide an answer, and that number could increase to approximately thirty per day during major events.

Ms. Rushon also attempted to gather information from Davis County regarding its chatbot system but was unable to obtain detailed feedback from county staff. In testing the system herself, she found that the AI tool sometimes provided incorrect information because it pulled data from both the county website and external sources such as Google. Ms. Rushton asked the Council whether it would like staff to include funding for a chatbot or texting system in the upcoming budget. Councilmember King stated that the texting system appeared to provide greater value for resident communication because it allowed the City to proactively notify residents about important information, rather than requiring residents to visit the website to ask questions. Councilmember Thompson agreed and noted that residents often relied on their mobile phones for information. He indicated that residents might be more interested in receiving notifications about events or service interruptions than using a chatbot to search for information on the City's website. Councilmember Wurth expressed skepticism about relying heavily on artificial intelligence tools at the current stage of technology. He stated that residents often expected accurate and personalized responses, which were still best provided by City staff with subject-matter expertise. Councilmember King also noted that City staff were currently able to answer phone calls without significant wait times, suggesting that the need for an automated chatbot might not be as pressing. Councilmember Ratchford observed that the data presented from other cities indicated relatively low usage of website chatbots and suggested that the texting system appeared to be the more practical communication tool.

Councilmembers then discussed how a texting system would be managed operationally. Ms. Rushton explained that the system worked best when managed by a single department to ensure consistent communication. She stated that the Communications Division could manage the platform, with other departments providing information when notifications were needed, such as water service interruptions or public safety alerts. Staff indicated that the process would be similar to how departments currently notified the Communications Division when information needed to be posted to social media. Staff also began discussing how the texting platform obtained resident phone numbers, including whether the system used public data sources or City utility records to identify verified phone numbers for residents. Ms. Rushton confirmed that numbers would be obtained through a variety of public sources and opt-in options. Mr. Allen said if the Council wanted to launch the TextMyGov program in the current fiscal year then a budget amendment would need to be approved. Otherwise, the approximate $16,000 initial set-up and annual fee would be added to the FY27 budget. Councilmember Peterson thought it was important to clarify whether the program would remain a Council Initiative item in perpetuity and clearly understand staffing expectations for the program.

**CHRISTMAS DECOR**

Ms. Rushton showed the Christmas Decor purchased with the Council Initiative.

**FISCAL YEAR 2027 COUNCIL INITIATIVE BUDGET**

Ms. Rushton thought that the remaining monies allocated for the Jet Program in FY26 would be enough to purchase the new jets but that due to the timing of production and arrival, FY27 funds could be needed to pay the artists and the base creation. There was further discussion to determine which projects would be included in FY27 budget for Council Initiatives. The projects would include the continuation of ChatBot research, Jet Program, Bridge Party, additional mural or neighborhood painting of fire hydrants or utility boxes, or beautification projects within neighborhoods and off the main corridor. Staff would finalize budget needs from the Council budget. Mr. Allen asked Council to determine whether the opportunity to host a jet from Hill Air Force Base would be a priority for them and whether it should be considered a Council Initiative that needed staff support. More information was needed for Council to finalize the initiatives.

Break for lunch.

The meeting reconvened at 12:35 p.m.

Team building activity.

**PAY PLAN APPLICATION**

Stuart Williams, City Attorney, and Ricki Miller, HR Manager, presented information regarding the City's compensation plan and associated budget impacts. Staff provided a summary of the compensation plan adopted in the previous year, noting that significant time had been spent conducting a market analysis and restructuring employee compensation. Staff explained that the City had eliminated the step-and-grade pay system and implemented a standardized pay plan for all full-time employees, along with six designated part-time positions. All employees now received increases based on a consistent formula, which included a merit-based adjustment of 0–3% and a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) tied to the Utah Retirement Systems (URS) formula. Staff emphasized that the approach removed subjectivity and ensured consistency across departments.

Staff reported that for the current year, no major changes to the compensation plan were being proposed. The recommendation was to “stay the course,” maintain the existing structure, and continue monitoring market conditions without adjusting pay ranges, titles, or classifications. Staff acknowledged that external market pressures and competition from other agencies continued to exist but stated that the City would remain focused on its adopted plan rather than reacting to external fluctuations.

Staff presented the updated COLA rate of 2.6%, recently received from URS, resulting in a total projected compensation increase of approximately 5.6% when combined with merit adjustments. Staff noted that although the percentage increase was slightly lower than the previous year, the overall financial impact remained significant. The total cost increase was influenced by staffing changes, including position eliminations and turnover, which reduced the overall budget impact compared to prior projections.

