



**CITY OF KEARNS SPECIAL
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
July 21, 2026**

Element Event Center
5658 Cougar Lane
Kearns, UT 84118

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jesse Valdez, Mayor
Chrystal Butterfield
Lyndsay Longtin
Lorin Colby Jr.
Patrick Schaeffer

STAFF PRESENT:

Diana Baun, City Recorder
Joel Grant, HR Director
Nathan Bracken, City Attorney
Lisa Watts-Baskin, Deputy City Attorney

PUBLIC MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Jesse Valdez called the Special Meeting of the Kearns City Council to order shortly after 6:00 p.m. on **July 21, 2026**.

2. DETERMINE QUORUM

A quorum was present, allowing the meeting to proceed.

ORDER OF BUSINESS:

3. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS:

- A. **Ordinance 2026-O-13**, An Ordinance Amending the Total Maximum Compensation Package for the Kearns City Administrator Position

Mayor Valdez introduced the public hearing item and explained that a digital comment card process was in place for individuals wishing to speak in person or virtually. He noted that a link was provided for remote participants and clarified that the public hearing would begin after an HR presentation from MSD Human Resources Director Joel Grant.

Presentation by Joel Grant (MSD Director of Human Resources)

Joel Grant provided an extensive briefing outlining why the previously approved compensation cap of \$180,000 had proven insufficient in attracting qualified candidates. He described the recruitment process conducted over the past year, including a pool of more than 30 applicants narrowed to 10, two

rounds of interviews, and two job offers—both declined even when candidates were offered the maximum allowed under the existing cap.

Mr. Grant emphasized that the Strategic City Administrator role demands an experienced, high-level executive capable of handling complex municipal operations, economic development, and coordination leading into and beyond the 2034 Olympic Games. He shared comparative salary information from other Utah cities and assistant city manager positions, arguing that the market rate had risen significantly and that Kearns' prior compensation range was well below current norms. He recommended increasing the administrator's maximum base salary to **\$170,000**, with up to an additional 50% in benefits, noting that even this amount remained below regional averages.

Mayor Valdez clarified that funding for the role already existed within the budget and reiterated that neither he nor the Council were seeking higher compensation arbitrarily, but had reached this point after a year of unsuccessful recruitment efforts.

Council Member Chrystal Butterfield moved to open the public comment portion of the meeting. Council Member Schaeffer seconded the motion; vote was 5-0, unanimous in favor.

4. CITIZEN PUBLIC INPUT (*Limited to 3 Minutes Per Person*)

Throughout the comment period, both in-person and virtual participants offered their statements. Due to technical difficulties, audio for online participants did not initially transmit, and staff worked to resolve the issue. Comments were taken in the order submitted through digital and physical comment cards.

Joanne Thompson expressed concerns about whether a city administrator—if hired—would be able to improve deteriorating conditions in Kearns. She asked whether the person selected would have the capability and commitment to address issues residents see in the community.

Dennis Clauson questioned the salary comparisons shown during the presentation, asserting that some nearby cities pay less than the proposed amount. He stated that Kearns does not have the financial infrastructure to justify a \$170,000 salary and cautioned the Council against "cherry picking" higher-paying cities for comparison.

Brian Richards shared long-standing concerns about limited tax revenue, rising costs, and the burden on low-income residents. He felt the proposed compensation was excessive and stated that individuals with passion for the community, not necessarily those with the highest résumé credentials—could perform effectively at a lower cost. He shared several ideas for economic development and community services he would have implemented himself.

Jenny Williams communicated online that participants were unable to hear the proceedings. She asked why compensation was being revisited so soon after budget ratification and questioned whether a particular candidate was driving the proposed increase. She also asked whether any candidate was related to a city official.



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COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
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Kent Marcus emphasized that other cities being used for comparison have much larger commercial tax bases, while Kearns' revenue is limited. He stated that Kearns lacks the revenue to support an administrative salary in the proposed range and noted ongoing local infrastructure needs such as lighting projects.

Roger Snow, a long-time resident and former volunteer council member, offered extensive analysis of sales tax revenues in Kearns compared to other cities. He argued that Kearns' smaller tax base makes higher salary figures unsustainable. Snow strongly recommended exploring alternative compensation structures such as performance-based bonuses and questioned why the meeting was not posted sooner on the city's official social media channels.

