

CITY OF OREM
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
56 North State Street Orem, Utah
August 26, 2026

3:30 P.M. WORK SESSION - JOINT OREM AND TIMPANOGOS SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING - CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM

CONDUCTING	Mayor Karen McCandless
OREM ELECTED OFFICIALS	Karen McCandless, Crystal Muhlestein, Jeff Lambson, Jenn Gale, LaNae Millett, Chris Killpack, Quinn Mecham
OREM APPOINTED STAFF	Brenn Bybee, City Manager; Ryan Clark, Assistant City Manager; Steve Earl, City Attorney; Chris Tschirki, Public Works Executive Director; Bryce Merrell, Community Services Executive Director; Brandon Nelson, Chief Finance Officer; Lon Myers, Assistant Fire Chief; BJ Robinson, Police Chief; Gary McGinn, Community Development Executive Director; Peter Wolfley, Community Services Executive Director, PIO; Teresa McKitrick, City Recorder
TIMPANOGOS SCHOOL BOARD	Jennifer Lyman, Sterling Hilton, Guy Fugal, David Smith, Ada Wilson, Michelle Sorensen, Gary Rex
TIMPANOGOS SCHOOL STAFF	Joe Jensen, Superintendent; Jason Sundberg, Business Administrator; Peter Glahn, Assistant Superintendent Teaching and Learning; Dave Mower, Assistant Superintendent Operations; Tyler Vigue, Communications Director; Karen Carter, Executive Assistant

NOTE: The referenced report and presentation documents for each discussion may be viewed at orem.gov/meetings under “City Council Presentations”

WORK SESSION ITEMS

1st Year Celebration Discussion *Presenter: Jennifer Lyman, Board President*

Board President Lyman presented a series of operational celebrations and updates highlighting recent progress, key partnerships, and facility decisions. A major milestone celebrated was the August 17 ribbon-cutting for Silver Peak and T Tech (Transitional Education Center), housed at the former Sharon Elementary School site. Co-led by Principals Adams and Heaps, the facility serves medically fragile and highly impacted students. Board members Wilson and Councilmember Millett commended the move, noting that staff consider it a

spacious, light-filled upgrade and emphasizing how it alleviates long-standing community concerns regarding vulnerable populations following changes with facilities like Dan Peterson. Board member Rex praised the name "Silver Peak," explaining that the concept of refining silver until it shines serves as a meaningful metaphor for the students' personal growth.

The board also discussed the finalized three-year Transportation Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Aspen Peaks School District. Assistant Superintendent of Operations Mower explained that under the agreement, the district is forfeiting its interest in approximately \$1 million of shared inventory parts to cover its first two years of rent at the shared facility, which sits just three blocks away from their base. For the third year, moving a trailer onto the property to house additional office staff will satisfy the rent requirement, and future iterations may involve building a joint training facility. Mr. Mower, Dr. Jensen, and Mr. Hilton underscored that while both districts will share custodians and select service personnel, the district maintains full operational independence—utilizing its own mechanics, routers, drivers, buses, and 2.5 dedicated maintenance bays. Dr. Jensen and Ms. Lyman emphasized that this "win-win" agreement reflects high trust between the districts, complementing additional three-year MOUs established for alternative and online schooling.

Additional organizational developments included the finalization of the district's vision and values living documents, as well as proactive public engagement regarding school boundaries and consolidations. The district conducted four cluster meetings across local high schools to gather constituent input from parents, teachers, and administrators on what defines a thriving school. Ms. Lyman also announced the establishment of a centralized district office campus at approximately 500 North State Street in Lindon, utilizing existing capital building funds previously set aside by Alpine—ensuring no new bonds are required, as clarified by Mr. Sundberg. This new campus will consolidate departments that were previously scattered across cities, improving staff collaboration and reducing travel time.

Finally, the transcript outlined staffing strategies, budget efficiencies, and administrative restructuring. Ms. Lyman reported that 80% to 90% of current hires have been drawn from Alpine School District, with employees transitioning via an incremental schedule—working one day per week (20% of their time) for the new district initially and increasing by 20% each quarter while Alpine continues covering their primary salaries. Demonstrating ongoing budget mindfulness, board members noted efforts to streamline management, such as eliminating supervisory layers so assistant superintendents work directly with schools, reallocating vacant managerial duties among existing personnel, and planning an internal print shop managed under existing departments to avoid hiring high-level administrative positions.