Councilmember Wurth inquired whether the changes made to the compensation plan in the previous year had improved financial sustainability. Staff confirmed that transitioning away from the step-and-grade system avoided an estimated $800,000 in additional costs and helped stabilize long-term projections, although the current increase still represented a substantial budgetary impact. Staff and Council discussed overall staffing levels and organizational size. The City Manager noted that the City employed over 130 full-time employees and several hundred part-time employees, emphasizing that personnel costs were a natural and significant component of the City’s budget.

Councilmember Thompson requested clarification on historical personnel expenditures and trends. Staff explained the distinction between budgeted amounts and actual expenditures, noting that actual costs were typically lower due to vacancies and turnover. Staff further explained that approximately 93–95% of the personnel budget was typically expended annually, with the remaining funds attributable primarily to unfilled positions.

Mayor Shepherd inquired about the application of merit increases and whether most employees received the full 3% adjustment. Staff indicated that the majority of employees did receive close to the full merit increase, with exceptions occurring in cases of disciplinary action or employees already above appropriate pay ranges under the previous system.

Staff discussed the impact of compensation changes on part-time employees, particularly within the Community Services Department. The Community Services Director explained that transitioning to fixed incremental increases for part-time employees, rather than percentage-based increases, would slow wage growth and improve cost recovery over time, especially at the Aquatic Center. Staff also noted structural changes to limit the number of higher-paid roles, such as head lifeguards, which would further control wage escalation.

The Council discussed staffing in relation to population growth and service demands. Staff indicated that while some staffing metrics had previously been tied to population or service levels, recent wage increases had shifted priorities. The City Manager stated that public safety staffing had remained a priority, with efforts made to maintain appropriate officer-to-population ratios, while other areas such as parks had not kept pace with prior staffing goals.

Staff reported that recruitment efforts had remained strong despite adjustments to compensation. Human Resources staff noted that applicant pools had remained robust, with recent job postings receiving significantly higher numbers of applicants than in previous years, indicating that the City remained competitive in the labor market.

The Finance Manager presented data on historical budget savings due to vacancies, noting that approximately $846,000 was left unspent in FY 2025, $1.5 million in FY 2024, and similar amounts in prior years. These savings were attributed primarily to employee turnover and unfilled positions.

**REVENUE TRENDS**

The discussion then transitioned to revenue trends. Rich Knapp, Finance Manager provided an overview of the City's primary revenue sources, noting a shift toward increased reliance on sales tax, which had become the largest contributor to the General Fund. Property tax, energy tax, and Aquatic Center revenues were identified as other key sources, though energy tax revenues had become less stable. Staff presented preliminary revenue projections for FY 2026, emphasizing that the data was limited and subject to change. Early estimates indicated a modest increase in sales tax revenue but a significant decline in energy tax revenue due to reduced utility rates. Staff projected an overall shortfall of approximately $456,000.

**FISCAL YEAR 2026 TRUTH IN TAXATION IMPLICATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027**

Mr. Knapp provided a detailed overview of property tax considerations and initiated a policy-level discussion regarding the potential use of the Truth in Taxation (TNT) process for the upcoming fiscal year. He explained that under current projections, maintaining the existing tax rate would not generate additional revenue, effectively resulting in a neutral position despite increasing costs. Staff illustrated that modest rate adjustments could produce incremental revenue, estimating impacts on an average household ranging from approximately $12 to $19 depending on the scenario presented.

The City Manager asked the Council to provide early direction on whether staff should plan to pursue Truth in Taxation for FY 2027. The City Manager referenced the prior year's experience, noting that although the City completed the Truth in Taxation process, the Tax Commission ultimately rejected the increase, leaving the City without the anticipated revenue. The City Manager emphasized that Council direction at the current stage would significantly impact budget development. If the Council was not inclined to pursue a tax increase, staff would need to prepare a more constrained budget, potentially requiring reductions in services, staffing, or capital projects.

Councilmember Wurth expressed caution about making immediate decisions regarding Truth in Taxation due to ongoing economic uncertainty and potential legislative changes that could affect the City's taxing authority or revenue structure. He indicated a preference for delaying firm decisions until more information became available and suggested strengthening multi-year financial planning to better manage variability.

