DEPARTMENT of PUBLIC LANDS
Parks, Natural Lands, Urban Forestry, and Trails Advisory Board Meeting
Steward, Advocate, Activate
May 7, 2026

Join in person: Public Lands Administrative Building: 1965 W 500 S., Salt Lake City, UT 84104, Upstairs Parks Training Room

Join Zoom meeting:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3703674458?pwd=xigAA5545gKVfbjuBUjQhpOPQtUb20.1
Meeting ID: 370 367 4458
Passcode: 133477

May Approved Minutes

Board Member in attendance: Kerri Nakamura, Ginger Cannon, Aaron Wiley, Sarah Foran, Meridith Benally, Steve Bloch, Melanie Perhson

City Employees in attendance: Kim Shelley, Public Lands Director, Tyler Murdock, Deputy Director, Maria Romero, Executive Assistant | Board Manager

I. **Call to Order, Introductions, and Welcome (5:00 pm) (digital content, Kerri)**

II. **Approval of Meeting Minutes (5:05 pm)**
  a. Minutes from April 2, 2026

  A motion to approve and adopt the Thursday, April 2nd, meeting minutes for the Parks, The Natural Lands, Urban Forestry, and Trails Advisory Board was made by a Board Member, Ginger Cannon. The motion was seconded by Board Member Aaron Wiley. The vote passed unanimously, with the Board Members present to approve and adopt minutes from Thursday, April 2nd, Advisory Board meeting.

III. **Public Comment (5:10 pm)**
  a. Verbal comments are limited to no more than 3 minutes; 15 minutes total. Written comments are welcome.

b. Board meetings are intended to be a place for people to feel safe and comfortable in participating in their government. A respectful and safe environment allows Board meetings to be conducted in an orderly, efficient, effective, and dignified fashion, free from distraction, intimidation, and threats to safety. We welcome everyone and ask all meeting participants to keep comments free of discriminatory language.

Tom Green, Constituent provided the following public comments
I'm Tom Green. I live over on 736 South 500 East, by the RT as well.
I'm here representing the youth baseball, and so I don't want to get it all emotional and talk about savings, so I'm going to talk about money first.
The Cal Rivkins are up to 12 years old. That is the T-ball, the machine pitch, the coach pitch, and they have 3 little empires, Central City, the Avenues, and Rose Park.
And those should not be messed with. What they're doing is awesome.
However, what happens is, when they go up to the next level for Cal Ripken to Babe Ruth.
The money doesn't work anymore.
So, you lose out on the girls' fast pitch softball, you lose out on the ADA Buddy Ball, you lose out on our boys' baseball.
And so, Aaron has been working with our school superintendent, Elizabeth Grant, and Chief Redd, they want to bring back the Police Athletic League.
I guess Tim Cosgrove from the mayor's office is friends with the Wall of the Wasatch, Rwanda, and he's a soccer guy, and they said, if we just had the police athletically.
We can aggregate the money back through 501c3. Now, I'm here for baseball.
That's the structural thing that'll take care of itself.
Last year, we sent down a letter from the high school saying, if you have these kids playing on the field.
If you have them playing on a field that's illegal, that doesn't meet the criteria in the rulebook, then you're open to a lawsuit. And sure as hell, somebody ran into the fence this year, knocked their eye out, broke their orbital socket.
Now they're interested in doing the fields.
If you have them playing on a field that's illegal, that doesn't meet the criteria in the rulebook, then you're open to a lawsuit. And sure as hell, somebody ran into the fence this year, knocked their eye out, broke their orbital socket.
Now they're interested in doing the fields.
So what I'm here to tell you is, not every field is competitive, but we have two fields that are at Herman, France.

The one is the softball field for the girls. The other one is the hardball field. All they need are warning tracks, and what that is is 10% aggregate. So when your metal cleats or your cleats hit it, you hear the crunch.
Now, I brought show and tell. This is the little... any field made with dirt.
You play with a softball. All the coaches want to be hardball players. Do you hear the difference? You put a little 8-year-old, 10-year-old in front of the back.
With no brass to stop it.
It should be child abuse, and there should be a ticket involved. So, we cannot let
The boys play hardball on the wrong field. We want the finest fields forever.
And with that, I'll let you, if there's questions or any of that, I'm sure my previous design.
That was just the money, that wasn't the state of the room.
Yep, 13 seconds. Yeah, yeah, you've got a problem.
These are all 40 foot to the backstop. We have a bunch of people from Rocky Mountain Baseball that have dug up our home plates to fit an 80-foot instead of 90-foot or 70-foot, and they've moved home plate back to the fence. So now you have bigger athletic kids closer to the fence.
So, Rocky Mountain Baseball and Pony League specifically, we cannot have it without the right field. We don't have that field.
Thank you. Thank you very much for your input. I feel better. Good.

