

CITY OF OREM
JOINT CITY COUNCIL AND TIMPANOGOS SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING
56 North State Street Orem, Utah
April 15, 2026

12:30 P.M. JOINT MEETING - CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM

CONDUCTING	Mayor Karen McCandless
ELECTED CITY OFFICIALS	Karen McCandless, Crystal Muhlestein, Jeff Lambson, Jenn Gale, LaNae Millett, Quinn Mecham ABSENT Chris Killpack
APPOINTED CITY STAFF	Brenn Bybee, City Manager; Ryan Clark, Assistant City Manager; Keri Rugg, Deputy City Manager; Steve Earl, City Attorney; Brandon Nelson, Finance Director; Sean Hirst, Assistant Fire Chief; BJ Robinson, Police Chief; Gary McGinn, Community Development Director; Tyler Peay, Parks and Recreation Director; Peter Wolfley, Community Engagement Director, PIO; Teresa McKitrick, City Recorder
SCHOOL DISTRICT ELECTED	Jennifer Lyman, President; Sterling Hilton, Vice President; Guy Fugal, David Smith, Ada Wilson, Grace Rex, ZOOM Michelle Sorensen
SCHOOL DISTRICT STAFF	Dr. Joe Jensen, Superintendent; Jason Sundberg, Business Administrator; Karen Carter, Executive Assistant

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

General Overview of Current Work and School Boundaries Discussion

School Board President Lyman provided an overview of the district’s first few months of operation. Key accomplishments include the hiring of Superintendent Joe Jensen and a leadership team referred to as the "Super Six" associate and assistant superintendents. The board has also officially named the district Timpanogos School District and established draft vision and value statements. Board members have toured all 29 school facilities and several auxiliary buildings to assess capital needs and explore potential shared service agreements for transportation and maintenance.

The district is preparing to launch a comprehensive "North to South" boundary study, which the board aims to make more transparent and inclusive than state-mandated minimums. The study will utilize advanced data tools to redraw boundaries while considering high school feeder configurations. Council Member Millett emphasized that residents without children in the

school system feel like overlooked stakeholders. The board agreed, noting that public education serves the entire community. To improve outreach, the board plans to collaborate with the cities of Orem, Lindon, and Vineyard to include a "School District Corner" in city newsletters and social media feeds.

Superintendent Jensen and President Lyman detailed a "rolling transition" plan to handle the official handoff on July 1, 2027. To mitigate financial constraints, the district will use a staggering schedule for staff hired internally from ASD. Starting in July 2026, these employees will dedicate one day a week to Timpanogos work while ASD continues to pay their full salaries. This commitment will increase quarterly until the final transition. The transition is currently funded at \$60 per student annually (approx. \$1.39 million). While the board expressed some concern over legislative funding equity, they noted that the state has provided early access to \$10 million from their eventual capital fund balance to cover immediate infrastructure needs.

Mr. Sundberg provided a data-heavy overview of the district's current and future state. Current enrollment is 23,325 students across 31 facilities (4 high schools, 5 junior highs, 20 elementaries, and 2 special schools). Projections suggest a decline to 20,000 students by 2030, driven by declining birth rates and the high cost of housing for young families. Timpanogos serves a more diverse and economically challenged population compared to neighboring split-off districts (Lake Mountain and Aspen Peaks). Approximately 30.5% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch, and 15.5% are multi-language learners. Special education (SPED) rates remain consistent with state averages at 12%.

City Manager Bybee and Mayor McCandless reiterated the city's commitment to a strong partnership. The city interacts with schools through various touchpoints, including: crossing guards, School Resource Officers (SROs), traffic coordination and "Safe Routes to School" programs and shared use of Parks and Recreation facilities for student events.

Overall Projected Financial Update Discussion

Business Administrator Sundberg presented an estimated financial update based on recent Alpine School District (ASD) data. He noted that if the Timpanogos School District had operated independently in FY2025, it would have faced a \$19 million deficit on a total budget of approximately \$225 million.

Mr. Sundberg outlined a strategy to mitigate this gap using a combination of revenue increases and expense reductions: ASD currently utilizes a building fund created through "increments" in the capital fund (generating about \$60 million annually for ASD). For Timpanogos, these increments represent roughly \$20 to \$22 million annually. The district could choose to move these capital increments into the general operations fund to offset the \$19 million deficit. However, doing so would leave the district with no dedicated building fund for future capital projects, new school construction, or lease revenue bond payments. A final analysis of the current fiscal year will be conducted this fall once ASD closes its books. By spring 2027, the board will finalize the FY2028 budget, which may involve "Truth in Taxation" hearings to potentially raise operational taxes.