Councilmember Ratchford requested additional context regarding unmet needs from the prior year, including projects and operational items that were deferred due to funding limitations. Staff identified postponed capital projects, including a major roadway overlay project, and noted that certain operational needs, such as park staffing, were also delayed. Staff also noted that the City was already operating with a baseline revenue gap, as previously planned property tax revenue (approximately $196,000) was not realized and was currently being offset through reserves, placing additional pressure on future budgets.

Overall, the discussion reflected that no formal direction was given; however, the Council generally indicated a need for **a**dditional data, long-term planning, and clarity on external factors before committing to a Truth in Taxation strategy. The City Manager concluded the discussion by stating that staff would begin preparing the FY 2027 budget and would incorporate Council direction regarding compensation, revenue strategies, and potential tax adjustments. No formal action was taken, and the discussion was for informational and planning purposes only.

There was a group activity.

**RECONFIGURING THE CITY'S APPROACH TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

Spencer Brimley, Assistant City Manager, provided a comprehensive update regarding the Emergency Management program and recent organizational changes. Mr. Brimley explained that the City had previously entered into a multi-city partnership with neighboring jurisdictions to fund a full-time Emergency Manager, as the City alone could not justify the position. He reported that Clinton City withdrew from the agreement, prompting a reevaluation of the partnership. As a result, the remaining cities determined that the existing arrangement was no longer viable, and the City subsequently eliminated the Emergency Manager position, with the individual's employment ending in early January.

Staff acknowledged that while some progress had been made, including a substantially complete draft Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and limited training, the overall outcomes did not meet expectations. The City Manager stated that after approximately one and a half years, the City had received limited deliverables and insufficient training, leading to concerns about the value of the arrangement. With the position eliminated, emergency management responsibilities had been temporarily reassigned to the Assistant City Manager, including attending coordination meetings and overseeing ongoing efforts.

Staff presented several potential options for moving forward:

- Partnering with additional cities, including outreach to Sunset City, particularly due to shared fire district relationships.

- Contracting with the county for emergency management services; however, staff expressed concern about unclear responsibilities and capacity constraints at the county level.
- Utilizing the fire district as the employing entity for a shared Emergency Manager, with costs distributed among participating cities.
- Completing the Emergency Operations Plan internally and contracting for targeted training rather than a full-time position.

Mayor Shepherd and the Council discussed the financial and operational implications of each option. Mayor Shepherd noted that hiring through the fire district would still require funding a new full-time position, including equipment and overhead, and that cost-sharing would likely be reduced due to fewer participating cities.

Councilmembers sought clarification on the scope of emergency management, and staff explained that it included all hazard planning, such as natural disasters, large-scale emergencies, and coordinated regional responses, rather than solely ambulance or fire services. Discussion also emphasized the importance of training. The Police Chief stated that while a draft plan existed, staff lacked sufficient training to effectively implement it, and emphasized that training was critical to preparedness regardless of the organizational model selected.

Councilmembers discussed the possibility of finalizing the Emergency Operations Plan internally and returning at a future work session with defined options, including cost estimates for consulting, training, or alternative service models. No formal direction was provided; however, staff was asked to continue evaluating options and return with additional information and recommendations for Council consideration.

**CAFC – EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT**

Mr. Allen, City Manager, introduced a discussion regarding operational and management challenges at the Clearfield Aquatic and Fitness Center. He emphasized the sensitive nature of the topic, noting that the discussion involved employees whom staff cared about and respected. Mr. Allen stated that the facility was a valuable asset to the community but that operational management challenges needed to be addressed. He explained that the City's goal was to maintain a high-performing division aligned with the City's organizational core values, provided a positive work environment—particularly for the many youth employees who worked at the center—and effectively addressed workplace issues when they arose. Additional objectives included minimizing liability and improving cost recovery while reducing the amount of subsidy required to operate the facility.

Mr. Allen reported that the Aquatic and Fitness Center had approximately five full-time employees, including a manager and four supervisors, while the facility might employ up to 200 part-time staff depending on the season. Many of the employees were young and in their first job. He noted that the ratio of supervisors to staff was significantly higher than in other departments, which could make consistent supervision and discipline challenging. Mr. Allen explained that some supervisory staff lacked experience handling workplace issues and that management had struggled at times to ensure consistent corrective action. He also reported that while the facility performed well in technical training—such as lifeguard certification—training related to City policies and expectations had been less consistent. Eric Howes, Community Services Director**,** confirmed Mr. Allen's assessment and stated that he wished he could present a different report but acknowledged the concerns.