Whitney Bullock expressed strong opposition to increasing the compensation cap beyond \$180,000 and to creating additional administrative positions. She argued that Kearns is small, landlocked, and already has MSD performing many administrative functions. She questioned fiscal priorities,

Cassandra Hodges stated that the listed duties for the city administrator appeared duplicative of MSD's responsibilities and asked why Kearns should pay a second person to perform work MSD already handles. She argued the proposed salary increase was excessive and should correlate to measurable revenue generation.

Janet Nerdin presented independent research comparing compensation with similarly sized cities and concluded that Kearns' salary range may still be too low to attract qualified candidates. She supported increasing compensation to secure experienced leadership capable of developing the local economy and improving long-term efficiency.

Ray Thomas stressed that no modern city he has worked with functions effectively without a city administrator or manager. He stated that Kearns cannot rely on elected officials to manage day-to-day operations, and that the position requires expertise comparable to a CEO. He supported compensation increases consistent with market expectations.

Staff attempted to locate the online participant "D. Howick" who submitted a digital comment but did not appear in the virtual queue. No verbal comment was ultimately provided.

Following public comments, Mayor Valdez and Joel Grant addressed various questions raised.

Mayor Valdez clarified that he and the Council were taking a deliberately cautious and fiscally conservative approach, emphasizing that the initial lean recruitment strategy failed and that the Council felt obligated to reassess the pay structure. He stated that the Council's responsibility is strategic—not

operational—and that an experienced administrator is essential for advancing Kearns' interests as the city moves toward major opportunities such as the Olympic Games.

Joel Grant addressed questions surrounding market data, candidate motivations, differences between city manager and city administrator roles, and potential outcomes of adjusting the compensation range. He reaffirmed that the recommended increase was necessary to recruit a qualified candidate who would stay longer than the typical two-year turnover seen in similar roles.

Council members shared perspectives:

- **Council Member Schaeffer** stated he preferred maintaining the current \$180,000 cap and restarting recruitment at that level.
- **Council Member Lauren Colby** supported raising compensation but at a lower level than first recommended.
- **Council Member Butterfield**, drawing from her HR background, stated that underpaying candidates leads to both recruitment failures and attrition, and that competitive compensation is essential.
- **Council Member Longtin** emphasized the urgency of experienced leadership given current regional developments and county negotiations.

Council Member Butterfield moved to close public comment. Council Member Colby seconded the motion; vote was 5-0, unanimous in favor.

5. COUNCIL BUSINESS – ACTION ITEMS (Discussion/Motion)

Council Member Jesse Valdez moved that the Council approve Ordinance 2026-O-13, raising the total maximum compensation package for the City Administrator position to a base salary of \$150,000 plus approximately 50% for benefits for a total compensation of \$220,000. Council Member Chrystal Butterfield seconded the motion; vote was 4-1 with Council Member Schaeffer voting “NO”, motion passed.

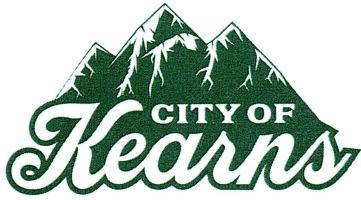
Council Member Butterfield moved to recess the City Council Meeting and move to Closed Session for the reason(s) highlighted below. Council Member Colby seconded the motion; vote was 5-0, unanimous in favor.

6. CLOSED SESSIONS IF NEEDED AS ALLOWED PURSUANT TO UTAH CODE §52-4-205

A. Discussion of the character, professional competence or physical or mental health of an individual

- B. Strategy sessions to discuss pending or reasonably imminent litigation
- C. Strategy sessions to discuss the purchase, exchange, or lease of real property
- D. Discussion regarding deployment of security personnel, devices, or systems; and/or
- E. Other lawful purposes as listed in Utah Code §52-4-205

7. ADJOURN



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COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
July 21, 2026**

Council Member Schaeffer moved to adjourn the July 21, 2026 City Council Special Meeting at 8:00 PM, immediately following the adjournment of the Closed Session. Council Member Longtin seconded the motion; vote was 5-0, unanimous in favor.

This is a true and correct copy of the July 21, 2026, City Council Special Meeting Minutes, which were approved on August 10, 2026.

Attest:

Diana Baun

Diana Baun, City Recorder

Jesse Valdez
Jesse Valdez, Mayor