

KAYSVILLE CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
February 4, 2025

Minutes of a special Kaysville City Council work session held on Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. in Kaysville City Hall at 23 East Center Street, Kaysville, UT.

Council Members present: Mayor Tamara Tran, Council Member John Swan Adams, Council Member Mike Blackham, Council Member Abbigayle Hunt, Council Member Nate Jackson, Council Member Perry Oaks

Staff Present: City Manager Jaysen Christensen, City Attorney Nic Mills, Finance Director Dean Storey, Power Director Brian Johnson, Parks and Recreation Director Cole Stephens, Public Works Director Josh Belnap, Community Development Director Melinda Greenwood, Fire Chief Paul Erickson, Police Chief Sol Oberg, Deputy Finance Director Maryn Nelson, City Recorder Annemarie Plaizier

OPENING

City Manager Jaysen Christensen opened the work session and welcomed everyone present.

REVIEW OF THE 2020 STRATEGIC PLAN AND DISCUSSION OF FUTURE PLANNING GOALS BASED ON THE PLAN

Jaysen Christensen outlined the meeting format and objectives. Participants were seated in mixed groups of elected officials and staff members to encourage discussion. Before beginning, he also recognized Public Works Director Josh Belnap for receiving the "Public Works Director of the Year" award from the Utah Chapter of the American Public Works Association.

Mr. Christensen explained that the session stemmed from previous discussions about the city's long-term vision. He referenced a past city tour with staff where differing perspectives on infrastructure projects, such as the Burton Lane roundabout, highlighted the need for clearer strategic planning. This led to the idea of structured discussions to align the council and staff on key priorities for Kaysville's future.

The session revisited existing strategic planning documents, including the 2020 Strategic Plan, the city's budget mission statement and objectives, and the 2022 General Plan. Mr. Christensen noted that while these documents contain guiding principles, they are often broad and underutilized. He emphasized the need to translate them into actionable goals and strategic initiatives. He also acknowledged that this work session was just the beginning of an ongoing, multi-meeting process that would involve setting priorities, developing specific goals, and further discussion on implementation, budgeting, and timelines.

Participants received three handouts summarizing key planning documents. The city's mission and vision statements were read aloud, reaffirming Kaysville's identity as a family-friendly, economically balanced community with strong infrastructure, public safety, and recreational

opportunities. Mr. Christensen noted that the 2020 Strategic Plan, developed with extensive community input, continues to define Kaysville. However, he invited council members to consider whether any aspects should be updated.

The discussion then shifted to the five guiding principles outlined in the 2020 Strategic Plan, which focus on building and maintaining quality, long-lasting infrastructure and connectivity to essential needs, collaborative and transparent decision-making, and responsible growth to create and maximize economic and community opportunities. These principles were compared with those from the 2022 General Plan and the city's budget objectives. Council members and staff agreed that while many principles overlap, they must be translated into concrete priorities and projects.

Council Member Oaks raised a question about how the city defines an "expected level of service", noting that service quality and cost efficiency must be carefully balanced. He also pointed out that expectations may vary among each person.

Mr. Christensen responded that this session was meant to focus on high-level priorities, with staff later developing measurable strategies. He explained that council members should identify areas of focus, while staff would develop tactical plans to address those priorities.

Each group was asked to review the guiding principles and select at least three to four priorities for shaping Kaysville's direction over the next five years. These priorities were then consolidated to identify common themes. Each group designated a spokesperson to present their selections. Mr. Christensen clarified that while operations, employees, and capital investment were assumed core budget priorities, this discussion should focus on other strategic areas guiding the city's long-term vision.

Each table presented their prioritized strategic principles and how they should guide the city's direction.