Mr. Allen further explained that communication challenges had occurred within the division, noting difficulty ensuring that policies and expectations discussed at the management level were consistently communicated to front-line staff. He also noted that some employees might not fully understand how operational decisions affected other departments such as Human Resources, Finance, and Risk Management. Mr. Allen stated that unclear expectations could make it difficult to hold employees accountable for performance or behavior. While many workplace issues were minor—such as employees failing to report for scheduled shifts—he reported that several more serious incidents had occurred and were not addressed promptly or appropriately. Examples included bullying, favoritism, sexual harassment, and sexual assault allegations. Mr. Allen stated that some of the challenges appeared to stem from a workplace mentality of maintaining longstanding practices rather than taking ownership to improve processes. He explained that the lack of ownership had sometimes created a divide between Aquatic Center staff and the rest of City government, with some employees viewing the facility as separate from the City organization. Mr. Allen explained that unresolved issues at the facility had placed additional burdens on departments such as Human Resources and Legal and had contributed to inefficiencies in operations. He also noted that staff sometimes hesitated to change programming or operations due to loyalty to certain user groups or employee groups rather than focusing on whether programs provided a good return on the City's investment. Mr. Allen stated that the City wanted youth employees to have a positive first job experience that prepared them for future employment opportunities. However, when problems occurred and were not handled properly, the City was not providing the experience it intended.

Mr. Allen then outlined organizational expectations moving forward. These included strengthening unity across departments, ensuring consistent communication through all levels of the organization, improving employee training on City policies, emphasizing high-quality work, addressing problems promptly and according to established procedures, and pursuing operational efficiencies to improve cost recovery. Mr. Allen also emphasized the importance of leadership taking ownership of issues rather than allowing loyalty to employees or user groups to prevent necessary corrective actions. Mr. Allen reported that he and Mr. Howes had been working on the issues for more than a year but had not yet seen the level of improvement desired. As a result, staff were bringing the matter to the City Council for direction. Mr. Allen then outlined three possible approaches for addressing the situation:

1. Revamp the existing operation, retaining some current leadership while significantly restructuring operations, staffing, and programs.
2. Completely restart the operation, which would likely require temporarily shutting down the facility and rebuilding the program from the ground up.
3. Outsource the operation by issuing a request for proposals (RFP) for an outside organization to manage the facility.

Mr. Allen explained that the second option was not considered highly viable due to the disruption it would cause to the community. The third option—outsourcing—would involve maintaining City ownership of the facility while contracting with an outside organization to operate programming and services. He stated that staff had already begun drafting an RFP to explore outsourcing but had not issued it because he wanted Council input first. Potential organizations that might have interest in operating the facility could include nonprofit organizations such as the Boys & Girls Clubs of America or the YMCA, as well as possible involvement from the county, school district, or private recreation providers.

Mr. Allen asked Mr. Howes to describe what an internal restructuring might look like if the City retained operations. Mr. Howes explained that staff had begun evaluating several operational changes. Those included adjusting hours of operation, particularly on Sundays when attendance was lower and staffing requirements were more difficult to manage due to labor restrictions for youth employees. Staff were also considering redistributing supervisory responsibilities among existing supervisors. Mr. Howes stated that staff were evaluating whether to eliminate some part-time positions in order to fund a full-time Assistant Center Manager position. The position would allow a full-time supervisor to be present in the facility for more operating hours and would focus on addressing personnel issues and customer concerns more effectively. Mr. Howes explained that current supervisors were responsible for approximately 45 employees each, which could make it difficult to step away from daily operations to address disciplinary issues or customer complaints. The proposed Assistant Center Manager would help address those concerns while allowing the Center Manager to focus on training, culture, and policy implementation. Mr. Howes also reported that staff were working to establish clearer operational goals. Currently, the City did not have defined targets for cost recovery or program performance. He stated that if the Council established specific financial goals—such as a targeted cost-recovery percentage—staff could pursue strategies to achieve those targets.

Mr. Howes also noted that the facility currently included many services in the standard membership price, including fitness classes. He explained that many comparable facilities charged additional fees for classes, which could be considered as a revenue-generating option. Other potential revenue strategies included expanding facility rentals. Mr. Howes also reported that staff were reviewing childcare programming, which had changed multiple times over the years. Staff planned to evaluate whether the program should continue and, if so, what its operational goals should be. Additional operational evaluations included reviewing the number of fitness classes offered, determining criteria for program success, adjusting childcare fees if the program continued, expanding facility rentals, improving supervisor training, and strengthening customer service expectations. Mr. Howes also acknowledged that customer service practices needed improvement. He reported that some staff had directed dissatisfied patrons to contact the City Council rather than attempting to resolve issues internally. He stated that practice needed to change so that issues were addressed at the operational level whenever possible.