Vision and Values Discussion *Presenter: Dr. Joe Jensen, Superintendent*

Mr. Hilton presented the district's newly adopted, living "Vision and Values" document, detailing a rigorous six-to-seven-month development process that began shortly after board members were sworn in. Needing an overarching framework to guide major decisions—including hiring a superintendent and business manager—the board drafted an initial

vision and conducted an extensive stakeholder tour. Visiting 28 of their 29 schools, the board held over 100 meetings with parents, teachers, administrators, and students to gather candid feedback. Mr. Hilton emphasized that the finalized statement is not merely a static policy piece, but a living collective guide shaped directly by the community to dictate daily operations and long-term goals.

During the meeting, board and session participants shared specific elements of the document that resonated with them personally. Ms. Rex highlighted the goal of fostering "joyful, thriving students," while Mr. Smith pointed to "always assuming goodwill" and a clear emphasis on "numeracy." Ms. Wilson emphasized "continuous learning and improvement," and Mr. Fugal cited "collaboration and accountability," particularly across the four participating boundary cities. Mr. Hilton noted his personal commitment to achieving "high levels of genuine learning and belonging for each student," Ms. Sorensen spoke to instilling lifelong citizenship and character traits, and Ms. Lyman celebrated the opening phrase "Together we," framing education as an all-inclusive community effort. Mr. Vigue, a newer addition to the team, attested that the board actively lives and models these core principles in every meeting and interaction.

When Councilmember Mecham inquired about specific changes resulting from stakeholder input, board members detailed several direct revisions driven by their school visits. Following strong feedback from students, the phrase "and belonging" was explicitly added to the core learning goal, and the word "safety" was added alongside "well-being" in the primary value statement. Furthermore, junior high students' expressed desires for greater kindness in crowded hallways prompted the inclusion of "empathy" and "self-mastery" under student character development goals. Dr. Jensen lightheartedly added that while the single most frequent student request was bringing back "True Moo Milk"—a detail passed along to nutrition services—the overall student discussions provided invaluable insight. Mayor McCandless and Councilmember Millett commended the board for directly consulting students, and Mr. Hilton concluded by reaffirming that the approved framework will continue to evolve alongside the district.

Robust School Criteria Discussion *Presenter: Dr. Joe Jensen, Superintendent*

Dr. Jensen outlined the framework behind the district's "Robust School Criteria," emphasizing that the study was driven by values of transparency, open communication, and community feedback gathered from over 250 participants across four high school cluster workshops. Rather than initiating a boundary study by asking which schools to close, the board first sought to define what a robust school should offer each student. Dr. Jensen presented this criteria using a structural school model: the foundation consists of non-negotiable elements that must exist in every school—such as high teacher quality, effective leadership, positive school culture, and strong safety policies. Above this foundation sit facility- and size-dependent factors, where school size acts as a proxy for program breadth. The board identified optimal school size ranges, noting that larger student bodies (roughly 500–600 students rather than 300) make it far easier to offer four specialized subjects at the elementary level, provide an array of AP courses in high school, fund assistant principals, and maintain three to five classes per grade level.

The council and board engaged in a detailed discussion regarding the practical impacts of school size and the proposed structural changes. Dr. Jensen explained that having three to five classes per grade level prevents undesirable split-grade classrooms, normalizes class sizes, gives administrators flexibility to separate incompatible students, and provides teachers with peer collaboration partners. Board members Wilson and Smith clarified that larger overall school enrollments do not increase individual class sizes, but actually afford more operational flexibility to keep class sizes down and meet parent desires for options. Dr. Jensen also outlined the board's two-part study approach: a July vote opened the formal evaluation of grade configurations—specifically moving 9th graders to high schools, 6th graders to middle schools, and establishing K–5 elementary schools—while an upcoming vote would authorize studying specific schools facing potential consolidation. Unlike past practices where only a single closing school was named, the district plans to name all heavily impacted neighboring schools holistically to evaluate better long-term solutions.

