Town of Mantua Council Meeting Minutes
Special Meeting: Working Session – 2026–2027 Pre-Budget Review
For May 27th, 2026
Location: Town Hall, 409 North Main, Mantua, Utah

Council Members Present: Mayor Annette Ash, Mayor Pro Tempore Matt Jeppsen, Council Member Cheryl Burgan, Council member Scott Ross, Council Member Henry Dovey
Recorder: Sherita Schaefer

Audience Present: Robert Thayne, Jennifer Packer, Linsay Strong, Amy Jeppsen, Kim Maughan, Harper Johnson, Janis Johnson, Katie Flinders, Virginia Newman, Charotte Billing, Eric Thueson, Tamara Thueson, Anne Hansen, Scott Larkin, Kim Cantrell, Karen Nelson, Jeff Peterson, Dakota Midkiff, Jim Peters, Anne Hansen

The meeting was opened by Mayor Annette Ash.

Presentations & security Budget Overview

Department Presentations:

Former Police Chief and current Police Commissioner Jim Jones stated the Mantua Police Department has operated successfully for 30 years. Jones opposes regional law enforcement contracting, citing failures in municipal autonomy during external service agreements from 1987 to 1988. He stated Mantua requires localized, dedicated police coverage due to specific municipal attributes: two national trailheads, state and private campgrounds, a navigable reservoir, and weekend tourism peaks of 4,500 visitors. Jones stated the recent 30% budget increase is an administrative oversight issue for the Town Council rather than a structural failure of the department, and he recommended administrative adjustments instead of dissolution.

Council Member Burgan presented an official correspondence from Lieutenant Brenchley of the Utah Highway Patrol (UHP) outlining state enforcement capabilities on the three-mile jurisdiction of US Highway 89/91 (mileposts 5 through 8). The correspondence verified that if the Mantua Police Department dissolves, the UHP will provide traffic enforcement, accident management, and motorist assistance within the corridor. The UHP stated it cannot contractually guarantee a 24/7 dedicated presence, but it will increase enforcement during morning and afternoon commutes and peak summer recreation periods. The UHP also committed to providing backup assistance to county units responding to non-highway municipal calls.

Council Member Burgan reviewed municipal law enforcement contracting metrics compiled by Chief Deputy Cade Palmer of the Box Elder County Sheriff's Office (BESO), which Council Member Hansen then presented as two structural options at a standard service rate of $92.58 per hour. The part-time framework provides 20 hours weekly for $96,283.20 annually, while the full-time framework provides 40 hours weekly for $192,566.40 annually. Contractual terms dictate that the billing clock halts immediately if a stationed deputy is diverted to an external life-safety emergency or handles calls within U.S. Forest Service campground jurisdictions.

Jim Peters of the Administrative Office of the Courts stated that municipal justice courts operate as state franchises governed by the State Judicial Council, not as local executive departments. A five-year filing summary shows traffic citations are the primary case volume, and 0.5% of court defendants reside in Mantua. An impending state administrative rule change will require a certified bailiff physically present at all public court sessions, creating a mandatory town expenditure. Council Member Cheryl Burgan stated that due to 2021 statutory amendments following past Mantua audits, fine revenues retained by the town are legally capped at 25% of the general fund, limiting the use of traffic citations to fund municipal law enforcement.

Anne Hansen of the Box Elder County Attorney's Office presented a comparative analysis using 2025 data to evaluate local department performance against county baselines. The 2025 Crime Data Report showed that 61.71% of total calls received were vehicle or traffic incidents, with the local department logging 530 hours of extra proactive patrols. In terms of reactive response calls, Mantua logged 417 hours, compared to Honeyville's baseline of 461 hours. The local department has a faster driving time averaging 11 minutes and 23 seconds compared to the county's 13 minutes and 48 seconds, but experiences a 12-minute dispatch-to-route delay due to off-duty call-out procedures. Consequently, the county's total average response time from dispatch to arrival is 24 minutes and 26 seconds, while the local department's average is 34 minutes and 1 second. Furthermore, Anne Hansen reported that Mantua had one of the highest case declination rates in the county for the last four years being declined due to local investigative deficiencies. These cases would be handled by the county's detective division under a contract model.