A significant portion of the discussion centered on the district's role in Redevelopment Agencies (RDAs) and Housing and Transit Reinvestment Zones (HRCs), particularly in Vineyard. Because the Timpanogos School District is not yet a formal taxing entity, it currently lacks official representation on these boards. Superintendent Jensen noted that the board is currently focused on information gathering to ensure they are "at the table" once they gain taxing authority. Council Members Muhlestein and Millett expressed concern over lost revenue in Vineyard RDAs due to recent state legislation that allowed for RDA extensions without a vote. They urged the new school board to be aggressive in negotiating these terms to recapture lost revenue for students. Council Member Millett clarified that Orem has historically avoided offering tax increment deferrals (like HRCs or TIFs) because they prioritize keeping property tax revenue within the school system to prevent placing a higher tax burden on residents.

Council Member Millett proposed a potential legislative partnership for the upcoming session regarding the Primary Residential Exemption. Currently, all primary residences, including high-density apartments owned by large investment entities, receive a 45% property tax exemption. Proposed Shift: Millett argued that this exemption was increased from 30% to 45% during the Great Recession but has failed to improve housing affordability, instead providing a massive tax break to corporate landlords. She suggested working with state legislators to scale back this exemption to the historical 30% level. Capturing that additional 15% in taxable value could provide a substantial revenue boost to the school district without penalizing traditional homeowners, as it would target high-density commercial residential units that heavily utilize school services.

Timpanogos School District (TSD) Update on Sharon School Site Discussion

Mr. Hilton discussed the official move to repurpose the Sharon Elementary school site as a dedicated center for specialized education and transition services. This decision is a cornerstone of the new district's effort to provide localized, high-quality support for students with diverse needs.

Beginning in August, the Sharon site will be renovated and opened under the direction of Alpine School District as part of the transition agreement. The facility will house two distinct programs currently served by Dan Peterson and ATEC (Alpine Transition Education Center) in American Fork. Specialized K-12 School modeled after the Dan Peterson program, serves students with severe physical and cognitive disabilities. Transition Program (18–22 Years) focuses on "life skills," this program helps young adults transition into community life. The site is uniquely suited for this because it includes (or will be upgraded to include) full kitchens and laundry facilities, allowing students to practice independent living in an apartment-like setting.

The board has already hired experienced principals for these programs: Melanie Adams (formerly of Lakeridge) and Dan Heaps (formerly of Horizon). While the Sharon site is an excellent interim solution funded by a \$10 million capital "pre-load," the board views this as a temporary 3-to-5-year step before building a permanent, custom-designed facility.

The board clarified the distinctions between the two student populations sharing the building. The K-12 specialized school serves approximately 100 students with high-intensity medical and cognitive needs. In contrast, the Transition (T-Tech) program serves about 125–150 students who are higher-functioning but require state-mandated educational services until age 22. By housing these programs adjacent to one another, the district aims to facilitate smoother transitions and allow for shared resources, such as sensory equipment and specialized transportation.

Council Member Millett raised the issue of the Giant Steps program, a specialized autism preschool currently managed by Wasatch Mental Health. While Wasatch Mental Health provides the program funding and staff, the school district provides the physical space and specialized therapists (OT/Speech). Ms. Millett highlighted the critical need for more space, noting that the waiting list is so long that many children "age out" before they can receive the early intervention that is proven to reduce the need for high-intensity services later in life. The board expressed openness to exploring community partnerships to expand this program. There was specific discussion about whether unused classroom space at the new Sharon site could be dedicated to Giant Steps to allow children to stay in their neighborhood schools rather than commuting to "magnet" locations.

A core priority for both the Transition and Specialized schools is community integration. The board noted that Sharon's location in Orem offers great opportunities for students to engage in local job coaching at nearby businesses. This "life skills" focus ensures that students graduating at age 22 are prepared to contribute to society and live as independently as possible.

UTA Options on 400 East (Sharon Site - Transition School) Discussion

Mr. Sundberg and board members noted that while the Sharon building has aging systems that are expensive to maintain, rushing into a new build would require committing to a site within an 18-month construction window. By utilizing the Sharon site as an interim solution, the district buys time to integrate specialized education into a broader master plan. This delay allows the board to evaluate whether the specialized K-12 school and the 18–22 transition program should remain together or be placed in closer proximity to general education schools to foster greater student inclusion and interaction.