Elliot, Constituent provided the following public comment
my name is Elliot.
appeared to advocate that the city reclaim the water trail at 1700 South.
For a long time, there were two sand ramps on the Jordan River. One was there, which is private.
And one was in Utah County.
I was involved with this board when the water trail, or when the bike path.
Jordan River Water Trail, the water flight path was completed.
But also, when EFIS is shifted to the barfield.
Salt Lake City was fast on the move at that time, and led the way in terms of promoting the water trail.
Well, with the development of the
water trail, or the water park at 17 South.
access to 1700 South Exchange Club Marina is way
And it hasn't been accessible, hasn't been used, is often off limits, people park there, shouldn't be there. I ask that you reclaim that site and promote the water trail in the city. It's one of your few true natural amenities that runs for the length of your town.
As you know, if the boundary is about 24 south, 70 meters south is as far south as you can get on the river.

The Jordan River through Salt Lake City, far and away, the most scenic stretch of the river.
Where it's... By not promoting that access point.
protecting it. It's gonna go away.
So, with that, I encourage you to consider your financial options for the Great Plan side.

IV. Director's Report (5:25 pm)

a. Summary of current high-priority department items – Kim Shelley

Kim Shelley provided a high-level update on the following items: The Special Events Mailer is delayed and will now be mailed in early June, and events are being shared with constituents through Public Lands Social Media Channels.

Kerri Nakamura commented that she sees the social media posts, but also received a mailer for Yoga at the Park, and asked whether there are targeted mailers. Kim Shelley responded with yes.

Aaron Wiley asked if signs can be placed at parks to inform visitors about upcoming events. Kim Shelley mentioned she is not aware of this strategy but can discuss it with the Communications team.

Kim Shelley shared the success of the Vision Study at Liberty Park, Kim added that Council Member Carlson attended.

Kim added that Public Lands was featured in a local podcast, including a reminder for board members to also visit the Public Lands Podcast.

Kim Shelley reminded the group of the 2027 Budget release from the mayor. Reminded the group that Ben Luuedtke, Deputy Chief Financial Officer, is here to present on the proposed budget. She added that she has some details of the Public Lands portion of the budget.

Kim Shelley stated that the department's proposal includes an overall 4% reduction to its budget, which the department plans to absorb internally. She explained that, while prioritizing core services, the mayor had requested that budget reductions during this difficult fiscal year not negatively affect those essential services.

Kim Shelley noted that the department is adding two new positions—one in residential lands and one in communications—but emphasized that these additions will be budget neutral because seasonal hours are being consolidated to cover the costs.

She also said the department is proposing to eliminate winter lighting at Pioneer Park, a reduction of approximately $72,000 from the budget. Additional cuts include reductions in professional services, contracting, and other associated costs. Employee travel and training will also be limited, with the department seeking lower-cost opportunities for continued staff development.

According to Shelley, the department is also slightly reducing its security contract in parks. She said the change is not expected to significantly impact residents because of the department's strong partnership with the Salt Lake City Police Department and improvements made to the contract.

Kim Shelley described the most difficult aspect of the budget as the reduction of seasonal hours within the parks division and the potential layoff of two positions in the Park Ranger program. While expressing strong support for the program and the services it provides to the city, she explained that the department was forced to evaluate which services were essential versus desirable. As a result, reductions to the Park Ranger program and seasonal staffing were proposed to the mayor and carried forward in the recommended budget.

Kim Shelley added that affected employees have been notified and that the department is working to help them find placements within the city that align with their interests and skills. Shelley concluded by acknowledging the somber atmosphere within the department, particularly among staff connected to the Park Ranger program.

Austin Whitehead asked whether Kim Shelley could clarify the percentage of the budget cut to Public Lands. Kim Shelley mentioned there is a 4% reduction.

Kerri Nakamura asked when Public Lands will be presenting at the Working Council Meeting. Kim Shelley responded on May 21st that the time of the presentation is currently undetermined.

Aaron Wiley asked why Public Lands had been requested to reduce its budget. Kim Shelley responded that there can be many responses, but Public Lands is part of the City and needs to make reductions as the city is doing so as well. Parks Division and Urban Forestry received the largest cut in operations, added Kim Shelley.

V. Staff Presentations, Updates & Discussions (5:35 pm)

a. Mayor's Office Budget 101 Presentation – Benjamin Luedtke, Deputy Chief Financial Officer

Board Members and staff engaged in a round of introductions. Ben Luedtke passed around the Capital Improvement Program books.

Ben Luedtke began his presentation by sharing the total City budget 2 billion.

Ben Luedtke began by demonstrating the FY 2027 Budget Fund Types: General Fund, Capital Improvement Fund, Enterprise Fund, and Internal Service Fund.

Ben shared the details of the General Fund expenditures totaling $498,863,053 a increase of 1.57%. He added that in the Non-Departmental portion, there are expenses such as debt services for bond, SLC County Animal Services, and Legal Defenders Association. He mentioned that Public Lands is 7% of the General Fund.