Councilmember Mecham raised important questions regarding how the district measures relational learning quality in larger settings and how it plans to preserve community identity when schools consolidate. Dr. Jensen, Ms. Rex, and Ms. Lyman acknowledged that school transitions require careful, intentional focus—including PTSA alignment, community focus groups, and dedicated time for patrons to both celebrate and mourn a closing facility—drawing from past consolidation experiences at Hillcrest, Sharon, Valley View, and Scera Park. Councilmember Millett and Mr. Glahn emphasized that Orem's neighborhood schools are deeply tied to historical geographic identities, parks, and feeder patterns. Glahn noted the board's priority to establish clean, unified feeder patterns that keep student cohorts together through middle and high school. Dr. Jensen observed that while northern and southern Orem have already undergone consolidation, the current study centers on the city's middle corridor, where six elementary schools with declining enrollments sit within a 1.25-mile radius. City Manager Bybee and Board President Lyman concluded by expressing a shared commitment for the city, school district, and community partners like the United Way to collaborate on repurposing any consolidated school properties for recreational or civic uses that continue to serve the surrounding neighborhoods.

Boundary Study Discussion *Presenter: Jason Sundburg, Business Administrator*

Mr. Sundberg and Dr. Joe Jensen outlined the demographic realities, facility metrics, and financial trade-offs driving the district's comprehensive boundary and school consolidation study. He explained that current student enrollment across Orem and Lindon reflects long-term structural declines rather than temporary fluctuations, noting that total elementary enrollment across the area's 20 elementary schools last year matched 1980 levels, when only 17 schools served the area. Elementary enrollment originally peaked in 1988, junior high in 1992, and overall district enrollment in 1996. Under the current K–6 structure, an elementary school needs approximately 590 students to maintain three classes per grade level, but only seven schools met that threshold last year, with projections showing only five will reach it by 2030, leaving 15

schools operating with lower enrollments averaging just one to two classes per grade. Secondary schools face similar declines; for example, Pleasant Grove High School dropped from 2,200 students in 2020 to 1,800 today, with a projected drop to 1,450 by 2030, while area high schools without adjustments would average around 1,350 students each.

To address these enrollment trends while preserving neighborhood identity, community feedback from boundary committees and focus groups strongly favored transitioning to a 9–12 high school model (alongside K–5 elementaries and 6–8 middle schools) over closing a high school. Moving 9th graders to the high schools resolves transportation friction for students traveling between junior highs and high schools for extracurricular activities while maintaining existing school identities. Furthermore, consolidating five junior highs into four 6–8 middle schools allows the district to align identical boundaries with the four high schools, establishing pure 1-to-1 feeder systems. Where elementary school boundaries must split, the district aims for a clean 50/50 split so students move into middle school alongside consistent peer groups. Under the 9–12 model, high school enrollments would remain under 2,000 students through 2030, with Orem High—the smallest facility by square footage—managed at approximately 1,600 students.

The session concluded with a discussion on fiscal responsibility and the financial realities facing smaller school districts. Mr. Sundberg noted that while massive districts like Alpine can absorb the cost of subsidizing extra teacher staffing to support full academic programming in under-enrolled schools, a smaller district must either right-size its facilities or rely on property tax increases to maintain underutilized buildings. Councilmember Millett observed that residents are deeply supportive of public education even when sensitive to broader municipal tax increases. Board Member Wilson reaffirmed that the board is acutely aware that the city and school district share the same taxpayers, emphasizing that the consolidation study aims to maximize educational quality while remaining fiscally responsible and avoiding undue tax burdens on local families.

Safe Routes and Bus Routes Discussion *Presenter: John Dorny, Orem Public Services Director*

Mr. Dorny addressed concerns regarding historical mapping data from the previous district administration, which had suggested that dozens of local bus stops might be eliminated and leave students walking long distances across major corridors like State Street. Mr. Mower reassured the council that no bus stops in Orem have been removed for the current school year, though he noted that a district-wide shortage of 20 to 30 physical buses—despite successful driver recruitment—has required double runs and schedule adjustments. Board President Lyman added that the state only reimburses transportation costs for "eligible" routes meeting strict distance thresholds—1.5 miles for elementary students and 2.0 miles for secondary students—meaning any non-qualifying busing provided by the district must be fully funded through local budgets.

To address student safety for non-bused walkers, the city and district outlined a collaborative, multi-step process for establishing updated Safe Routes to School. Once the board formally decides on school boundaries in early December, individual School Community

Councils (SCCs) and district safety administrators will map designated walking paths and conduct physical walk-throughs with city engineers to identify hazards, sight-distance issues, and required crosswalk improvements. Mr. Dorny urged early coordination, pointing out that major infrastructure safety upgrades—such as \$160,000 HAWK pedestrian signals—require months of design, engineering, and construction lead time. The city offered to complete engineering design work in-house to save funds, noting that safety projects historically follow a 50/50 cost-share model between the city and the district for small (\$20,000), medium (\$60,000), and large (\$160,000+) capital projects.

