

**Pleasant Grove City
Special City Council Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 11, 2026
6:00 PM**

Mayor: Eric Jensen

Council Members: Dianna Anderson
Cyd LeMone (joined meeting at 6:01 p.m.)
Steve Rogers
Todd Williams
Dustin Phillips

Staff Present: Scott Darrington, City Administrator
Sierra Pierson, Assistant to the City Administrator
Christine Petersen, City Attorney
Wendy Thorpe, City Recorder
Drew Engemann, Fire Chief
David Packard, Human Resources Manager
Keldon Brown, Police Chief
Carl Nielson, Police Department Lieutenant
Jacob Hawkins, City Planner
Chase Gustman, Deputy Fire Chief

The City Council and Staff met in the Community Room, 108 South 100 East, Pleasant Grove, Utah.

6:00 PM SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

1) CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Eric Jensen called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and welcomed those present. He then provided an overview of the meeting format.

2) PUBLIC HEARING to Consider the Proposed Certified Tax Rate for the City of Pleasant Grove for Fiscal Year 2027 (July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2027. Presenter: Administrator Darrington.

Administrator Darrington reported that the City had been working on the budget for several months. The initial proposal was to increase staffing for the Police and Fire Departments, which stemmed from surveys conducted of neighboring communities' staffing levels. Two full-time police officers would be added, as well as one reserve officer and additional funding for officer retention. The Reserve Officer Program brings in officers from other cities to staff some shifts, which provides the officer with additional income and the City with experienced officers on patrol. The request also included three new full-time firefighters. The total cost was approximately

\$683,000, which Staff recommended be funded through a property tax increase. At that time, the anticipated increase was \$4.16 per month on the average home valued at approximately \$580,000.

Administrator Darrington reviewed a chart of sworn officers per 1,000 population in nearby cities. The City would ideally have one full-time police officer per 1,000 population but was currently at 0.79. The new officers would bolster that number.

Pleasant Grove has one fire station with three shifts. Ideally, there would be seven full-time firefighters per shift, but currently there were only five, so two part-time firefighters were needed per shift. However, part-time firefighters are similar to reserve officers in that they typically work full-time in another municipality and are often unavailable for shifts. Some shifts only have six or even five firefighters. All necessary services can be covered with five, but it is not ideal. The request would bring the staff to six full-time firefighters per shift with the intention of increasing the number to seven in the future.

A difficult part of the budgeting process is that projections must often be made from incomplete data. For example, sales tax revenues for the next fiscal year are projected in March, but at that point revenue has only been received for seven of the 12 months of the current fiscal year. When the tentative budget was first presented, the Council asked Staff to reevaluate and find a way to reduce the proposed property tax increase. Fortunately, the next two months of sales tax revenues were \$129,841 higher than projected, which freed up existing General Fund monies. The City also completed negotiations with Alpine School District to increase the reimbursement amount for the school resource officer, which brought more revenue into the General Fund. Additionally, the new hotel that was initially slated for late 2026 opened ahead of schedule, which increased Transient Room Tax revenue projections by \$30,000. Lastly, one-time monies would be used for the purchase of police body cameras; as it was only a three-year contract, Administrator Darrington was comfortable funding it with those monies. These changes reduced the deficit by \$317,421 to \$365,667, which decreased the property tax request from \$4.16 to \$2.26 per month on an average home valued at \$601,623.

Administrator Darrington reported that the State requires that cities be very specific on what the increased property tax revenue will be expended on. The initial increase would have funded two police officers and three firefighters, including outfitting, as well as Police Department retention efforts, some of which would now be funded through the savings outlined above. The final request would fund one full-time police officer, one reserve officer, retention efforts, and two full-time firefighters. One Police and one Fire position would be paid through existing funds.

A chart of nearby cities' proposed property tax increases was reviewed. Administrator Darrington reported that Eagle Mountain proposed to fund their entire police department through a dramatic increase. If Pleasant Grove were to do so, it would require an approximately \$2 million or 50% increase. Saratoga Springs was growing and proposed an increase to build and staff new fire stations. Cedar Hills and American Fork also proposed increases.

If approved, Pleasant Grove's tax rate would from 0.000938 to 0.001020, a total increase of 8.75%.

Mayor Jensen opened the public hearing.