Ginger Cannon asked whether the Golf is in the Enterprise Fund, Ben Luedtke responded that Golf is in the Enterprise Fund.

Kerri Nakamura asked what the Golf Number is? Ben Luedtke responded that he does not know the number at the top of his head but referred to the Mayor's Recommended Budget Book for the Golf number.

Aaron Wiley commented that the non-departmental percentage of 26% is comparable to the Police Department of 28%. Aaron asked whether reductions had happened in the non-departmental area? Aaron asked whether reductions happened in all budget areas or only in select departments like Public Lands. Ben Luedtke responded that every department, including non-departmental, has cuts and efficiencies. Ben added that there was not a blanket percentage of reductions; there were surgical reductions in each department. This was done in collaboration with departments and the mayor.

Ben shared examples of city equipment, such as firefighter gear, asphalt, and street traffic signals have had significant cost increases due to inflation. Ben mentioned efficiencies and cuts to the city budget are a total of $13 million across all general fund departments.

Ben added that some departments have more efficiencies and actions, some savings in the current fiscal year, where $6,000 in vacancy savings, with another $3 million projected next year. Describing a vacancy saving as when a position is left unfilled longer. He added that due to record revenue for Golf, there is a $1.3 million reduction in the General Fund transfer.

Kerri Nakamura asked that with the reduction, what the new total transfer to Golf. Ben clarified that the Enterprise Fund Department generate their own revenue, but that does not cover all of its costs. Ben added that the Golf Division is an exception and receives a transfer from the General Fund. Kerri Nakamura asked if Golf transfers to the administrative services fees. Ben responded that Golf pays for IT Services. Kerri asked if the Council and the Mayor's office also pay for services. Aaron Wiley asked whether there is a city price for services. Ben responded that it is the same price across the board. Austin Whitehead asked whether those admin costs are reflected in the General Fund graph. Ben responded that those will show in the admin fee section that is listed under every department.

Ben Luedtke shared that the Salt Lake City Police Department has a million dollars less in overtime in the current fiscal year. This is attributed to Chief Brian Redd's effort in staffing the department. These overtime reductions will follow for the next budget. Ben also shared that many low-use programs are proposed to be eliminated. Aaron Wiley asked if those program reductions include those in the Park Division. Ben responded that no programs come to mind at the moment, specific to the Parks Division.

Ben Luedtke added that in addition to the $13 million of efficiencies and cuts, there is also a $13.5 million property tax increase that is proposed in the annual budget. He noted that the typical house value in Salt Lake City averages in value around $624,000; a typical household will receive approximately $9.87 more in property taxes. Ben shared a table of the breakdown of the allocated tax increase, adding that most of the percentage goes to Capital Improvement Projects.

Kerri Nakamura asked whether the portion of funding allocated to capital improvements, despite being supported by ongoing revenue, will remain a long-term commitment after the initial projects are completed. Kerri noted that capital improvements are typically one-time expenses and raised concern that parks have historically had to compete annually for capital dollars to maintain assets like playground equipment. Kerri Nakamura asked for clarification on whether the city plans to sustain this level of investment in the capital improvement program moving forward. Ben responded that it would be up to future elected officials, each fiscal year, to make that determination in the budget processes. Kerri Nakamura then asked if there was a policy goal with the increased property tax? Ben referred to a mayor's budget presentation during a council meeting, where if the tax increase did not happen, there was a choice for mass lay-offs or not continuing the

Capital Improvement Project. Kerri Nakamura reiterated the importance of the longevity of the tax proposal to ensure Public Lands can have a sustained investment from the property tax increase.

Ginger Cannon discussed the issue of ADA Public Lands projects and the rescue program. She questioned whether these investments would support the playground. Ginger asked Ben if he could provide more information about the environment and energy vision. Ben shared that the Sustainability department comprises Waste and Recycling Operations and the Energy and Environment programs, adding the local food assistance and air quality incentives. Ginger asked whether this percentage is going towards programs. Ben responded that it is for programs, followed by a diagram of lower and higher property value tax increase approximations. Ben then moved towards Commercial Property Tax increases.

Melanie Perhson asked whether rental properties will receive a tax increase. Ben responded that there is a variety of factors that can change the response, examples he shared were whether the rental properties are low-income, non-profit, etc.

Ben shared a diagram on taxing entities, but reminded the group the proposed increase only applies to the City.

Ben moved to the Public Utilities rate increases, and information about sewer and water rate increases was shared on the diagram. Kerri Nakamura asked what percentage increase is represented on the diagram. Ben responded that the diagram represents last year and this years increases. Austin Whitehead commented that utilities increase when tiered. Ben responded that increases are tiered this year as well, and increases are higher for higher water users, sending the signal that water rates are increasing.