Council Member Adams, spokesperson for his group, identified the first Guiding Principle from the city's Strategic Plan (SP-1), "Build and maintain quality, long-lasting infrastructure and connectivity to essential needs", as the highest priority, emphasizing the need for improved community communication and marketing. They noted that infrastructure projects are often overlooked by the public because they are not visually appealing or immediately exciting. To address this, they suggested implementing a stronger marketing approach, such as visual materials illustrating the condition of aging pipes and other infrastructure issues, to help residents understand the necessity of funding these improvements. This, they believed, would make residents more receptive to tax increases or budget allocations for essential projects. They also prioritized the third Guiding Principle from the General Plan (GP-3), "Enrich our city center and downtown", aligning it with the first Guiding Principle from the General Plan (GP-1), "Staying True to Kaysville's Heritage", arguing that downtown improvements should reflect Kaysville's historical identity. Their third selection was the third Guiding Principle from the Strategic Plan (SP-3), "Make decisions based on information, facts and analysis; not ego or individual political agendas."

The second group, with spokesperson Parks and Recreation Director Cole Stephens, also selected SP-3, emphasizing the need to for data-driven decisions. They highlighted the importance of GP-1 and SP-4, "Respecting the past while embracing the future", reinforcing the idea that Kaysville's

identity is well-established and should be maintained rather than significantly altered. Their final selection was SP-1, reaffirming the need to maintain high-quality infrastructure.

The third group, with spokesperson Public Works Director Josh Belnap, similarly chose SP-1, recognizing the challenge of narrowing priorities, but stressing the need for detailed, actionable steps. They also prioritized SP-5, “Create and maximize economic and relational economic development opportunities”, recognizing that while Kaysville is primarily a bedroom community, economic development could help alleviate some of the tax burden on residents and support infrastructure improvements. Their final selection was GP-3, “Enrich our city center and downtown”, reflecting the broader consensus on the importance of downtown development.

After compiling the results, Mr. Christensen summarized the commonalities across the groups. SP-1 (Infrastructure) emerged as the clear top priority, receiving unanimous support from all three groups. GP-3 (City Center and Downtown) and SP-3 (Fact-Based Decision Making) were each selected twice, indicating strong but slightly less universal support.

To continue refining priorities, Mr. Christensen instructed the participants to reorganize into new groups, mixing staff and elected officials differently. The next task was to break down SP-1 (Build and maintain quality, long-lasting infrastructure and connectivity to essential needs) into more specific initiatives. He asked participants to identify broad but concrete goals within infrastructure, such as improving streets, ensuring sustainable water management, or implementing long-term infrastructure plans. He emphasized that they should avoid getting into overly technical details, but instead establish general priorities within infrastructure that would guide the city’s future investments and maintenance efforts.

Council Member Jackson, spokesman for his group, said that they prioritized sidewalks, recognizing that minor infrastructure elements had been neglected over time. They advocated for restoring consistent sidewalk funding and emphasized the need for a long-term plan for street striping and crosswalk maintenance, suggesting that regular updates would ensure safety and improve community aesthetics. Additionally, they stressed the importance of developing clear communication around utility infrastructure to help council members effectively communicate the necessity of funding increases to residents.

Council Member Hunt said that her group proposed adopting design standards for future city projects to ensure cohesive aesthetics throughout Kaysville, including consistent lighting and city gateway enhancements. They also emphasized that repaving projects should go beyond basic resurfacing and incorporate safety, economic, and recreational improvements where possible. Connectivity, particularly the difficulties emergency services face in reaching the other side of town, was another major concern. They highlighted the need for improved east-west connectivity.

Police Chief Sol Oberg said his group discussed the tendency of the city to make short-term, cost-cutting decisions that ultimately lead to greater long-term expenses. They cited the city’s past failure to support aesthetic improvements on the freeway off-ramp near the Young Kia dealership, which resulted in the dealership relocating and a decrease in sales tax revenue. They emphasized the importance of investing in long-term, high-quality infrastructure rather than opting for cheaper, short-term solutions. They also discussed the challenge of unifying the distinct identities of Kaysville’s east and west sides, both in terms of community engagement and physical connectivity.

