

KAYSVILLE CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
NOVEMBER 5, 2025

Minutes of a special Kaysville City Council work session held on Wednesday, November 5, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. in Kaysville City Hall at 23 East Center Street, Kaysville, Utah.

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

Absent: Council Member Nate Jackson

Staff Present: City Manager Jaysen Christensen, Finance Director Maryn Nelson, Police Chief Sol Oberg, Community Development Director Melinda Greenwood, Power Department Director Brian Johnson, Fire Chief Paul Erickson, Public Works Director Josh Belnap, Parks and Recreation Director Cole Stephens, Information Systems Manager Ryan Judd, City Recorder Annemarie Plaizier, Val Starkey, Josh McBride

OPENING

Mayor Tran opened the work session by welcoming participants.

DISCUSSION ON THE STRATEGIC PLAN AND FUTURE PRIORITIES

City Manager Jaysen Christensen opened the discussion by outlining the purpose of the session, which was to evaluate long-term priorities related to a west-side fire station, improvements to the operations center, the future of the former library building, and employee compensation planning. He referenced the strategic planning work session held in February where the council and department heads considered priorities for the city. He cited the city’s mission statement and the guiding documents shaping current policy—the Budget Mission and Objectives, the 2020 Strategic Plan, and the 2022 General Plan. He summarized the overarching themes identified in February’s sessions, including maintaining long-lasting and reliable infrastructure, improving data-driven decision making and analysis, and enhancing the downtown area. Department heads met in September and added a fourth emphasis on developing and maintaining a well-trained, qualified and dedicated workforce.

Fire Chief Paul Erickson presented the first item, the priority of a west-side fire station, by reviewing NFPA 1710, the national standard establishing response benchmarks and minimum staffing requirements for career fire departments. Through a video demonstration and additional explanation, he described how fire growth timelines, required staffing levels, and response-time expectations influence operational readiness. The standard calls for dispatching at least 15 firefighters to a single-family structure fire, 28 to a small commercial or garden-apartment fire, and a minimum of 43 to a high-rise incident, with a four-person engine crew expected to arrive within four minutes based on recommended response benchmarks. Chief Erickson explained how total response time is calculated, including call-processing, turnout, and travel time, and noted that Kaysville’s west-side responses currently average approximately 12 minutes—almost twice the

recommended benchmark. He also described limitations in sustaining interior attack operations, citing a recent Layton apartment fire where 48 firefighters were required and crews needed rotation after roughly 12 to 15 minutes, emphasizing the need for adequate staffing and timely backup.

Chief Erickson discussed how the site of a proposed west-side station could influence compliance with NFPA standards. A previously considered site near a church on 200 North on the west side of the city was dismissed in favor of city-owned property on Burton Lane, which would allow the department to meet coverage standards in four west-side zones rather than one. Presently, only about 40 percent of calls citywide meet required response benchmarks. In response to council questions, he estimated that a west-side station would likely raise compliance into the 80-percent range, although turnout-time improvements would remain essential. He also noted capacity challenges at the existing east-side station, where simultaneous calls routinely occur despite having eight personnel on duty. Mutual aid fills gaps but cannot serve as a long-term substitute for local coverage.

The chief then reviewed mutual-aid activity for the year, noting that Kaysville crews had responded to Farmington and Fruit Heights more than 300 times, while Farmington had responded to Kaysville approximately 38 times. Kaysville had also exchanged assistance with Layton, providing aid 41 times and receiving 69 times. He reiterated that the data reflected regional staffing conditions rather than criticism of neighboring agencies. He outlined how county fire chiefs jointly establish predefined response orders, known as “stacks,” and highlighted Kaysville’s practice of sending a single chief officer to fire incidents due to staffing limitations.

Chief Erickson next introduced preliminary cost projections for a west-side station. Council Member Blackham assisted in compiling estimates using current construction data, including figures from Layton’s recently completed station and information from the architect involved. The discussion emphasized significant escalation in construction and materials costs. Past benchmarks—such as station bays at roughly \$200 per square foot and living quarters at \$250 in Kaysville’s existing 25-year-old station—contrast sharply with recent numbers, including Syracuse’s facility, which reached approximately \$650 per square foot and increased from an initial \$9 million estimate to more than \$11 million at completion. The chief also noted that although Syracuse completed its building, due to budgeting constraints, they could not staff the new station fully, resulting in reduced staffing at another station. He reminded the council that earlier estimates for a Kaysville west-side station in 2018 were roughly \$3.2 million, but inflation has substantially altered projections. Council Member Blackham added that a formal needs assessment had not yet been conducted and it would be necessary to refine cost projections, likely requiring architectural engagement in the spring.

The council continued its discussion by examining staffing considerations for a potential west-side fire station. When asked whether constructing the building without the ability to staff it immediately would provide operational benefit, Chief Erickson explained that splitting the current eight-person crew between two stations would not resolve the city’s existing challenges, which include frequent double and triple calls and insufficient coverage. He stated that adding a second station without additional personnel would leave both facilities under-resourced and would not improve response capabilities. Council Member Oaks noted that the city’s reliance on existing staffing levels amounted to assuming ongoing risk, likening the fire and police departments to essential “insurance” for the community. Chief Erickson reviewed personnel cost projections, explaining that salary estimates shown in his presentation reflected top-scale compensation that

employees typically reach after approximately eight years of merit progression, and that benefit costs were calculated at roughly 35 percent of salary. Discussion then shifted to whether the council should continue exploring the station project and consider placing a funding question before voters.