Mr. Howes acknowledged the validity of Mr. Allen's concerns and stated that the incidents described had occurred and must be addressed. He stated that he was committed to improving operations and correcting the issues identified. Mr. Allen then summarized the three potential paths forward and reiterated that the most viable options appeared to be restructuring the current operation or issuing an RFP to explore outsourcing. Mr. Allen explained that outsourcing would involve the City maintaining ownership of the facility, utilities, and building maintenance, while a contractor would operate programming and membership services. However, outsourcing would require the City to relinquish some operational control and would still likely require a subsidy from the City. Mr. Allen noted that he had attempted to gather information from Ogden City Corporation regarding their experience with both in-house operations and outsourced recreation management, though he had not yet been able to connect with their staff. Mr. Allen then asked councilmembers for direction.

Councilmember Ratchford asked whether organizational changes in the Human Resources reporting structure could have contributed to the issues at the Aquatic Center. Mr. Allen stated that while HR and Legal had been significantly involved in addressing issues at the Aquatic Center, the structural change itself was not the cause of the operational challenges.

Councilmember King asked about employee training procedures and how often a full-time supervisor was present in the facility. Mr. Howes explained that the facility operated approximately 100 hours per week and that staff attempted to schedule full-time supervisors to cover as many hours as possible. However, full-time staff might be engaged in other responsibilities, such as overseeing swim lessons, which could limit their availability to address other issues. Councilmember King asked whether employees had immediate access to supervisors when issues arose. Mr. Howes explained that supervisors often oversaw specific operational areas and might be occupied with responsibilities such as aquatics programs, front desk operations, or daycare supervision, which could make immediate assistance difficult at times.

Ricki Miller, Human Resources Director, explained that new employees received the same general orientation as other City employees. After orientation, departments were responsible for providing position-specific training and reinforcing City policies. She noted that departments also conducted periodic “core value conversations” with employees to reinforce organizational values. Councilmember King suggested that the City incorporate stronger messaging about the City’s culture, values, and expectations during onboarding so employees clearly understood they were working for the City as a whole rather than only for the Aquatic Center.

Councilmember Wurth stated that the core question was whether the Council had confidence in the current leadership at the Aquatic Center to implement improvements. He expressed concern that outsourcing operations could lead to higher costs and a reduction in service levels because a private operator would need to generate a profit. Councilmember Wurth stated that if outsourcing were pursued, the City might ultimately need to consider establishing a recreation district to manage the facility. Mayor Shepherd stated that previous discussions with other cities indicated little interest in forming a recreation district. He expressed support for issuing an RFP to determine whether outside organizations might be interested in operating the facility, even if the likelihood of success was low. Mayor Shepherd stated that aquatics facilities almost always required subsidies and that the City had committed to providing the service when the facility was constructed. He emphasized the importance of ensuring the facility operated effectively for the benefit of residents. Councilmember Ratchford expressed concern that outsourcing could reduce staff availability for other City events and programs, as Aquatic Center employees often assisted with community activities. Councilmember Thompson expressed concern about potential public perception if the City outsourced operations. He stated that residents might view outsourcing as using public funds to support private industry. However, he also indicated he would not oppose gathering information through an RFP process.

Councilmember King stated that she supported pursuing internal improvements first and believed that changes in leadership and training could improve operations within a few months. Councilmember Peterson stated that outsourcing appeared difficult given the facility's operational constraints and agreements with the School District. She expressed hope that internal restructuring could allow the City to turn the situation around rather than surrendering control of the facility. Mr. Howes stated that he would implement whichever direction the Council chose and was committed to making the necessary changes to restore the facility's success. He acknowledged that the issues occurred under his leadership and stated that if staff were unwilling to implement the required changes, they might need to be replaced.

Mr. Allen summarized that the apparent consensus of the Council was to pursue an internal revamp of operations while keeping other options available if improvements were not achieved. Councilmembers indicated that improvements should occur quickly and that additional actions could be considered if necessary.

Councilmember Ratchford asked how long staff anticipated it would take to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed operational revamp. She asked whether staff were considering a three-month or six-month evaluation period. Mr. Allen responded that he believed at least six months would be necessary to evaluate meaningful improvement, and possibly up to a year to fully assess the results of the operational changes. Councilmember Ratchford asked how staff would measure whether improvements had been successful and what specific indicators Staff would look for. Mr. Allen explained that one of his primary goals would be to see operational issues handled appropriately within the department before escalating to other City departments. He stated that his "ideal scenario" would be learning about an issue months after it occurred and confirming that it had already been addressed correctly within the department without requiring involvement from Legal, Human Resources, or Finance.