John Johannesmeyer complimented the City Council on lowering the property tax increase from 16.55% to 8.75%. He believes citizens show up because they have a real interest in the topic. Increasing taxes is a big issue that should not be taken lightly. He was grateful that the Council listened to citizens and reduced the request but asked if more could be done. In the private sector, when you don't have enough money, the first thing you do is ask what can be cut. There are usually layoffs and other things that happen to stay within budget. He asked that they look at salaries and other areas. He understood that \$20 per year is not a significant increase but believed it was a matter of principle. It's also cumulative, with \$20 on top of the school district charging more and food and other expenses going up. The Grove area was forecasted to bring in about \$10 million of additional funding, which was awesome because the City needs retail business. He asked that the tax burden be put on somebody else and not the citizens because a direct tax on their property was a hard pill to swallow. He encouraged the Council to look at ways to cut expenses because that is what the private sector would do.

Jonathan Kirk spoke in favor of the increase and stated that he was pleasantly surprised to hear that the City had done its work to figure out how to bring it down. He believed that the numbers were telling. The City Council's job was not just to provide for infrastructure but to protect citizens. He did not know if anyone else had ever answered a 911 call knowing there were not enough police officers or firefighters on duty to respond or spent 15 minutes providing CPR instructions over the phone hoping that a paramedic would show up. He answered the call when Lehi Sergeant Joseph Adams was shot and killed, and the response took longer than they wanted. Lehi staffing was still too low, and Pleasant Grove could not be allowed to go that low. There were not resource officers in every school, and he did not want his child to experience an incident at school. The numbers needed to be higher, and it was the City Council's duty to increase taxes. He found it unfortunate that anyone would argue about \$2 per month. Everybody should be willing to pay a lot more so the City can hire and retain more and better-trained officers.

Sean Barry stated that Mr. Johannesmeyer mentioned personal or business budgeting. If revenue will not fund everything, expenses should be put in a hierarchy. As much fun as a park, fireworks, or City-sponsored activities might be, the Police and Fire Departments were very important. The most important things should be funded first, and other things done if there is a surplus. In his opinion, property taxes mess with people's livelihoods because it takes away from what they're trying to provide for their families. He moved from Provo and purchased his home for under \$400,000 in 2020. The County had now valued it at \$631,000. He did not know if it was worth that and did not want to move, so from a business standpoint, that was an unrealized gain. He believed that the rate remaining the same multiplied by the increase in property value gave everyone an increase. It goes up every year. An increase of \$25 per year would not kill him, but it is death by a thousand cuts. A senior may not be able to stay in the City because they cannot get a second job to bring in more money.

Jim Adams asked what services residents wanted to cut. If someone's neighbor's dog is barking or someone breaks into their car, they can call someone else. Salt Lake City sends those calls to a website where they can obtain a police report number to file with their insurance. Do they want to cut parks, recreation, or the library? Things cost more, and there need to be increases. He was in favor of the small increase because he had seen the difference firsthand between having a

seasoned or new police officer show up to a call. Five years ago, beginning police officers made less than \$20 per hour, and those with five to 10 years of experience did not make over \$30. Pleasant Grove had the lowest-paid Police Department in the county for decades, and now it was second or third. Cutting salaries was not an option. He would love for the City to be able to reduce property taxes by 2% if sales tax revenue improved, but people would still likely complain about that. He did not envy the City Council's position. Throughout the state and country, cities were cutting services, and the choice was between doing the same or paying a couple of dollars more per month to ensure that citizens are taken care of.

In response to a question from Mayor Jensen, Assistant to the City Administrator, Sierra Pierson confirmed that there were no online or written comments.

In response to a question raised by Mayor Jensen, Administrator Darrington reported that the City Council would be voting on the item at its August 18, 2026, meeting.

There were no further comments. The public hearing was closed.

Mayor Jensen asked Administrator Darrington to explain how property taxes work. Administrator Darrington reported that a common misunderstanding is that as property values go up, property taxes also increase. On the contrary, the State requires that as property values increase, the citywide tax rate decreases. The rate is reduced each year to ensure that the City's revenues are the same as the previous year. The City does not benefit from increased home values, but it does benefit from new growth. When he first started working at Pleasant Grove in 2010, the rate was approximately 0.002. It is now at 0.0009 due to increased property values over that time.