Mr. Christensen reviewed the common themes that emerged from the discussions. Council Member Blackham reiterated that the focus should be on maintaining existing infrastructure rather than expanding new projects at the expense of basic upkeep. The conversation also touched on the city's budgeting approach, with concerns that deferred projects lead to increased costs over time.

The discussion then shifted to the importance of communicating city expenditures.

Council Member Blackham expressed frustration over the challenge of prioritizing department funding requests. He suggested that department heads should collaborate to present a unified list of personnel and infrastructure priorities rather than submitting individual requests. Council Member Blackham noted that staffing requests, in particular, should be prioritized at the administrative level before reaching the council, as it is difficult for council members to weigh competing needs across departments.

City Attorney Nic Mills observed a recurring theme in the conversation: the need for improved communication between city staff and the council. He noted that while strategic planning is critical, fostering better relationships and dialogue between these groups could lead to more effective decision-making.

Mayor Tran agreed, suggesting that regular work sessions could improve collaboration and allow council members to gain a better understanding of department needs.

Council Member Adams expressed a preference for presentations to the council that focus more on immediate needs and challenges rather than routine statistics. He suggested that department heads present a clear, compelling narrative about their priorities.

Council Member Jackson supported the idea of increased direct communication between staff and council members. Council Member Jackson noted that Council Member Hunt does an excellent job of proactively setting up meetings with department heads and encouraged others to follow suit.

Moving on to the next discussion item, Mr. Christensen instructed the participants to again reorganize into new groups. He then transitioned the meeting to discuss the next priority: SP-3 (Make decisions based on information, facts, and analysis, not ego or political agendas). Participants were asked to brainstorm actionable steps to improve data-driven decision-making, as well as ways to enhance communication between staff, the council, and the public.

Mayor Tran explained that her group reinforced the value of work sessions like this one, advocating for regular meetings to maintain group discussions rather than fragmented departmental conversations. They emphasized the importance of staff providing clear, prioritized needs to the council, as council members lack firsthand knowledge of department operations. She encouraged department heads to be assertive in conveying their most essential needs, assuring them that council members trust their expertise and are not skeptical of their requests.

Council Member Oaks was excused from the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

Power Director Brian Johnson said that his group echoed the need for structured prioritization within city departments. They pointed out that staffing requests, for example, often come to the

council piecemeal rather than as a unified citywide priority. They recommended that department heads collectively assess needs before approaching the council, allowing for more strategic decision-making.

Council Member Adams said that his group focused on improving city communication to residents. They noted that while the council often makes fact-based decisions, the public frequently lacks access to that information, leading to misunderstandings and opposition. They proposed a simplified approach to public outreach, such as single-topic flyers that clearly present data—like fire response times on the west side—to build community awareness and support for major projects. They also stressed that the city should consider the capacity of its existing infrastructure when evaluating development proposals rather than solely relying on external analyses advocating for increased housing. Council Member Adams expressed frustration over the city’s reliance on expensive studies and suggested finding alternative ways to gather and use data.

Mr. Christensen summarized the key themes of the discussion and acknowledged that some of these issues would be addressed further in upcoming budget discussions and infrastructure planning.

Participants were again instructed to reorganize for a final time into new groups. Mr. Christensen introduced the last priority to discuss: GP-3 (Enriching the city center downtown) and asked each group to identify actionable goals for revitalizing Kaysville’s downtown core. After discussing this final priority, each group again selected a spokesperson to summarize what was discussed.

Community Development Director Melinda Greenwood said that her group began by questioning what “enrichment” truly means in the context of downtown. They identified key elements such as landscaping, lighting, and design guidelines, all of which would contribute to a visually appealing and welcoming downtown. Beyond physical improvements, they emphasized the importance of programming and events that attract people to the area. Ms. Greenwood noted that continued community and business input would be crucial in shaping a more comprehensive downtown plan.

