

**TOWN HALL MEETING
CITY OF CEDAR HILLS
Tuesday, May 19, 2026 6:00 p.m.
Civic Center
3925 W Drive, Cedar Hills, Utah**

Present: Mayor Pro Tempore, Laura Ellison Presiding
Council Member Bob Morgan

Staff: Chandler Goodwin, City Manager
Charl Louw, Finance Director
Kevin Anderson, Public Works Director
Hyrum Bosserman, City Attorney
Gretchen Gordon, Deputy City Recorder

TOWN HALL MEETING

1. Call to Order

The City Council meeting of the City of Cedar Hills, having been properly noticed, was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Mayor Pro Tempore Ellison.

Discussion on Pressurized Irrigation Water Rates, Secondary Meters, Drought Conditions, and Water Conservation

City Manager Chandler Goodwin delivered a comprehensive presentation covering four main topics: water sources, meters and rates, city water reliability, and conservation measures.

WATER SOURCES

Mr. Goodwin explained that Cedar Hills operates two separate water systems: a potable (drinking) water system and a pressurized irrigation (PI) system for outdoor watering. They come from different sources because some of them are treated, some of them are cleaned, some of them are not cleaned.

For the potable water system, the city has two municipal wells: Harvey Well and Cottonwood Well. The city also maintains a connection to American Fork for approximately 100 acre-feet per year as a placeholder, though actual amounts vary. The city owns approximately 2,300 acre-feet of groundwater rights for these wells.

For irrigation sources, the city receives water from Pleasant Grove Irrigation Company (PGIC), which provides runoff from American Fork Canyon. The city is typically entitled to between 750 and 850 acre-feet based on water rights, pending supply availability. In drought years, this supply is significantly reduced. The city also has shares in the Murdock Canal Irrigation Company for surface water. Additionally, there is a well on the golf course that pumps groundwater as part of the city's 2,800 acre-feet allocation, though this well is not set up to produce water exclusively for the irrigation system.

The city also has 700,000 cubic feet (approximately 710 acre-feet) in the Central Utah Water Conservancy District (CUWCD) project. Mr. Goodwin noted that we have 700,000 cubic feet that we are allowed to pull up every year. In previous years, we have not been able to pull our full amount. We have always left a reserve up there which has been to our benefit because this year we are able to pull our full allocation of 710 acre feet without any penalties.

Regarding timing, the city typically relies on Pleasant Grove Irrigation Company surface water from mid-April to mid-June, then transitions to the CUWCD water from mid-June to early July through the remainder of the irrigation season.

Mr. Goodwin emphasized a critical point about groundwater usage during a drought when there is no surface water or percolation regenerating the aquifer as in a normal year. What you are doing is drawing on future funds and placing the aquifer under greater stress.

CURRENT DROUGHT CONDITIONS

Mr. Goodwin presented alarming statistics about the current drought situation. He stated that Utah's snowpack is the lowest on record with expected runoff at approximately 50% or less of normal levels. The snowpack typically peaks in late May or early June, but this year it peaked on March 9 at only 8.4 inches, approximately three weeks earlier than normal. He reported that 100% of Utah is in a drought, and 59% of Utah is in what is classified as extreme drought, classifications are determined by federal and state authorities rather than the city.

METER PROGRAM

Mr. Goodwin explained that the meter installation program was mandated by the state legislature in 2022 under House Bill 242, which requires every city within a first or second class county to meter every secondary water connection by 2030.

The city secured 70% funding through a grant from the state for the first round and 65% for the second round. The total cost for the PI meters was approximately \$3 million, including labor, with the remainder paid through utility fund reserves. In total, approximately 4,700 meters were installed throughout the city, both culinary and pressurized irrigation including 2,200 irrigation meters. The difference in numbers exists because some HOAs have many units with individual culinary meters but only 2-3 pressurized irrigation connections serving common areas.

WATER ALLOCATIONS AND TIERED RATE STRUCTURE

Mr. Goodwin described how water allocations are determined. He referenced City Code 10-5-16, which requires developers to turn over water rights to the city during the development process. The outdoor water allocation is calculated as 2.58 times the lot area in acres. Residents can easily determine how much water their lot is designated by first finding out how big their lot is and using the city's PI calculator to find out their usage rates.

Mr. Goodwin explained that the city has tried various conservation approaches in the past, including odd/even watering days and time-of-day restrictions, without success. He stated that we have tried for many years and never saw a reduction in use.

He said the city adopted a structure where tiers 4, 5, and 6 represent usage above 150% of allocation and have rates that are doubled. The benefit of the tiered rate structure is that it is like every utility you have, you pay for what you use.

Mr. Goodwin explained the philosophy behind this approach of water as a scarce resource. We do not have an infinite supply. If you look at it as a scarce resource there is this race to draw everything out of the tank and get it before your neighbor does. But if you change the behavior and say you only need this much and everything above is going to come at a cost to you, then you start to see people change their behavior.