The meeting concluded with city officials emphasizing Orem's ongoing investments in student safety, highlighting that the city fully funds and manages its crossing guard program through the Orem Police Department across approximately 34 local locations. City Manager Bybee and council members reaffirmed that Orem's award-winning traffic and transportation staff stand ready as a full operational resource to assist the school district and neighboring municipalities with cross-jurisdictional traffic management, signal installations, and safety solutions to ensure seamless, safe transitions for all students come August.

Fire Cadet Program Discussion *Presenter: Lon Myers, Assistant Fire Chief*

Assistant Chief Myers presented a joint high school cadet initiative created in partnership with the Alpine School District. The presentation featured a news report highlighting high school juniors gaining hands-on firefighting and emergency medical experience. Participants in the program receive school credit, train in full turnout gear, practice pulling hose lines, measure patient vital signs, and ride along on actual fire and medical emergency calls alongside active Orem firefighters.

Assistant Chief Myers explained that the cadet program serves as a mutually beneficial pipeline to address first-responder recruiting shortages that have persisted across the state since Utah altered its first-responder retirement system in 2011. Designed as a mentorship-heavy internship, the program caps each semester class at 8 to 10 students to ensure direct coaching from assigned fire crews. Students pay a \$200 fee, which covers an official physical examination at WorkMed and basic uniform gear. Running afternoon and evening shifts for high school credit, the program draws participants from numerous regional high schools—including Orem, Timpanogos, Mountain View, Pleasant Grove, Cedar Valley, Sky Ridge, Karl G. Maeser, Provo, Lehi, American Fork, and Payson. Assistant Chief Myers noted that word-of-mouth and social media drive strong student interest, with several alumni already pursuing Utah Valley University's firefighter academy or securing employment with local fire departments. Mayor McCandless praised the initiative, observing firsthand how the structured mentorship builds immense confidence and career readiness in young adults.

School Resource Officers (SRO) Discussion *Presenter: BJ Robinson, Police Chief*

Police Chief Robinson presented an overview of the city's award-winning School Resource Officer (SRO) program. Chief Robinson detailed that the department maintains five

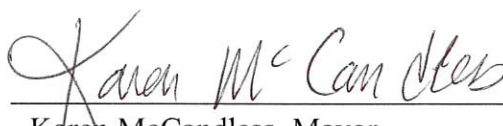
full-time SROs, one sergeant, and four detectives permanently assigned to Orem's three high schools and three junior high schools. Operating under the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) model, these officers fulfill a threefold role as law enforcement officers, informal mentors who build trust to resolve conflicts before they escalate, and CTE educators who teach accredited law enforcement classes. SROs work full-time (40 hours per week) dedicated to their assigned secondary schools during the school year, while also covering surrounding elementary schools on an as-needed basis and providing security for extracurricular events like football games.

Chief Robinson highlighted the department's culture of innovation, noting that an Orem SRO pioneered a standardized tactical grid system over a decade ago—similar to a Battleship grid—to allow first responders from any agency to locate specific classrooms rapidly during critical emergencies. This Orem-developed innovation was subsequently codified into Utah state law as a statewide mandate, and the department itself was recognized as a Model Agency by NASRO in 2024. Addressing the upcoming school district transition, Chief Robinson, City Manager Bybee, and district board members emphasized the importance of early budgetary and operational alignment to establish clear expectations. Board member Wilson and Dr. Jensen praised the program, with Dr. Jensen highlighting the unmeasurable preventative value SROs bring to school safety and administrative support. The session concluded with Mayor McCandless adjourning the meeting.

ADJOURN

(These minutes were created with the help of AI)

PASSED and APPROVED on this 8th day of September 2026.



Karen McCandless, Mayor

ATTEST:



Teresa McKittrick, City Recorder



COUNCIL MEMBERS

AYE NAY ABSTAIN ABSENT

Mayor Karen McCandless	☒	☐	☐	☐
Chris Killpack	☒	☐	☐	☐
Crystal Muhlestein	☒	☐	☐	☐
Jeff Lambson	☒	☐	☐	☐
Jenn Gale	☒	☐	☐	☐
LaNae Millett	☒	☐	☐	☐
Quinn Mecham	☒	☐	☐	☐