Aaron Wiley commented that his water utility bill has become his most expensive bill. Is the City experiencing the same issue? Ben responded that the City pays for Utilities, adding that the Parks Division and Golf Division are paying for water to their assets. Aaron Wiley asked whether it is easy to explain the increases in detail. Ben explained that there is invisible infrastructure, explaining that there are various canyon water treatment plants built in the 1950's, and those treatment plants are nearing their expiration date. These increases are meant to aid in extending the useful life of those water treatment plants. Explaining that in the coming years, water treatment plants will need to be rebuilt, one of those rebuilds is the City Creek Canyon, which is only one of four. The cost is not just for the water but the system as a whole, Ben added. Aaron Wiley asked whether the Capitol

Improvement Project Funds go towards those water treatment plants. Ben referred to the Capital Improvement project books. Kerri Nakamura added that General Fund funds Capital Improvement Projects, Ben responded that there is a section for Public Utilities Capital Investment Projects. Kerri Nakamura added that Property Tax increases do not go towards water capital improvement projects. Ben responded that her comment was correct, the water rate increases fund that. Ben finished the slide with sharing more information about how to ask more questions and Public Utilities contact information.

Ben Luedtke shared information about the City water conservation program manager. The city is offering water checks for free for Salt Lake City residents' homes, along with drought-tolerant grass seed for those interested.

Ben Luedtke shared increases in city utilities such as stormwater, street lighting, waste, and recycling.

Ben Luedtke followed with a graphic of the Budget timeline, along with information about important hearings. Ben shared a QR code to find the documents outlined during the presentation.

b. Constituent Acquisition Recommendation for Green Space at Hawthorne Elementary - Giridhar Thiagarajan, SLC Constituent

Constituent Giri began the presentations by providing background on the recent closure of Hawthorn Elementary, and their proposal for the City to acquire the green space to convert into a public space.

Constituent Jayanthi began her presentation by sharing that the Hawthorn Elementary Property has vegetation and a playground, adding the proximity to residents and adding this green space to the options for residents. Jayanthi added that this would be a great opportunity for people to keep a place that contains memories. She added that the green space is ready to be converted into a public space. Jayanthi hoped the board could add this acquisition to a future agenda.

Giri began his presentation by sharing a photograph of the tree planting day at Hawthorn Elementary 2 years before closing. He added that $25,000 was raised for trees as the grounds were originally bare. He added that as of the day of presentation, 18 trees are dead, as watering has stopped for that property after the closure. Giri added that the community has met with the school to water the trees; however, that outcome has been unsuccessful. Community organizing has happened to propose that the green space be converted into public space. Giri suggested the board read an article about his proposal. Giri added that the City index map shows that this neighborhood is one of the hottest. Giri added that as part of a community organization, this proposal was taken to the Liberty Wells Community Council, which passed a resolution to support the proposal. Giri closed his presentation by asking the board to consider the proposal.

Kerri Nakamura asked Kim Shelley whether Urban Forestry can connect with the school district to learn more of why the district made the decision to stop watering the trees. Kim responded that she would work on a response.

Board Member Aaron Wiley mentioned there are closures in the westside for elementary schools. Aaron asked what kinds of actions the board can take. Kim Shelley responded that a letter of support can help.

Melanie Perhson commented on whether this letter of support can extend the proposal to other schools that have closed.

Aaron Wiley added that the west side community has considered turning those schools into community hubs, trade schools. Aaron added he has never considered the green space proposal to turn into Public Space, adding that community leagues would appreciate more access to those spaces.

Austin Whitehead added that by law, the city has the first right to the land if the school district decides to sell. He added that the idea to parcel the land could make it more affordable for the city to purchase it.

Board Member Sarah Foran asked whether the Hawthorn Elementary School Property was Salt Lake City Public Lands Property, and if so, Board Members responded that the property is owned by Salt Lake City School District.

Kim Shelley commented that there was an analysis put together by the Planning & Design team 2 years ago, based on all the information from the community that supports Hawthorn and other schools. This document can be brought back to the board at a future meeting.

Tyler Murdock commented that this document can be helpful for the board as it identifies the level of park service in every community where a school has closed. This document can play a role in the city's prioritization of the city's interest, this would help identify focus areas that have existing park-level service gaps.

Austin Whitehead commented that there are private school properties that have opened up. Austin asked whether this document only looks at public schools or includes private schools.

Kerri Nakamura commented that the fact that the green space is separated from the building makes this a unique opportunity. Giri commented that there is an increase in price if the city purchases the building as well. Melanie Perhson commented that after listening to the school council, once they sell the building, they can't get it back.

Ginger Cannon reminded the board that the board needs to facilitate research to learn the School District's plan for the property, and step back and review the strategy. Ginger added that it can help best support rather than support one party. Ginger added that not to forget the Hawthorn property has the new urban trail along 7th, and it connects to Liberty and Sugar House.

Kerri Nakamura commented that it is important for Urban Forestry to reach the school district with a response to watering the existing trees.