Parks and Recreation Director Cole Stephens said that his group believed that the city must take the lead in improving its own facilities if it expects private businesses to invest in the area. He cited the former library building, which has sat vacant for nearly a decade, as an example of city neglect. The group suggested that upgrading city facilities, beautifying entrances to Kaysville, and enhancing visual elements—such as improving Main Street banners—would set a standard for the rest of the community.

Fire Chief Paul Erickson said his group focused on the need for a long-term vision and actionable execution plan. They suggested that the city strengthen partnerships with downtown businesses by offering incentives or assistance for aesthetic improvements. They also emphasized that city communication remains a challenge and that improving dialogue with businesses and residents would be a key factor in successful downtown enrichment.

Mr. Christensen summarized the priorities discussed and outlined the next steps. He acknowledged that the discussion on downtown revitalization yielded more varied responses than expected, with a broader focus on overall city aesthetics. He reiterated the importance of continued strategic planning and communication and suggested that quarterly work sessions be scheduled to keep these discussions ongoing.

With upcoming budget workshops beginning on February 14, Mr. Christensen noted that many of priorities discussed would tie into budget planning. He encouraged council members and staff to continue providing input and reassured them that this session was just the beginning of a longer-term strategic effort.

Council Member Blackham emphasized that budgeting remains his top priority but acknowledged the challenge of fully understanding the sources and sustainability of city revenue. He reiterated a recurring theme that he's taken from the session—that city staff should collectively prioritize budget needs before presenting them to the council. He requested that staff not only identify their highest priorities but also provide clear cost estimates and funding strategies, including potential tax increases and their impacts. Council Member Blackham also expressed frustration that he felt that past budget discussions lacked specificity regarding financial impacts, leaving council members without the necessary details to make informed decisions.

Chief Erickson reinforced that the city council had deferred difficult financial decisions for several years, and as a result, the upcoming budget priorities would be "ugly."

Council Member Blackham stressed that while some priorities will have to be sacrificed, city leadership must define those priorities in a way that is sustainable and defensible. He emphasized that he is willing to support a tax increase if necessary to maintain essential services, but he wants the justification to come directly from staff, based on long-term strategic needs.

Mr. Christensen noted that previous council feedback has already led to changes in how financial discussions are structured, shifting toward clear, bottom-line priorities rather than vague discussions. He committed to providing the council with not only recommended expenditures but also an explanation of the consequences of inaction—such as service deterioration, infrastructure failures, or higher future costs.

Council Member Blackham further explained that he needs clear data and a narrative to justify financial decisions to the public. He argued that the city should aim to maintain a tax rate that aligns with regional averages—ranking around seventh or eighth among Davis County cities—rather than artificially keeping taxes low at the expense of city services. He acknowledged that no council member wants to impose tax increases, but responsible governance requires maintaining financial stability rather than continuously deferring costs.

Council Member Jackson added that past tax increases seemed reactive and only covered immediate needs, leaving the city in the same position the following year. He advocated for a more strategic approach that ensures financial stability over multiple years, reducing the need for frequent increases. However, he also cautioned against raising taxes too aggressively, noting that the city must balance its financial needs with the economic burden placed on residents. He emphasized the importance of public outreach and transparency, stating that council members must be able to explain budget decisions in a way that is understandable and justifiable to the public. He stressed that if residents are better informed about why certain investments are necessary—such as infrastructure maintenance or public safety enhancements—they are more likely to support tax or fee increases.

As the session wrapped up, Mayor Tran expressed appreciation for the collaborative nature of the discussion and supported the idea of regular work sessions to maintain open communication between staff and the council.

Mr. Christensen reiterated that this was just the beginning of the strategic planning process, with more detailed discussions to follow during the upcoming budget workshops. He committed to refining staff priorities and returning to the council with clearer financial projections and sustainability plans.

The work session adjourned at 8:00 p.m.