Mr. Goodwin clarified the intent, and the goal of drought pricing (tiers 4, 5 and 6) is not to hurt everybody. He added that he would prefer that the city does not collect a dime through this and prefers that people use less than 150% of their allotment. This is not intended to be a revenue stream for the city.

WATER UTILITY BUDGET

Mr. Goodwin provided detailed information about where water revenue is spent, emphasizing that it is not a profit center for the city. For the current budget: Staff and benefits: \$649,000 (covering multiple staff members involved in water operations). Utilities: \$420,000 (primarily electricity to power pumps that push water uphill). Water purchases: \$194,000 (for purchasing additional water when the city exceeds its allocation, plus annual shareholder costs for water rights). Debt service: \$185,000 (interest on water and pressurized irrigation project debts). Maintenance and operations: funding for system repairs and future replacements.

METER RELIABILITY

Mr. Goodwin presented data on meter reliability based on a review of work orders. There was a review of between 3,000 and 4,000 work orders from January 2025 through May 2026, filtering for meter related service calls. Of 586 meter-related service calls: Three quarters of calls resulted in finding no issue with the meter. One quarter involved leaks on the homeowner's side. Only 24 meters were found to be defective out of more than 4,700 installed meters.

Mr. Goodwin stated that anytime you are dealing with the purchase of thousands and thousands of the same item, you will get a few errors. So a 0.5% or half of 1% error rate is something that he feels is acceptable. He explained that defective meters can have various issues including cracked casings, backwards installation, or phantom water readings.

He explained that the city identifies problematic meters through two methods: (1) monitoring the software system for meters not reading properly and creating work orders, and (2) resident calls. He emphasized that we want residents to keep an eye on what they are doing so they will call the city when they suspect that their meter is not working correctly or suspect that there is a leak.

Mr. Goodwin said that of the service calls analyzed, approximately 35% showed the meter was working properly, a significant percentage involved private leaks, another portion involved bad installations (such as improperly fitted PVC joints), radio problems, and software issues.

He noted that when a defective meter is found that has resulted in excessive water charges we will zero that out and charge them just the base rate and put in a new meter and start fresh. He said that we do try to work with the homeowners and be very reasonable about what we are finding.

He strongly cautioned residents to not open their own meter, stating that if you open it incorrectly, you could pull the node or the radio off of the meter, damaging the meter.

SYSTEM RELIABILITY CONCERNS

Mr. Goodwin addressed concerns about overall system reliability, particularly regarding the culinary wells. He explained that while both Harvey Well and Cottonwood Well are currently functioning properly, there have been periods when each has been out of service due to equipment failures or maintenance. When the Cottonwood Well is down, Harvey Well must serve the culinary system exclusively.

Mr. Goodwin emphasized the importance of conservation given these system limitations. He said we do not have a system that can provide irrigation water in a drought if a culinary well goes down. Our primary obligation to residents will be culinary water, not irrigation water.

CITY CONSERVATION MEASURES

Mr. Goodwin detailed multiple conservation measures the city is implementing. The Parks Department has reduced watering days, schedules, and duration, resulting in park grass that might look a little drier and dull than in years past.

Non-functional turf is being removed through hydrocut application in various locations. He mentioned the landscaping on the Bayhill Drive roundabout and the in the median on 4600 West as examples. The city is working with Utah State University on the land north of Harvey Park between Cedar Hills Drive and the fences across from Cedar Ridge Elementary to develop waterwise landscaping plans. Smart controllers have been installed throughout community parks. He noted that not all city irrigation systems have smart controllers yet, which is why some areas may still run sprinklers during rain.

The Harvey Park Splash Pad will remain operational it is some of the most efficient water that the city uses. It is used twice, the water is pumped from Harvey Well, used at the splash pad only when manually activated, collected, and then pumped back to irrigate Harvey Park.

The golf course is reducing watering of rough areas and fairways, though greens and tee boxes require continued watering because the greens and tee boxes are about one-sixteenth of an inch with sand bedding and if you do not water that every day, it burns to a crisp.

Mr. Goodwin stated that a major irrigation system replacement project is underway on the golf course's 4th hole, replacing old PVC pipe with HDPE (high-density polyethylene), which is fused together in a way that is much more durable and lasting than the PVC. He noted that the golf course sits on a debris basin, so leaks can run indefinitely underground without being visible, making this upgrade critical. The old system is 25 years old.

RESIDENT CONSERVATION MEASURES AND RESOURCES

Mr. Goodwin encouraged residents to take several conservation actions which include using their water allocation wisely. The city will help residents determine their allocation and track monthly usage. A good measure is installing smart controllers that can schedule watering appropriately and shut off systems during rain. Breaking up watering cycles helps rather than watering one section for an hour, you can break it up into 3 sections of 15 minutes, 45 minutes total, so that it absorbs into the grass and does not just drain through.