Tyler Murdock added that these spaces are functional and are open to the public. He added that Hawthorn has people using these spaces, in some ways, if these properties are sold and not in the Salt Lake City inventory, that could mean a reduction of public space.

Austin Whitehead asked whether the city can propose that Salt Lake City District retain ownership of the land, but Public Lands utilizes and maintains. Kim Shelley added that Rosewood Park is the inverse of that, as Public Lands has allowed West High School to use the field and improve it for 6 to 7 years.

Giri added that one of the comments in a recent community council meeting is that there is community worry that a large developer can turn the space into a parking lot.

Kerri Nakamura thanked the presenter for the information provided.

c. Donation Policy Update - Ashlyn Larsen, Partnership Coordinator **(5:50 pm)**

Ashlyn Larsen provided a brief summary of her background. Ashlyn began by sharing that this document was shared prior to the meeting by Maria Romero. She added that the department found the need to close the gap on donations to Public Lands and streamline those donations.

Tyler Murdock added that there are several city ordinances that guide donations; he added that there are gaps existing. The title of the document is Donation Process Standards and Procedure. This document guides donations but does not amend the existing ordinance.

Ginger Cannon responded that she has a number of questions, but she will do so in a written format. Ginger added that during the last presentation, the board's role was discussed in the process of donations. She added that, as presented, it outlines the role well, that donations over $50 thousand will come to the board, not to approve but to review. Ashlyn provided the example of the recent donation for the Peace Gardens.

Kerri Nakamura asked whether the board will have the opportunity to write letters of support or to write recommendations and considerations, and possibly a letter of no support when donations come to the board.

Tyler Murdock responded that the language for board authority is fluid because if the board had authority to vote to approve or deny a donation, it would require a change in ordinance. Tyler commented that if, hypothetically, the board did not support a donation over $50 thousand, then the letter would be sent to the mayor's office along with the proposed donation for the mayor to make a decision.

Ginger Cannon commented that she has format recommendations.

Meridith Perhson asked whether there is an opportunity to write a section on the funding process for the advisory board. Kerri Nakamura mentioned that the donation policy does not support a funding stream for the board.

Austin Whitehead asked whether this process outlines a system if a person donates money with no specification. Tyler Murdock and Ashlyn Larsen responded that it has not happened, but a good scenario to explore on allocation.

Aaron Wiley asked whether this policy streamlines smaller donations, such as slide replacements and benches. Tyler Murdock mentioned the policy focuses on donations such as trees and benches. The city has changed its process for smaller donations under $50 thousand; they do not require a donation agreement. Aaron asked, similarly to the naming of the scoreboard in Rosepark baseball field, does the policy speak to the naming of donated assets? Ashlyn responded naming of assets is a separate process.

Sarah Foran asked about the rejection of memorial proposal donations, she asked why there is not a blanket rejection of other types of donations. Tyler

Murdock responded that rejection language exists in the city ordinance and policy.

Ginger Cannon recommended breaking the policy into 2 section a small donation and over $50 thousand donation. Tyler Murdock agreed about a smaller section for small donations.

Ashlyn commented that the policy outlines common donations; this policy and procedure can be adjusted as needs change according to ordinance. Tyler Murdock responded their as pieces of the document that is being worked on and they welcomed the opportunity to present changes to the board in the future, he added the department is working on Donner Park, Memorial Tree Grove and other locations, he added donations for trees are strategically planned to ensure they are in the most optimal locations for example existing tree specific irrigation to ensure their growth and success. Ashlyn commented on the strategic placement of the donation of assets.

Ginger Cannon asked about the previous draft, where a section requires environmental review and cultural impact. Tyler Murdock mentioned there is a section in the planning review where it can be addressed. Ginger Cannon asked whether the donation agreement will include language about lifecycle and maintenance, vandalism, theft, and acts of god. Tyler Murdock responded that it is good feedback.

Sarah Foran asked whether land donations are part of the document, as she recalls a past conversation about whether donations of land to the city will be placed under the Public Lands Department inventory. Tyler Murdock responded during his time that 2 land donations have been made and were integrated into the Public Lands assets. He mentioned he does not recall the conversation Sarah Foran referred to, but there is a process for land donation to the city. Tyler responded that if a land donation occurs for the city, the agreement would specify where the asset is allocated.

Kerri Nakamura asked what is required from the board, Ashlyn responded that she welcomes receiving recommendations in writing.

Ashlyn shared 2 photos of separate memorial benches. She reported that the department has identified a vendor who will provide the city with high-quality benches.

Aaron Wiley asked the price of those benches. Ashlyn Larsen responded that the price is $2,500. Aaron Wiley asked about the price for installation. Tyler responded that it is difficult for the city to understand the internal pricing. But currently, Public Lands staff complete those installations, so no actual installation costs. Tyler added to incentivize donations and streamline the process, donors would just need to donate to the asset itself.