Council Member Phillips stated that the public misperception was likely due to the fact that their property tax bill keeps increasing, but that was not due to the City's taxing authority. In response to his question, Administrator Darrington stated that approximately 15% of the overall property tax bill goes to Pleasant Grove and 70% goes to Alpine School District. Other entities are also subject to the same law; as property valuation increases, their rates drop as well. Council Member Phillips stated that Pleasant Grove does not increase taxes every year. If an individual tax bill increases, it has nothing to do with the City unless they have gone through the Truth in Taxation process. The City can only control its small portion of the overall tax bill.

Council Member Williams indicated that there can also be a misunderstanding about the percentage increase. If the City proposes raising taxes by 8.75%, the general public may look at their tax bill and think it is an 8.75% increase on their \$3,000 bill. However, the increase applies to the City's 15% of their overall bill.

Council Member Rogers expressed appreciation for the public engagement on the issue. Enough residents responded to the survey for the results to be statistically significant and provide information on what citizens need in the City. He had also paid attention to tax increases in other cities. Eagle Mountain passed a 183% increase the previous week. Saratoga Springs was considering a 50% increase, and Cedar Hills 19.55%. American Fork's proposed 8.48% increase would be approximately \$33 per month for the standard household, which was a similar percentage to Pleasant Grove but a higher dollar amount. Outside of Utah County, similarly sized cities were

also considering increases: Woods Cross was at 46%, Cottonwood Heights 42%, Salt Lake City 25%, Draper 22%, Kaysville 14%, and South Salt Lake 12.9%. It is a reality in Utah that increase are necessary to provide the services that Councils feel are necessary for their citizens.

He was impressed by what Directors and Chiefs do and what they had accomplished, and he knew that the City's dollars were being spent responsibly. He had spoken with a lot of citizens, and their comments were taken very seriously. The Council also did its own research to ensure that their decision was fiscally responsible for the City. He had gone through the budget and met with Administrator Darrington and Director Roy many times.

The Police and Fire Departments had to deal with difficult issues, and he would never consider cutting those services. Mr. Adams is an Honorary Colonel, a group of private citizens and businesses that donates a lot of money to help the Police Department shoulder costs. He agreed with Mr. Kirk that it is the City's duty to provide these services to citizens, to keep them safe and protected in their most vulnerable times. He appreciated the City's Directors and Administration for working with the Council to find savings. Things were cut and budgeted differently, which decreased the necessary property tax increase by half.

Council Member Andersen agreed with Council Member Rogers. She believed that revenue from The Grove would continue to increase and help fund needed services. Regarding hiring full-time police officers and firefighters, if there is a catastrophe, full-time staff will come to Pleasant Grove and part-time staff will go to their full-time job. She wants to have qualified, educated, smart, and tenured first responders in town when a catastrophe happens.

Council Member Phillips echoed his colleagues' comments. He appreciated Mr. Kirk and Mr. Adams' perspectives and willingness to stand up and say that this is the right thing to do, because often an extremely vocal minority stands up and criticizes the very heavy responsibility that the Council takes on.

Mr. Johannesmeyer mentioned that it is a matter of principle, and he agreed. To Council Member Phillips, it was the principle of being unwilling in the current circumstances to cut everything else and make sure there is only enough money for police. Pleasant Grove is a community. In his first volunteer position with the City, he spent six years on the library board, and he knows what a community center the library is. It provides an opportunity for those who may not have internet at home or the resources that so many people take for granted. He does not consider it socialism to recognize that the City has a responsibility to make sure that especially the least in our community have access to resources, programs, and opportunities like the library, recreation center, and other programs that make such a difference in the lives of our neighbors. He was grateful to stand behind that principle and support the Fire and Police Departments and the great things that they do.

Council Member Williams stated that the Council had talked about the budget and a lot of different avenues, from expenses to revenue. That is what he does every day, and the City had done an amazing job of ensuring that it matches tax-generated revenue to appropriate expenses. There had been questions, answers, accountability, direction, and change, and he was comfortable with the current proposal.

Council Member LeMone expressed appreciation for the citizen engagement as their comments helped her make decisions. She believed there was a misconception that the City was immune to inflation and cost increases. She did not know if that was because it was a government entity, and people thought Pleasant Grove was not affected by factors like gas and supply price increases. The cost of fertilizer for the parks can increase by thousands of dollars. The City was affected by these things, and unfortunately, the costs must be passed on so they could maintain the level of service the Council wants for citizens. It is sometimes forgotten that the City is not a private business but a public entity. Another misconception is that money from all this new business and tax growth was disappearing, but with that tax growth comes more people, more businesses, and more impact on services. First responders are critical, especially with a new hotel in addition to more housing and businesses. The Council wanted to make sure the community is protected and safe.