Despite the temporary nature of the Sharon site, the board expressed a commitment to creating a "Blue Ribbon" facility in the future. Members discussed the potential inclusion of specialized amenities, such as a therapy pool, which—while currently cost-prohibitive for a temporary site—would be a priority for a permanent facility to serve students with severe physical disabilities. Council Member Millett noted that neighboring districts like Canyons and Jordan have seen significant community donations for similar projects, suggesting that Orem and the surrounding communities would likely provide strong philanthropic support for a premier special education center.

The discussion transitioned to the logistical necessity of public transit for students in the transition program (ATEC/T-Tech). Superintendent Jensen reported that his operations and

logistics lead, Dave Mauer, has initiated talks with the Utah Transit Authority (UTA) to establish or improve service along the 400 East corridor specifically to serve the Sharon site. Many students in the 18–22-year-old demographic rely on public transportation to attend school and reach community job sites.

Superintendent Jensen sought the City of Orem's assistance in navigating UTA's bureaucracy, noting that initial coordination had been difficult. City Manager Bybee responded by offering direct contact information for UTA leadership, affirming that the new UTA director is eager to coordinate more closely with municipalities. Both bodies agreed that ensuring reliable transit is essential for the success of the transition program and the independence of its students.

Other Discussions: Communication & Intergovernmental Coordination, Legislative & Policy Advocacy and Economic Development Connections

The final portion of the interlocal meeting between the Orem City Council and the Timpanogos School District (TSD) board focused on establishing long-term communication structures, addressing critical transportation safety concerns, and identifying legislative and community priorities.

The bodies discussed how to maintain a consistent partnership as the district builds its own identity. Staff suggested a rotating schedule where the TSD board meets with one of its four member cities each month, resulting in three formal meetings with Orem per year. However, given Orem's size and the volume of shared concerns, there was an openness to meeting more frequently—potentially quarterly or through smaller three-on-three liaison groups. Orem City Manager Bybee noted that while board-level meetings are essential for policy, monthly staff-level meetings between city directors and the district's facilities and operations teams will continue to handle day-to-day "nuts and bolts" issues, such as school entryway safety and infrastructure repairs.

A primary point of concern for the Orem City Council was the potential elimination of junior high bus routes for students living within 1.2 miles of their schools. Council Member Millett emphasized that while state law does not mandate funding for "safety routes," Orem's geography—characterized by high-traffic state arterials like State Street, University Parkway, and 800 North—makes walking hazardous for students. The city currently faces significant costs for safety infrastructure, such as Hawk signals (costing approximately \$280,000 each) and crossing guards. The board acknowledged the difficulty of defining "safe route exceptions" and proposed using a measurable rubric or matrix to negotiate these needs with the other splitting districts, ensuring that student safety remains a shared priority.

Both entities identified "local control" as a unifying legislative priority. TSD board members noted that the Joint Legislative Committee (JLC) would soon be setting goals for the upcoming session. The board and Council agreed to meet before the legislative session begins to align on issues such as property tax exemptions and school funding. The Council expressed a strong desire to support the district in future General Obligation (GO) bonds, noting that GO bonds provide cheaper funding and better community transparency than lease revenue bonds.

There was a commitment to market future bonds as a joint effort between the four cities and the school district to foster broad community support.

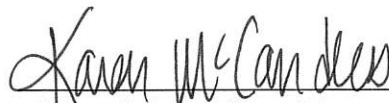
Board President Lyman shared that the district's next phase of hiring includes a combined Foundation and Communications Director. This role will be tasked with building relationships with local businesses for sponsorships and community support. The division of assets from the Alpine Foundation is currently underway, with undesignated funds being split by student percentage and school-specific donations remaining with those respective campuses. Orem offered to coordinate these efforts with their own new Economic Development Director once that position is filled.

In response to a high-level question about the district's future, Superintendent Jensen and board members expressed confidence and optimism. They noted that the hiring of their "Super Six" leadership team and the recruitment of respected local principals has significantly reduced transitional anxieties. Board members also noted that emerging issues like Artificial Intelligence (AI) are on their radar, with a goal of ensuring the district remains responsive to the changing world of its students. The meeting ended with the TSD board sharing a QR code for a "Vision and Values" survey, inviting the Council and the community to provide feedback on the district's foundational principles. Mayor McCandless concluded the meeting by reaffirming the city's role as a collaborative partner in the district's success.

ADJOURN

(These minutes were created with the help of AI)

PASSED and APPROVED on this 28th day of April 2026.



Karen McCandless, Mayor

ATTEST:



Teresa McKittrick, City Recorder



COUNCIL MEMBER

AYE NAY ABSTAIN ABSENT

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