Prior Meeting Review: Council Member Burgan reviewed the 2021 Utah State Legislature statutory amendments, resulting from past Mantua municipal accounting audit exceptions, which cap total traffic and court fine revenues retained by a municipality at 25% of the municipality's general fund. This legal constraint prevents the town from using highway traffic citations as the primary funding mechanism for the local police department. The statutory threshold creates a structural deficit that requires alternative budgetary balancing strategies for the upcoming fiscal cycle.

PUBLIC COMMENT & CONSULTATION REVIEW

Mayor Ash opened the floor for community feedback regarding the law enforcement proposals and local Justice Court structural options.

Resident Scott Larkin urged the council to study the unintended consequences of dissolving the local public safety infrastructure. Drawing from his tenure as the town's last marshal, Larkin stated that 15 highway fatalities occurred in the canyon corridor before the local department was expanded and professionalized under Jim Jones and Judge Nelson. He stated that local security oversight is necessary due to high volumes of transient traffic passing through the municipality.

Resident Harper Johnson stated that local speed fluctuations and traffic control are the primary historical complaints from citizens. He submitted a formal inquiry regarding whether the Box Elder County Sheriff's Office would contractually guarantee a persistent presence for speed enforcement on town interior roads, or if traffic monitoring would decrease under a county model.

Resident Janice Johnson, drawing from her 32 years of experience as a court clerk, advocated for keeping proactive, community-integrated policing. Johnson stated that Chief Midkiff has a specific interest in the welfare of Mantua residents that rotating county personnel cannot replicate. She questioned non-essential municipal spending, such as an annual $10,000 fireworks allocation, while public safety funding faces reductions. Johnson requested the Council table the dissolution proposal and collaborate with the existing department on an intermediate balancing strategy.

Mantua Court Clerk and resident Charlotte Billings spoke against outsourcing law enforcement and advocated for internal adjustments to reduce the Justice Court's deficit. She stated local officers consistently beat county or state units to emergency scenes, citing a medical and suicide crisis where the local chief arrived first. Billings rejected treating the canyon and highway corridor separately from the town, pointing out that local school bus routes cross this intersection daily, making consistent local speed control essential for student safety. She opposed replacing police officers with civilian code enforcement officers who receive a single week of training, questioning the safety of sending an unprotected civilian into remote areas like the reservoir to confront individuals. To address the Justice Court's financial deficit without dissolving it, Billings recommended operational shifts, such as implementing remote video hearing options and reducing in-person public sessions requiring a bailiff to a bi-monthly or monthly schedule.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION & DEPARTMENTAL BUDGET REVIEW

Review of Department Oversight & 2026-2027 Projections Chief Dakota Midkiff presented an amended 2026–2027 law enforcement budget that removed vehicle lease expenses, because the vehicles are town-owned assets, and removed court bailiff funding, because municipal ordinances require those costs to come from the general fund. Midkiff stated a full-time officer is on active military deployment until October, creating a temporary first-quarter payroll savings, though federal the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) regulations require the preservation of the position and benefits upon return. Chief Midkiff submitted two revised budget choices: Option 1 sets the Chief position at a fixed annual salary of $116,000 including health benefits, reducing total department expenditures to $285,252.84; Option 2 maintains an hourly rate of $33 across 2,210 hours, plus a mandatory 10-hour weekly shift at straight pay, making base compensation approximately $116,000 before incidentals and call-outs.