Her primary job as a Council Member is the health, safety, and welfare of the community. If that is taken care of, then other areas can be addressed. One resident spoke about the livelihood of the community. Between 6,000 and 7,000 people enjoyed the fireworks celebrating the country's 250th anniversary, and that was part of the community's livelihood. It is the Council's job to balance that with the needs of first responders and of parks and recreation. One person's definition of "livelihood" might not be the same as someone else's, which is why the City Council wanted to hear citizen comments.

Council Member LeMone was pleased that they were able to get to the final tax rate, as it went from a double-digit increase to 8.75%, which was doable for most people. She did not believe \$2 on average was an unreasonable request considering what it would go toward and was in favor of regular incremental increases to avoid a situation like the one faced by Eagle Mountain and other cities. Pleasant Grove had only increased taxes twice over the past 40 years. The increase was a manageable amount for citizens and businesses and would address the City's need for first responders to keep the community safe. The community's health and welfare is her most important job as a Council Member. She appreciated the public comments and asked citizens to stay engaged by continuing to attend and speak at meetings.

Mayor Jensen thanked the Council and members of the public for their insights and comments. He has lived in Pleasant Grove for a long time. It is a city of services, and its fine employees provide those services. He appreciates them so much. When he drives around the City, walks through the library, or visits Public Works, the Recreation Center, or parks, he does not see a city but a community. He appreciates all the work that is done on behalf of citizens. City employees work very hard every day, and they run a lean machine.

Like Council Member Rogers, Mayor Jensen had looked at the numbers and gone back and forth. It meant a lot that the Police and Fire Departments stepped up and asked for help. The City Council went through a process several years ago to rank services by level of importance. They then took their findings to citizens for a vote. The citizens came back and said that they did not want to cut services. They were overwhelmingly opposed to cutting the library or parks. Pleasant Grove is a growing city with expectations to meet, and this was one of them.

3) **PROPERTY TAX IMPACT STATEMENT: The Presentation from a Budget Officer of a Property Tax Impact Statement for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2026 and ending June 30, 2027, as a separate document from other budget documents. Presenter: Finance Director Roy.**

Director Roy read the following:

Proposed Property Tax Impact Schedule
Tentative Budget July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027

Pleasant Grove City will consider an increase to its property tax rates from .0009380 to .001020 to generate an additional \$365,667. The following information is intended to provide decision-makers and the public with an explanation of how the City's operations would be affected if the proposed property tax increase is adopted.

Pleasant Grove City's Current Property Tax Rate: 0.000938
Pleasant Grove City's Current Property Tax Revenue: \$4,178,247
Proposed Revenue with Tax Change: \$4,543,914
New Property Tax Revenue to Pleasant Grove City: \$365,667
Estimated Increase to Pleasant Grove City's Property Tax Revenue: 8.75%
Estimated Annual Increase to a primary residence of \$601,623: \$27.16
Estimated Annual Increase to a commercial property valued at \$601,623: \$49.38

Affected Department: Police

- Proposed Budget: \$6,541,602
- Budget without Tax Change: \$6,387,935
- Budget Change: \$153,667
- Impact of Tax Increase: The Police Department will hire one new police officer and provide funding for reserve and retention.

Affected Department: Fire

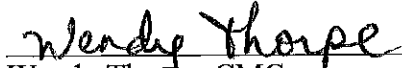
- Proposed Budget: \$3,722,747
- Budget without Tax Change: \$3,510,747
- Budget Change: \$212,000
- Impact of Tax Increase: The Fire Department will hire two new fire fighters and provide funding for outfitting.

Total General Fund Change: \$365,667

4) **ADJOURN**

MOTION: At 6:47 p.m., Council Member Williams moved to ADJOURN. Council Member Rogers seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with Council Members Andersen, Rogers, LeMone, Phillips, and Williams voting "Yes."

The City Council Minutes of August 11, 2026, were approved by the City Council on September 15, 2026.



Wendy Thorpe, CMC
City Recorder

(Exhibits are in the City Council Minutes binders in the Recorder's office.)