

CITY OF SOUTH SALT LAKE
CITY COUNCIL WORK MEETING

COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday September 23, 2026
6:30 p.m.

CITY OFFICES

220 East Morris Avenue
South Salt Lake, Utah 84115

PRESIDING:

Council Chair Sharla Bynum

CONDUCTING:

Council Chair Sharla Bynum

<https://sslc.gov/AgendaCenter>

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Joy Glad, Corey Thomas, Sharla Bynum, Nick Mitchell,
Irvin Jones, Clarissa Williams, and Ray deWolfe

COUNCIL MEMBERS NOT PRESENT:

None

STAFF PRESENT:

Mayor Cherie Wood
Josh Collins, City Attorney
Danielle Croyle, Police Chief
Jared Christensen, Deputy Fire Chief
Jonathan Weidenhamer, Community & Economic Development Director
Craig Giles, Public Works Director
Eliza Ungricht, Community Development Deputy Director
Stewart Okobia, Finance Director
Britney Helmers, Arts Council Director
Carson Aprato, Police Sergeant
Spencer Redden, Police Officer
Corby Talbot, Capital Improvements Project Manager
Spencer Cawley, Senior Planner
Matthew Robins, Executive Assistant
Ariel Andrus, City Recorder
Sara Ramirez, Deputy City Recorder

Matters for Discussion

1. Salt Lake County Presentation on County Budget, Services & Key Priorities

Salt Lake County Council At-large Members Suzanne Harrison and Natalie Pinkney presented to the City Council regarding the role of the County, its budget, and opportunities for regional partnership. Harrison began by outlining the history of incorporations within Salt Lake County, noting that South Salt Lake was incorporated in 1938 during the earlier waves of municipal incorporation. She explained that recent legislation would result in the County being entirely composed of incorporated cities, apart from the canyons, by mid-summer 2027. Consequently, the County had shifted its focus from municipal services to regional services, intentionally

leaving municipal duties to the City, while continuing to provide municipal services to unincorporated areas through specific funding.

Harrison detailed the core regional services provided by the County, highlighting that approximately seventy-three percent of the general fund was allocated to criminal justice and public safety. This allocation covered the operation of the county jail, the district attorney's office, the sheriff's office, and indigent defense services. The jail alone required nearly one hundred twenty million dollars to operate. Additionally, the County fulfilled statutory obligations to manage elections, provide health department services, and oversee adult and aging services, such as the Meals on Wheels program and senior centers. Harrison noted the critical role of these community centers in combating an ongoing epidemic of loneliness among seniors. Furthermore, she explained that the County served as the behavioral and mental health authority for the region, providing services for low-income individuals.

Pinkney and Harrison also discussed the County's involvement in culture, arts, and tourism. They noted the County managed or co-owned facilities such as the Eccles Theater, Clark Planetarium, the Salt Palace, and the Mountain America Expo Center. These entities were funded outside the general fund through tourism dollars, which Harrison stated lowered the tax burden for every household by over seventeen hundred dollars annually. Regarding regional parks and recreation, Harrison advocated for the upcoming recreation bond on the ballot, which would allow continued investment in parks and trails. Pinkney added that this specific bond only appeared on the ballot once every decade. Harrison also highlighted the free My County Rec pass, which granted every Salt Lake County resident under the age of eighteen free access to public pools, ice rinks, and recreation centers year-round.

Addressing the County's budget, Harrison clarified public misconceptions that the budget had ballooned uncontrollably. She explained that a state auditor required pass-through dollars, which amounted to five hundred million dollars largely distributed to the Utah Transit Authority and other entities, to be included in the County's budget reporting. The actual operating budget under the County's jurisdiction was one and a half billion dollars. She further explained Utah's Truth in Taxation laws, emphasizing that increasing home values did not automatically generate increased tax revenue, as the County collected the exact same dollar amount each year regardless of property value increases. This system occasionally necessitated tax rate increases simply to keep pace with inflation. Harrison concluded the presentation by stressing the County's commitment to fiscal responsibility, noting its AAA bond rating and its bipartisan cooperation in balancing the budget.

Following the presentation, Council Member deWolfe inquired about the budget breakdown, noting a discrepancy between the total one and a half billion-dollar budget and the one hundred twenty-two million dollars allocated to the jail, asking where the remaining funds were distributed.

County Council Member Harrison clarified that the slide presented only covered the public safety portion of the budget, which encompassed seventy-four percent of the general fund. This portion included numerous other law enforcement and judicial services beyond the jail, such as canyon patrols, the gang unit, the district attorney's office, and indigent defense. County Council Member Pinkney offered to send the City Council a full breakdown of the general, special, and enterprise funds.

Council Member Williams asked how the upcoming closure of the county justice court system would impact cities and whether it would place a financial burden on the City to replace those services.

County Council Member Harrison responded that cases from unincorporated areas would be referred directly to the district court, assuring the Council that this transition would not create an additional financial or administrative burden on the City.

Council Chair Bynum asked if the youth recreation center pass was available year-round or only during the summer.

County Council Member Harrison confirmed the pass was valid all year and requested the City's assistance in promoting the program to families.

Council Chair Bynum then expressed that it would be highly desirable for the City to have a recreation center of its own.

County Council Members Pinkney and Harrison acknowledged the request, explaining that a regional board reviews these needs to ensure equitable access across the County, though a facility might not be placed in every single municipality.

Council Member Thomas requested clarification for residents watching online on how to obtain the free youth passes.

County Council Member Harrison explained that a parent or guardian must sign their children up online by searching for the Salt Lake County recreation pass, reiterating that the program was completely free.

Council Member Williams asked if the recreation pass could cover activities and leagues, such as baseball or basketball, noting that some families could not afford the fees to get their children involved in organized sports.

County Council Member Harrison stated that league play was not currently covered by the pass, as the County had to balance providing broad access with the financial realities of funding the programs. However, she noted they offer free clinics for youths to try new activities and stated that the County strives to keep all program fees as low as possible.

Council Member Williams concluded by stating the City would prefer a recreation center over being the site of another jail or homeless shelter.

County Council Member Harrison acknowledged the sentiment.

Council Chair Bynum thanked the presenters for their collaboration and expressed appreciation that County Council Member Pinkney, who previously served South Salt Lake, was now on the County Council.

County Council Member Pinkney affirmed her continued advocacy for the City, acknowledging

the significant sacrifices the City had made in supporting regional behavioral health and human services.

County Council Member Harrison added that Council Members Aimee Winder Newton and Jiro Johnson, who also represent portions of the City, were unable to attend but kept the City's interests in mind.

Council Chair Bynum reiterated her request for a local recreation center as the discussion concluded.

A copy of the presentation is attached and incorporated by this reference.

The meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Sharla Bynum, Council Chair

Ariel Andrus, City Recorder