Staff and Administration Mayor Ash introduced an administrative restructuring proposal to transition the Finance Manager and the Public Works Director from hourly to salaried roles. The plan applies a 12% upward adjustment to these salaries, based on a three-year historical compensation average that included prior overtime accumulations. Mayor Ash outlined a uniform 4% Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for all municipal staff. The proposal also adds a new $1,000 monthly general fund expenditure ($12,000 annually) to lease an interim equipment storage facility for public works and law enforcement assets pending permanent building construction.

Sewer, Roads, and Fire Department Appropriations Mayor Pro Tempore Jeppsen confirmed that the sewer enterprise account remains stable, benefited by a reduction in capital repair requirements due to extensive remediation work completed in the previous fiscal year. The municipal roads budget reflects a localized increase, which Jeppsen clarified is strictly allocated to fulfill the town's mandated cost-share portion of the upcoming Main Street reconstruction project. Budgetary line items for the fire department were reviewed and verified as sufficient to sustain active emergency operations without additional modifications.

Water Fund Infrastructure Deficits and Revenue Council Member Ross stated that the Water Fund enterprise account faces an expected $10,000 to $11,000 reduction in projected services revenue for the 2026–2027 cycle. Total operating expenditures are projected to increase to $248,000 due to rising costs for chlorination chemicals, state testing fees, and a mandatory $18,000 maintenance fee to clean the North and South culinary water storage tanks. Ross stated that a utility rate adjustment proposal is being drafted for review within two weeks. Mayor Ash stated that state regulators recommend the town increase its base culinary water rate from $85 per month to $135 per month to qualify for future federal infrastructure grants and low-interest state loans.

Parks, Recreation, and Community Event Solvency Council Member Burgan stated that the Parks and Recreation budget will operate within the strict confines of local Parks, Arts, Recreation, and Culture (PARC) tax revenue allocations, with no external grant funding projected for the current cycle. To insulate the general fund from operational deficits, the community events budget will pivot exclusively to corporate sponsorships and private donations. Burgan noted that a rigid monthly oversight protocol has been established for upcoming summer municipal events to ensure full financial self-sustainability, correcting a negative variance from the prior year where community events required emergency general fund subsidies.

Waste Disposal Contract Extension and Rate Adjustments Council Member Dovey reported on utilities and asset management, confirming the execution of a three-year contract extension with Honeycomb Waste. The terms of the agreement freeze waste disposal fees for the upcoming fiscal cycle, followed by a 5% annual escalation across the final two years. To offset these future inflationary variances, Council Member Dovey recommended a rate adjustment to the basic municipal utility schedule—increasing the primary waste receptacle fee by $2 to a total of $16 per month, and the recycling bin fee by $1 to a total of $8 per month—marking the first utility rate alteration since 2022.

Cemetery Capital Projects and Historical Grant Matching Council Member Dovey stated that baseline cemetery operational expenditures remain stable and parallel to prior fiscal years. He requested a specific budgetary allocation of $4,500 in matching municipal funds to secure a $9,083 State Historical Society grant. Directed in coordination with Town Recorder Sherita Schaefer, these funds will completely subsidize the digital transformation and mapping of historical burial plots and cemetery records.

Taxation Timelines Mayor Ash and Council Member Dovey confirmed that the town is not required to initiate the formal "Truth in Taxation" public hearing and notification cycle because the proposed 2026–2027 fiscal year budget relies on existing operational revenues and utility fee adjustments rather than a property tax rate increase. The final budget adoption schedule remains aligned with the standard statutory deadline of July 1, 2026.

Budget Direction & Next Steps The council reviewed budget projections and proposed adjustments for inclusion in the FY 2026-2027 budget and directed staff to continue preparing figures for the June budget hearing.

Adjournment

Mayor Pro Tempore Jeppsen made a motion to adjourn the May 27, 2026, special meeting of the Mantua Town Council. Council Member Dovey seconded.

Yes votes: Mayor Annette Ash, Matt Jeppsen, Scott Ross, Cheryl Burgan, Henry Dovey
No votes: None
Abstained: None
Absent: None
MOTION PASSED