**CLINTON CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES**

**Date: May 12, 2026**

**Time: 6:00 PM**

**Location: 2267 N 1500 W, Clinton, UT 84015**

**Staff present:**

City Manager Trevor Cahoon, Finance Director Cory Christensen, Public Works Director David Williams, Parks & Recreation Director Brooke Mitchell, Community Development Director Peter Matson, Fire Chief Jason Poulsen, Police Chief Shawn Stoker, Communications Katie Strobehn, Deputy Recorder Amy Durrans, Recorder Lisa Titensor

**Attendees:** Greg Allen

**Elected Officials:**

**Mayor:** Marie Dougherty

**Councilmembers:** Spencer Arave, Jennifer Christensen, Chris Danson, Adam Larsen, and Dane Searle

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Dougherty called the work session to order at 6:00 PM.

**DISCUSSION**

**Fiscal Year 2027 Tentative Budget Discussion**

Mayor Dougherty explained that she views the budget process as an ongoing year-round discussion rather than a one-time annual event. She stated the Council would continue evaluating priorities and making adjustments through budget amendments and future discussions as needed. She referenced upcoming conversations regarding streets funding, the JUB street analysis, police department needs, and the overall vision for City operations and services.

**Property Tax and Public Safety Funding Discussion**

The Council discussed the concept of separating or earmarking portions of property tax revenue specifically for public safety services, including police and fire operations.

City Manager Trevor Cahoon explained that public safety represents the largest strain on the City's General Fund and stated staff had explored the possibility of identifying public safety funding separately on tax notices or internally earmarking property tax revenue for those purposes. He explained staff had received conflicting guidance from the State Tax Commission and other tax advisors regarding whether municipalities legally have authority to create separate public safety levy categories.

Mr. Cahoon stated the concept could help establish benchmarks and provide transparency regarding how property tax revenues support police and fire services. He further explained that current General Fund allocations are approximately:

- 28.3% for Police Services
- 21.3% for Fire Services
- 50.4% for remaining General Fund operations

Mayor Dougherty expressed concern that breaking out separate public safety tax lines on tax notices could create confusion among residents by making it seem that the City is adding new taxes and potentially make tax increases appear significantly larger percentage-wise, even when the actual dollar amount remained the same. She also expressed concern regarding long-term restrictions that could accompany separate levies.

Councilmember Jennifer Christensen stated she appreciated the transparency associated with separating public safety funding and felt it would help residents better understand where property tax revenue is spent. She stated residents often question how tax revenues are used and believed clearer identification of police and fire funding could improve public understanding.

Councilmember Adam Larsen agreed that transparency is important and stated that when departmental costs increase significantly, the public should understand why those increases are occurring. He stated the City should be prepared to openly explain the need for increases when justified.

Councilmember Spencer Arave expressed support for improving communication and public education regarding property taxes and stated many residents do not fully understand the breakdown of taxing entities on their tax notices.

Councilmember Christensen further stated that regardless of whether residents closely examine tax notices, the City has a responsibility to present information as clearly and transparently as possible.

Staff discussed how residents frequently believe the City raises taxes every year, despite multiple taxing entities contributing to property tax changes.

After discussion, the Council generally supported continuing to research the legal feasibility of separate public safety tax categories while also considering internal earmarking methods for budgeting and public communication purposes. Staff indicated the issue would likely require additional review and future discussion.

**Employee Wage and Compensation Discussion**

The Council next discussed employee compensation, including Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA), merit increases, executive pay adjustments, salary ranges, and long-term sustainability of personnel costs.

Mayor Dougherty stated personnel costs represent the City's largest ongoing financial obligation and one of the most significant long-term budget concerns. She explained that the tentative budget currently included approximately $440,000 from fund balance to cover increased personnel costs and acknowledged that using fund balance for recurring operational expenses is not sustainable long term.

The Council reviewed market salary comparison information generated through CompServe data, which compares compensation ranges among municipalities. Mayor Dougherty explained concerns regarding the inclusion of larger cities such as Layton and Ogden in compensation comparisons because those cities have significantly larger populations and different operational structures.

Mayor Dougherty stated she believed comparisons should focus more heavily on similarly sized communities within Davis and Weber Counties. She noted that removing Layton and Ogden from the comparison data reduced salary range averages to a more financially manageable level for Clinton City.

Councilmembers discussed several factors impacting wage comparisons, including:

- Population differences
- Sales tax revenue disparities
- Service levels provided by various cities
- Total compensation packages and benefits
- Recruitment and retention challenges
- Cost of employee training and certifications
- Competitive labor markets, particularly in public safety

Mr. Cahoon explained that public safety positions currently operate in a highly competitive employee-driven market where surrounding cities regularly increase compensation to recruit and retain qualified personnel.

Councilmember Jennifer Christensen asked whether data existed comparing Clinton's current total compensation levels to surrounding communities. Staff confirmed that Clinton's compensation levels generally remain below surrounding market averages.

The Council reviewed examples showing some Clinton salary ranges and actual compensation levels falling significantly below surrounding market averages.

Discussion included the City's previous step-based pay system and the transition toward a more performance-based merit system. Mr. Cahoon explained that the City no longer publishes formal step increases and has begun implementing merit-based evaluations more consistently. Staff reported that approximately twelve employees did not receive full merit increases during the current evaluation cycle.

Councilmember Danson stated that compensation systems should include measurable criteria for determining where employees fall within established salary ranges. He emphasized the importance of having objective standards tied to tenure, performance, or merit.

Mayor Dougherty acknowledged the difficulty of balancing competitive compensation with the City's limited long-term financial capacity.

Councilmember Christensen stated that public safety positions should remain a high priority because of the importance of police and fire services to community safety. She suggested the City may need to focus compensation adjustments first in departments experiencing the greatest recruitment and retention challenges.

Staff discussed the difficulty of competing with surrounding cities offering significantly higher compensation packages and noted that some communities have adopted aggressive compensation policies that later proved financially unsustainable.

The Council also discussed the relationship between sales tax revenues and compensation capabilities. Staff noted that many surrounding cities with higher compensation levels benefit from stronger sales tax bases and greater overall revenues.

Councilmember Christensen stated that long-term solutions would likely require additional commercial development and revenue growth to strengthen the City's financial position.

Mayor Dougherty reiterated that the City must determine a sustainable balance between maintaining competitive compensation and responsibly managing long-term financial obligations.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 pm.

***Dated this 12th day of May 2026***
***/s/Lisa Titensor, Clinton City Recorder***