Aaron Wiley asked whether the donor needs to pay for cement for the bench. Tyler responded that the donor only needs to pay for the asset; the city covers labor and cement. Aaron asked if memorials can be slides or playground equipment. Tyler Murdock responded that at this time, this process is for memorializing benches and trees. Ginger Cannon congratulated the city on the new bench at donner park dedicated to a former City attorney who passed away. The board agreed to send edits and comments on the document Maria Romero will share on the Google Drive.

d. Foothills Update - Tyler Fonarow **(6:10 pm)**

Tyler Fonarow provided an update on recent discussions involving the Foothills Committee, City Council, and the Environmental Dispute Resolution Program (EDR), with the primary focus on the proposed Foothills Working Group and related management efforts.

Tyler Fonarow reviewed the history of the Foothills Trail System Plan, noting that the plan was adopted in 2020, followed by Phase 1 trail development and a subsequent evaluation period. In August 2024, City Council authorized staff to move forward with planning and design efforts. He explained that maps of the foothills illustrate the complexity of land ownership, which includes Salt Lake City, the U.S. Forest Service, the University of Utah, and Utah State Parks. Because of the multiple public landowners involved, he emphasized the need for coordinated management and collaboration. Following City Council direction in August 2024, the City engaged the University of Utah's Environmental Dispute Resolution Program (EDR) to assist with two efforts: development of the Foothills Management Partnership and recommendations for a community working group structure.

Tyler Fonarow explained that the management partnership consists of multiple land-managing agencies working collaboratively to establish a common vision, improve consistency in maintenance and management practices, and enhance the user experience across the foothills. The partnership meets bi-monthly, with the Public Lands Department serving as the lead coordinating agency.

Tyler Fonarow also discussed recommendations from the 2024 evaluation process, which proposed organizing future planning around geographic zones rather than property ownership boundaries. Seven management zones were identified to support a broader land management approach that extends beyond trail development alone.

Discussion then focused on the proposed Foothills Working Group. Mr. Fonarow noted that City Council had requested the creation of a community stakeholder group and that the PNUT Advisory Board had also previously requested formation of a Foothills Working Group to assist with planning and implementation efforts. He explained that EDR conducted an extensive situation assessment beginning in 2025, ultimately interviewing 47 stakeholders, including City Council members and PNUT representatives. The resulting report, released in February 2026, recommended that the Foothills Working Group be “situated within” the PNUT Advisory Board rather than formed directly by the Public Lands Department.

Tyler Fonarow summarized the ongoing discussions that occurred throughout spring 2026 among staff, the Foothills Committee, PNUT leadership, and City leadership regarding governance, bylaws, and communication with City Council. He noted that staff presented the EDR recommendation to City Council while emphasizing that PNUT would determine how the group should move forward as part of its advisory structure.

Tyler discussed the area regarding PNUT’s desired role in the working group, potential bylaw updates, expectations for participation, and how membership could best represent the foothills community.

Ginger Cannon asked for clarification on the current membership of the Foothills Committee.

Aaron Wiley summarized his understanding of the process, noting that PNUT had originally recommended that Salt Lake City create a working group, after which the City engaged the Environmental Dispute Resolution Program (EDR) to conduct stakeholder interviews and provide recommendations. He observed that EDR ultimately recommended situating the working group within the PNUT Advisory Board structure.

Kim Shelley clarified that the department was not prioritizing EDR’s recommendation over PNUT’s earlier recommendation, but rather considering all feedback and discussions holistically, including conversations with City leadership and staff.

Further discussion clarified the distinction between the Foothills Management Partnership and the proposed community working group.

Tyler Fonarow explained that the management partnership consists of the participating public landowners coordinating land management efforts, while the community working group would serve in an advisory and stakeholder capacity. He noted that the Mayor's Office and EDR both supported using the existing advisory board framework rather than creating a separate stakeholder body outside the City's established public engagement structure.

Austin Whitehead asked how the other landowners viewed the concept of a community advisory group, particularly given that PNUT represents Salt Lake City residents while the foothills involve multiple jurisdictions and stakeholders. Mr. Fonarow responded that the participating agencies generally supported Salt Lake City taking the lead on community engagement and advisory processes. He noted that agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and Utah State Parks primarily wanted to remain informed and involved in approval processes, while the University of Utah maintained a more direct interest due to its campus lands. Overall, the agencies supported the Public Lands Division serving as the coordinating partner and viewed PNUT as an appropriate mechanism for representing community perspectives.

Aaron Wiley also raised the importance of ensuring that a variety of voices, including Indigenous groups and other stakeholders, are heard during the process. Mr. Fonarow acknowledged that concern and noted that feedback from the EDR assessment reflected broad interest from many groups. However, he stated that creating a working group with dozens of representatives would be unmanageable, and the overall feedback indicated that stakeholders primarily wanted meaningful opportunities to be heard throughout the process.