Councilmember King asked whether the facility currently used a customer service survey to evaluate patron experiences at the front desk or with facility services. Mr. Howes explained that the facility currently maintained a comment box and has used feedback devices in the past that allowed patrons to rate their experience by pressing buttons. He reported that overall feedback from patrons had generally been positive. Mr. Howes noted that the facility received approximately 108,000 visits annually, and the concerns discussed represent a relatively small portion of total interactions, though they remained important to address. Curtis Dickson, Deputy Community Services Director, added that staff sent a survey to patrons when memberships were canceled in order to gather feedback about why the membership ended.

Councilmember Peterson emphasized the importance of establishing clear expectations and measurable guidelines if the City proceeded with a revamp of the Aquatic Center's operations. She stated that there should be defined metrics to evaluate progress and determine whether the City was on the right track or whether additional action was needed. She asked how long it would take to complete an RFP process if the City ultimately decided to pursue outsourcing operations. She expressed concern that waiting too long to determine whether the revamp was effective could delay the process if outsourcing later became necessary. Mr. Allen explained that the revamp approach would allow staff to implement changes much more quickly than issuing an RFP. He stated that an RFP process would likely be complex due to the operational structure of the facility. Potential contractors would need time to develop proposals outlining how they would structure operations and staffing. Mr. Allen estimated that preparing proposals could take at least a month or longer for interested organizations. Negotiating the contract and completing the operational transition could take many additional months and potentially up to a year before a contractor could fully assume operations. Mr. Allen suggested the issue be revisited at the Council's next retreat to discuss the City's experience with the operational revamp and evaluate whether further action was necessary. Councilmember Peterson stated that by the time the Council reached its mid-year review period in July or August, she would expect to see clear indications that changes were being implemented. She emphasized that the City should already be well underway with improvements by that point rather than still planning changes. Mr. Allen agreed and noted that staff were aware of the urgency of the situation. He referenced operational leadership changes that had recently been implemented within the Parks, Recreation, and Facilities divisions. He explained that Clint Warnick, Aquatic Center Manager, who had been working on aquatics and fitness operations, had been evaluating more substantial structural changes to the program. Mr. Allen stated that he had encouraged staff to take an even more proactive and bold approach to restructuring operations than originally planned. He explained that some changes could be implemented within one to two months, though additional adjustments would likely continue as part of an ongoing evolution of the program.

Councilmember Peterson reiterated the importance of establishing clear performance metrics so expectations were consistent across staff and Council. She stated that measurable standards would prevent misunderstandings and help avoid frustration if different parties had different expectations for the results of the revamp.

Councilmember Ratchford expressed concern about the operational challenges associated with supervising a large number of part-time employees. She noted that the Aquatic Center employs approximately 100 to 150 part-time staff, many of whom were under the age of thirty and viewed the position as a temporary job rather than a long-term career. Councilmember Ratchford stated that managing such a large group of young employees required strong supervision and training. She expressed concern that the current staffing structure might be stretching supervisors too thin and limiting their ability to provide adequate training and accountability. Councilmember Ratchford stated that without sufficient supervision, staff might not receive the guidance needed to succeed. She emphasized that expecting supervisors to manage a large workforce without adequate resources could set them up for failure. Councilmember Thompson asked Councilmember Ratchford whether, based on her concerns, the City should consider creating an Assistant Center Manager position as part of the revamp process in order to provide additional management support. Councilmember Ratchford stated that she believed additional management support would be necessary. She explained that the only alternatives would be requiring existing supervisors to work excessive hours or providing them with additional staffing resources. She reiterated that failing to provide adequate support could make it difficult for staff to meet expectations.

Councilmember Thompson stated that the Council would likely need several months to evaluate how operational changes affected staffing needs. He noted that hiring a new full-time position would require time for recruitment and onboarding and could not be implemented immediately. Councilmember Wurth stated that while he understood the concerns about staffing capacity, the City also needed time to determine whether existing staff were willing to adopt the changes being requested. He explained that several operational issues had occurred recently and that the City needed to evaluate whether the organization was prepared to adapt and improve.