Another measure is to participate in the turf removal program through the Central Utah Water Conservancy District, which provides rebates of up to \$3 per foot for lawn replaced with waterwise landscaping including rocks and low-scape plants that are beautiful yet are more tolerant to the Utah environment. Also upgrading to high-efficiency fixtures including toilets, sinks, and showers.

Mr. Goodwin encouraged residents to check for leaks regularly. He provided examples of water waste from common leaks: a slow drip from a faucet may seem minor but over time these things add up. A running toilet uses 8 gallons an hour, 200 gallons a day, 1,400 gallons a week, 6,000 gallons a month. Broken sprinklers also use a lot of water.

Mr. Goodwin noted that while residents have learned their indoor water usage over years of metered culinary water (averaging 6,000-8,000 gallons per month for an average Cedar Hills family), outdoor usage is less familiar. He encouraged residents to learn how to calculate their outdoor water usage. The Public Works Department created a diagram showing different sprinkler head types and water output rates so residents can calculate usage by zone.

Outside resources are also available including Slow Flow, Utah Water Savers, and Utah Water Watch, along with various conservation guides.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Mr. Goodwin concluded by emphasizing we are not the only city that is grappling with these issues, this is a region wide issue, He said that he appreciates the city council for taking a serious step to advocate and educate residents.

He also directed residents with questions to contact the city through the official website at cedarhillsutah.gov using the city's contact form rather than posting on unofficial Facebook groups. He stated that we want to help, we want to answer your questions. If you need your meter checked, we want to help and give you guidance.

Mayor Pro Tempore Ellison inquired about the golf course water usage and if there is a budget line item for their consumption. Mr. Goodwin stated that the golf course pays for the water they use. There is an annual allotment in their utility budget.

Cedar Hills resident Brett Beal stated he would like some clarification on his water meter, after it was installed, another group came back afterward and did some repair work to it. He would like to understand a little better what happened and what the result was.

Mr. Goodwin responded that the city initially worked with a subcontractor through Mueller Meters, but unfortunately not every install was done very well. The city then engaged a second company, Patriot Hydrovac, to correct bad installations. He explained three main issues that were corrected. The first was many meter boxes sank into the ground, requiring the city to lift some of these boxes, replace some of the landscaping around the boxes, and make it flush to make it look nice. Second, the initial company removed many residents' private shut-off valves, necessitating reinstallation so residents would have the ability to shut off the system themselves without accessing the city's meter box. Third, some installations had plumbing issues including improperly installed 90-degree joints where the threads could have not lined up very well and caused a leak.

Council Member Morgan inquired about where a residents can go to get their lot size and water allocation information and also for the AquaTrax app. Mr. Goodwin responded that the lot size is on the county records and it also shows on their utility bill. AquaTrax is another resource that can be used and is updated daily so it makes it easier to determine your usage. The monthly amount on AquaTrax may not reflect the same as the utility bill because of the billing cycle. Bills are generated based on 30-31 day periods, but when there is a holiday or a weekend, the bill file created might only be 28 days, or it might be 32 days. This information and more about water usage can be found on the city's website.

Cedar Hills resident Ron Halls asked for clarification about the Harvey and Cottonwood Wells, specifically whether they are culinary wells.

Mr. Goodwin confirmed both are culinary wells, but explained that the Cottonwood Well, while it is a culinary well, has the ability to divert that water from the culinary system directly to the PI system. So it can feed either system.

Mr. Halls then asked whether the wells would go dry if the aquifer is not replenished by canyon water.

Mr. Goodwin explained they would not go dry in one year, but the city works with other communities through the North Utah County Aquifer Council to monitor aquifer levels. He emphasized long-term stewardship, and that they are trying to be responsible stewards of that, recognizing that it has to last far beyond any of us if this is going to be a habitable place to live. He warned if the drought lasts a few years, we might have some serious problems if we keep drawing on the aquifer.

Mr. Halls asked what would happen if residents do not conserve irrigation water, and what percentage of conservation is needed.

Mr. Goodwin responded that the city is asking for 15-20% conservation, meaning residents should use approximately 80% of their allotment. He stated that if they are using 80% of their allotment, he believes that we are going to be fine, we are going to get through this this year.

Mr. Halls sought clarification about whether running out of PI water would mean no water at all.

Mr. Goodwin clarified that culinary water would still be available. However, he warned against relying on culinary wells to provide irrigation water, comparing it to driving a car pedal to the metal constantly, you are going to burn it out.

With no further questions from attendees, Mayor Pro Tempore Ellison closed the town hall meeting, reminding residents they are always welcome to contact city staff with questions.

The Town Hall Meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Approved:
June 16, 2026

/s/ Colleen A. Mulvey, MMC, UCC
City Recorder