Melanie Pershson expressed concern about volunteer capacity and whether PNUT members could realistically take on the additional workload associated with a working group. Mr. Fonarow agreed that capacity considerations are important and emphasized that staff would continue to lead and support the process rather than placing the burden solely on volunteer board members. He explained that the role of the working group would involve focused discussions related to planning efforts and management guidelines, with staff preparing materials, conducting public engagement, and managing the majority of the process work.

Tyler Fonarow described a potential workflow in which draft land use plans or management proposals would first be reviewed by the working group before being shared through broader public engagement processes such as Shape SLC. Public feedback would then be collected and brought back to the working group for further discussion and refinement. He emphasized that the process would remain collaborative between PNUT and City staff, with staff continuing to provide administrative and technical support while ensuring community voices are incorporated into decision-making.

Aaron Wiley asked whether there was a timeline for work that would need to be completed by the proposed working group during the remainder of the year. Tyler Fonarow responded that there was both flexibility and some pressure associated with the timeline. He explained that previous references to "summer 2026" construction assumed that multiple pieces of the planning and approval process would move forward successfully and in sequence. However, he emphasized that staff did not intend to rush the process, noting that after several years of evaluation there is community pressure to move forward with trails, but that maintaining public trust and following the agreed-upon process remained the highest priority.
Aaron Wiley noted that additional community input and working group involvement would likely become more important as planning efforts progressed. Tyler Fonarow explained that the East City Creek planning effort was nearing completion and that staff's goal was to finalize a clear and accessible draft document that could first be reviewed by the working group before broader public engagement. He stated that there is urgency in establishing more consistent management practices in the foothills due to ongoing misuse and unmanaged activity in some areas.

Ginger Cannon stated that the board already has established processes for committees, working groups, and outside participation through its bylaws. She emphasized the importance of clearly defining what the existing Foothills Committee is being asked to do and documenting its responsibilities for transparency and public understanding. Ginger Cannon expressed concern about repeating challenges experienced during prior foothills discussions several years earlier, when board members faced criticism and tension related to trail decisions. She noted that the board is in a stronger position now because of the current bylaws and committee structures, but stressed the importance of ensuring volunteers are not unfairly placed in difficult positions or blamed for broader land management decisions.

Kerri Nakamura added that concerns could also arise if community members feel their stakeholder perspectives were not included in the process.

Austin Whitehead agreed that clearly defined roles and responsibilities would be essential regardless of whether the group is referred to as a stakeholder group or working group. He noted concerns about both volunteer bandwidth and the challenge of meaningfully engaging a large number of stakeholders. Austin Whitehead emphasized that any future structure should make clear that the Foothills Committee or working group would not serve as the sole source of public engagement, and that Public Lands staff should continue broader outreach efforts with stakeholders and community groups beyond the advisory structure itself.

Kerri Nakamura also raised concerns about the administrative burden associated with coordinating a working group, noting that volunteers already face challenges managing schedules and communication alongside full-time jobs and other responsibilities. She suggested that additional administrative support would likely be necessary for a group of this scale and complexity.

Ginger Cannon stated that one alternative would be to formally redefine the scope of the existing Foothills Committee rather than creating a separate working group structure. Under that approach, outside experts and stakeholder voices could continue to participate through established public engagement processes.

Austin Whitehead suggested that a revised Foothills Committee structure could potentially fulfill the intended role of the community working group without assuming all of the responsibilities outlined in the EDR recommendations. He stated that balancing those expectations while protecting volunteer capacity appeared achievable with clearer definitions and structure.

Tyler Fonarow stated that staff's primary goal is to ensure that community voices are heard and meaningfully incorporated into the process, regardless of how the working group or committee structure is ultimately organized. Melanie Pershson noted that she appreciated the idea of having a designated staff point person actively engaged with the committee, as this would help provide consistency and support. She also stated that if the working group concept is intended to serve as a pilot for future efforts, it is important to clearly understand how the board's bylaws and existing structures for committees and working groups are intended to function, including clearly defining responsibilities and roles.

Ginger Cannon emphasized that committee charters are intended to provide that clarity by defining the scope, purpose, duration, and responsibilities of each committee. She noted that some committees are ongoing while others are created for specific projects or time-limited efforts.

Tyler Murdock agreed that having dedicated staff participation within committees adds value and helps establish a shared vision between staff and board members. He suggested that one of the next steps should be reviewing the existing Foothills Committee charter alongside the recommendations outlined by EDR to determine how closely they align. Tyler Murdock stated that the board should carefully evaluate whether the existing committee structure already fulfills much of the envisioned role of the working group and identify any areas where revisions may be needed. Tyler Murdock further stated that if the Foothills Committee intends to serve in this representative capacity, the committee could return to the board with a revised charter developed collaboratively with staff. Ginger Cannon noted that the bylaws could also be revised if needed and stated that several governance-related issues had emerged over recent months that may warrant further review.