Mr. Allen noted that while financial considerations were not his primary motivation for bringing the issue forward, cost recovery remained an important factor. He stated that he would like to see improvement in cost recovery rates and increased evaluation of whether current services and programs provided an appropriate return on the City's investment. Mr. Allen stated that staff should evaluate operational factors such as business hours, the number of fitness classes offered, and whether certain programs were underutilized. He emphasized the importance of questioning long-standing practices and making changes when necessary rather than continuing operations solely because "that is the way it had always been done."

Councilmember Ratchford stated that operating costs for an aquatic facility were inherently high. She noted that the facility required significant water usage, chemicals, and specialized labor to maintain safe operations. She stated that unexpected incidents could also increase operating costs. Councilmember Ratchford noted that raising membership prices might not be a viable solution because residents might not be willing to pay significantly higher fees. She suggested that the City might need to consider alternative pricing models, such as charging additional fees for specific services or reducing the use of certain facility areas during lower-demand periods.

Councilmember Peterson stated that it was widely recognized that municipal aquatic facilities typically required subsidies. She recalled previous conversations with the former mayor of Kaysville regarding the challenges of funding public pools. Councilmember Peterson noted that the issue was not unique to Clearfield and that many municipalities faced similar financial challenges. However, she stated that reducing operational risks and addressing management issues should be the City's first priority before focusing on financial targets. Councilmember Peterson suggested that once operational stability was achieved, the Council could consider establishing a target subsidy level or cost recovery percentage for the facility. She noted that previous discussions had included the possibility of covering certain operational costs through program revenue while capping the overall subsidy from the general fund.
Councilmember Peterson emphasized that if operational changes required adjustments to programs or schedules, councilmembers should support staff decisions when residents expressed concerns. She stated that Council support would be important if changes affected long-standing programs or user groups. Mr. Allen noted that a significant portion of the facility's patrons were not residents of Clearfield, which might also be an area worth evaluating as part of the financial analysis. Councilmember Ratchford acknowledged that the City had previously increased fees for non-resident patrons and noted that the adjustment had improved revenue but had not significantly changed the facility's overall financial position.

Mr. Allen thanked councilmembers for their input and acknowledged that the topic had been difficult for staff to present. He stated that he and Mr. Howes had been concerned about the discussion and appreciated the Council's engagement. Mr. Allen concluded by recommending that the Council postpone the planned discussion on artificial intelligence to a future work session due to time constraints. He suggested that the Council take a break and reconvene at 3:30 p.m. to begin the next agenda topic regarding retail recruitment.

The Council agreed to recess.

The meeting reconvened at 3:15 p.m.

It was agreed that due to time constraints, the discussion on Artificial Intelligence would be moved to another work meeting.

**RETAIL RECRUITMENT – WHAT DO WE WANT MOST, AND HOW TO GET IT?**

Spencer Brimley, Assistant City Manager introduced the retail and economic development discussion. Mr. Brimley referenced recent regional development practices, including an example from Syracuse City, where more assertive expectations were placed on developers. He noted that while Clearfield City was attempting to take a more proactive and supportive approach with developers, market conditions still imposed limitations. Mr. Brimley emphasized ongoing efforts to build stronger partnerships and highlighted recent discussions with Lakeside developers, where City leadership encouraged more progress and collaboration.

Mr. Brimley provided an overview of key economic development partners and organizations involved with the City, including state-level entities, regional development organizations, and local partners. He explained the distinction between local Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and state Economic Development TIF (EDTIF), clarifying that EDTIF incentives were administered by the state. Mr. Brimley reported that Clearfield had recently partnered with the Economic Development Corporation of Utah (EDCUtah), which focused on manufacturing job creation and was assisting with development opportunities, including the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) project. He also reviewed partnerships with organizations such as 47G, the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), the Davis Chamber of Commerce, and various private development partners.

Mr. Brimley discussed the status of ongoing projects, including the TOD, noting that while the City had fulfilled its obligations, development progress had been limited by private partners. Mayor Shepherd added that delays were partly due to partner availability and expectations not being met upon return to the project. Mr. Brimley also reviewed Lakeside development efforts, broker relationships, and coordination with the Military Installation Development Authority (MIDA) and Woodbury Corporation. He noted challenges in ensuring that development activity near Falcon Hill benefited the broader Clearfield community.

Mr. Brimley outlined current economic development initiatives, including the creation of a community profile through EDCUtah, updates to the City's economic development website, and ongoing coordination with Lakeside developers to provide market analysis support. He emphasized the importance of marketing the City effectively and increasing engagement in economic development networks to raise Clearfield's visibility.