Steve Bloch shared that members of the Foothills Committee, including Austin Whitehead, Meredith, and others, had already begun discussing a potential framework and approach. He stated that additional revisions and conversations with staff would continue before bringing recommendations back to the full board, likely in June. Steve Bloch noted that the goal is to identify a workable structure that allows meaningful stakeholder engagement while still enabling progress on foothills planning, restoration, and trail management efforts.

Steve Bloch also expressed concern that formally nesting a stakeholder group within the Foothills Committee could become administratively burdensome and potentially slow progress if not carefully structured. Tyler Murdock added that it will be important to clearly communicate the broader public engagement opportunities that exist outside the committee structure, including larger outreach processes such as Shape SLC. He noted that clarifying those additional engagement pathways would help address concerns about whether the committee alone is responsible for representing all stakeholder input.

VI. Board Discussion (6:30 pm)

a. Administrative Update – Maria Romero, Board Manager

Maria Romero updated the board on the recruitment tabling effort on Saturday, May 2nd, with Board Member Meridith Benally. The event was the Native American Youth Day. Maria reminded the board to pick up their apparel branded with the City logo. Maria updated on the current board vacancies and the efforts made for recruitment. Maria Romero updated the board that the new board's internal presentation requests outside of board meetings should come in the Google Form. Austin Whitehead, Aaron Wiley, and Sarah Foran asked clarifying questions.

b. Committee Reporting

i. Foothills: Steve Bloch, Board Member
ii. Communications: Sarah Foran, Board Member
iii. Urban Trails: Thomas Merrill, Board Member
No update from Urban Trails

iv. Jordan River Trail: Melanie Perhson, Board Member

Melanie Perhson briefed the board on the lapse of meetings and updates on work for the Jordan River. She mentioned she is working towards scheduling a meeting and working with Soren Simonsen, Executive Director for the Jordan River Commission. Board Member Aaron Wiley discussed calendar recommendations. Kerri Nakamura provided recommendations for the committee. Melanie Perhson further discusses action items for the Jordan River Trail.

v. Bylaws: Ginger Cannon, Vice Chair
Ginger Cannon updated the board on bylaw updates and that the committee will have a draft for the board to review soon.

vi. SCAAMP: Ginger Cannon, Vice Chair
Ginger Cannon commented that there are no SCAAMP updates at this time.

c. Board comments, question period & request for future agenda items

Aaron Wiley requested agenda time in June to present the Baseball Field Committee. Ginger Cannon asked if there is public interest, Aaron confirmed there is public interest.

Meridith Benally requested agenda time for June to present the indigenous committee proposal, and Kerri asked for the draft to be brought to the board. Ginger Cannon reminded Meridith Benally to utilize the bylaws document to submit the committee proposal.

Steve Bloch asked for the department a weekly digest of mentions of Public Lands in local media. Steve requests Jana Cunningham to send the digest. Kerri asked Kim Shelley whether this is tracked. Kim asked Maria to find a solution for the digest request.

Kerri Nakamura asked for written update for Taufer Park.

Steve Bloch asked Maria Romero how the agenda is created and what the process is. Maria Romero shared the process with Board Member Steve Bloch.

Sarah Foran asked whether she can receive information for Budget Revenue opportunities, such as increasing permitting prices. Kim Shelley asked Sarah Foran for clarification whether this is a citywide question or Public Lands Department. Kerri Nakamura responded with information on the city's evaluation of an increase during a new budget proposal. Sarah Foran clarified her question that increases should reflect the wear and tear. Kerri Nakamura reminded Sarah that fees are reviewed annually and approved through the city process. Kim Shelley discussed alternatives and areas the city can review.

Austin Whitehead briefed the board on the recent Camping Ordinance Amendment Council Presentation from the mayor's office. Austin asked the board for their input for a future presentation and a letter from the board to share their recommendations for this ordinance. Kim Shelley shared that Andrew Johnson, Director of Homeless Policy and Outreach, has welcomed the opportunity to present. Kerri Nakamura shared her concerns for the agenda item, and Ginger Cannon commented that she has limited information to make a decision on whether this issue should be brought to the board. Ginger reminded the board that residents can make comments to the council and mayor on their thoughts on the ordinance. Melanie Pehrson commented that this ordinance is relevant to the board and is interested in the board taking action. Maria Romero is committed to requesting legal advice to determine if the board can take action on the item, and Ginger and Kerri need clarification. The board discussed the potential for the presentation pending legal advice on the action the board can take.

d. Board Engagement Opportunities/Requests
e. Written Update:
    i. Park Ranger Program Training Update
    ii. Recent Council Agenda Items
    iii. Next Meeting: Thursday, June 4, 2026

VII. Adjourn (7:05 pm)

Aaron Wiley made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Steve Bloch seconded the motion, and all board members were in favor of adjournment at 7:48 pm.