Mr. Brimley reported that Clearfield had a strong base of small businesses, with over 800 commercial and approximately 500 home-based businesses. However, challenges remained in attracting franchise operators willing to establish new locations. He described outreach efforts to potential restaurants and businesses, including Strap Tank Brewery and Mission BBQ, though noted limited progress due to proximity to existing locations. He also reported no updates on the outlet mall project.

Mr. Brimley introduced a potential planning effort for the Clearfield Town Square area, noting that private interest in purchasing the property presented an opportunity for the City to proactively define a vision for redevelopment. He emphasized that the City was not pursuing acquisition but was considering a planning study to guide future development, potentially incorporating civic, commercial, and residential components. Mayor Shepherd supported this approach, stating that the City should establish a clear vision rather than reacting to developer proposals.

Discussion shifted to retail recruitment goals. Mr. Brimley emphasized that retail should not be viewed as the sole driver of economic success and that Clearfield's identity was rooted in small businesses, mid-level businesses, and manufacturing. He asked Council to consider what types of retail and services the City should prioritize and what success should look like. He noted that incentives might be necessary to attract desired businesses.

Councilmember Ratchford suggested that service-based businesses, such as salons, should be considered alongside retail. Mr. Brimley acknowledged their importance but cautioned about over-saturation in certain areas. Commissioner King suggested a bookstore as a desired amenity. Councilmember Wurth emphasized the need to prioritize high economic impact uses and encouraged a more strategic and bold approach to development. Mr. Brimley agreed and noted that increasing median household income would significantly improve economic development outcomes. Councilmember Peterson discussed the concept of placemaking, and emphasized the importance of creating destinations with complementary businesses that attracted and retained visitors. JJ Allen, City Manager reinforced that retail should be considered as part of placemaking, not just revenue generation. Councilmember Ratchford raised the need for amenities such as bars or gathering spaces, noting that residents currently leave the City to access those types of services. Mr. Brimley acknowledged challenges in attracting such uses, including competition with nearby developments and limited support from regional partners.

Mayor Shepherd highlighted the importance of partnerships and incentives, citing the successful recruitment of the Crush entertainment facility as an example. He expressed confidence that anchor developments would attract additional investment and emphasized the need to identify desired uses for key development areas. Councilmember Thompson suggested focusing on smaller, entrepreneurial businesses, including food trucks and culturally unique food offerings, as a way to organically build community identity and attract visitors. Mr. Brimley agreed and noted the need to better connect with and support local entrepreneurs. Councilmember Wurth suggested focusing on character-driven development rather than competing for large national retailers. Councilmember Ratchford raised concerns about the financial challenges faced by small businesses and the importance of creating conditions that allowed them to succeed. Councilmember Peterson proposed developing a more structured strategy, including identifying key development areas, defining desired uses, and aligning resources such as Community Development and Renewal Agency (CDRA) funding. Mr. Brimley agreed that clearer direction from Council would improve implementation and accountability. Mr. Brimley confirmed that existing planning documents, including the General Plan and Form Based Code, provided a foundation for the work, but additional focus and direction were needed. Council discussed the potential for a future work session to identify development priorities, funding strategies, and targeted recruitment efforts in preparation for ICSC.

Councilmember Ratchford suggested exploring opportunities within the Freeport Center to attract or relocate businesses that could support broader economic development goals. Mr. Brimley noted that while the Freeport Center was primarily industrial, new ownership was showing interest in being more proactive, which might create opportunities for collaboration.

Mr. Allen concluded the retail discussion and thanked participants for their input.

**FOURTH OF JULY/AMERICA 250**

The meeting then transitioned to a presentation by Curtis Dickson, Deputy Community Services Director, regarding Fourth of July planning and the America 250 celebration. Mr. Dickson reviewed tentative event dates, including Movie in the Park, Paint the Bridge, Pool Bash, a patriotic concert, a race, parade, and evening festivities with fireworks at Fisher Park. He noted scheduling considerations due to the holiday falling on a Saturday, requiring same-night cleanup to accommodate Sunday activities.

Mr. Dickson introduced the America 250 initiative, a nationwide celebration of the United States' 250th anniversary, and noted that Clearfield City was participating in related programming. He outlined potential opportunities for local involvement, including speaker series and historical programming.

The meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m.

**APPROVED AND ADOPTED**
**This 28th day of April 2026**

**/s/ Mark R. Shepherd, Mayor**

**ATTEST:**

**/s/ Nancy R. Dean, City Recorder**

I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Clearfield City Council meeting held Friday, January 16, 2026.

/s/ Nancy R. Dean, City Recorder