Council Member Blackham expressed concern about the feasibility of placing a fire station bond measure on the ballot in the near term. He noted that the city's recent Truth-in-Taxation proposal did not pass, and that the coming fiscal year will require implementing the tax increase associated with the gymnasium partnership with the Davis School District. That arrangement is expected to require a bond of approximately \$10 million, with annual payments estimated between \$700,000 and \$800,000. Given these obligations, he cautioned that proposing a general obligation bond for a fire station during the same period would likely result in voter rejection.

Mayor Tran asked whether voter approval of a bond required the city to begin construction immediately. Jaysen Christensen explained that even with approval in the following year, construction would not begin for approximately two years due to necessary design and engineering work. Community Development Director Melinda Greenwood added that the schedule would also depend on whether the city intended to use bond proceeds to fund the engineering phase. The mayor asked whether the city must issue the bond within a set timeframe after voter approval, and Mr. Christensen noted that timing depends on how the bond language is drafted. Bond attorneys typically specify the effective date of the associated tax increase, and while the city could delay issuance of the bond itself, tax collection generally begins when the ballot language indicates.

Mr. Christensen presented cost estimates prepared by Zions Public Finance to illustrate the potential financial impact on homeowners. He emphasized that it would not be transparent to present only the construction cost—approximately \$16 million—without also addressing the annual operating cost of roughly \$2 million required to staff the station. Zions recommended structuring the ballot language so voters see both figures. Based on the city's average home value of \$690,000, the annual tax impact would be approximately \$114 for the building and \$195 for staffing, totaling about \$310 per household. He noted that while the city cannot advocate for a ballot measure, it can provide information to help residents understand the need, such as NFPA standards, response-time data, and systemwide impacts.

Council members discussed whether the fire station is an immediate need or whether it could follow a multi-year timeline given financial demands from existing commitments. Council Member Adams asked whether Farmington's planned station might reduce Kaysville's workload. Chief Erickson explained that because Farmington is relocating to the west side and delaying the staffing of its existing station, Kaysville will likely face increased call volume into Farmington and Fruit Heights. When Council Member Adams asked whether recovering service responsibility for Fruit Heights would help offset costs, the chief responded that Kaysville already responds frequently to the area and decisions should not be based on reimbursement alone.

The council then examined how other cities have financed similar projects, including Farmington's sale of surplus property. In response to a question from Council Member Blackham, Chief Erickson stated that Kaysville's police station bond will mature in 2031. Council Member Blackham reiterated his position that placing a fire station bond on the ballot in the upcoming year would likely fail, and that a failed measure could delay the project for many years.

Mr. Christensen acknowledged the concern but noted that many cities experience initial bond failures, only to see subsequent attempts succeed once residents become more familiar with the issue. He cautioned that presenting major projects in separate stages could create the appearance that the city is withholding information. Instead, presenting long-term needs comprehensively—such as the fire station, library building, and operations center—may help residents understand the broader picture. Council Member Blackham warned that doing so risks overwhelming voters with the scale of upcoming expenses. Mayor Tran agreed that residents benefit from transparency about long-term needs and stated that community education and honest discussion are essential even if the council elects not to place a bond question on the next ballot.

The council next discussed public outreach and communication related to major capital projects, particularly the proposed west-side fire station. Council Member Adams noted that a recurring theme from earlier strategic planning discussions was that the city does not always effectively convey information to residents. He recommended using more visually distinct printed materials—such as topic-specific mailers branded “Kaysville Fire Station Information”—similar to the pamphlets distributed during the 2021 paramedic service transition. He stated that such formats are more likely to capture attention than traditional letters. Chief Erickson agreed, recalling positive public response to similar efforts in the past. Council Member Adams suggested including a QR code linking to additional resources, such as explanatory slides, short videos, or a brief survey that could help gauge whether residents want the station placed on the ballot and whether they would support the associated tax impact.

Mr. Christensen noted that, according to the timeline prepared by Zions Public Finance, the city’s primary task in the near term is to educate the public, and that a final decision about a bond would not be required until late August. Staff and council members discussed examples from other cities, including Ogden City’s survey on police staffing that presented residents with specific service-level tradeoffs, which helped justify wage adjustments and address staffing shortages. Council Member Hunt expressed support for gathering resident input but also stated that she believed the west-side station had been postponed long enough and that, as a public-safety issue, it should be placed before voters despite other financial pressures.

Council Member Blackham restated his concern that placing a fire station bond on the ballot during the same period that the gym-related tax increase takes effect would likely result in failure. He cited historical experience with an earlier unsuccessful public-safety bond and emphasized that residents may feel overwhelmed when faced with multiple major expenses at once, including the fire station bond, the gym project, and needed work at the operations center. Council Member Hunt responded that resident views often shift as they gain understanding of operational conditions, pointing to how past public-safety facility needs became more widely accepted after residents learned more about them.

Chief Erickson stated that firefighters regularly receive questions from west-side residents and that staff feel the operational need for the station, but he also recognized the broader economic and political context. Mayor Tran suggested the possibility of using the next year or longer to conduct a structured public information campaign and then considering a later ballot year, such as 2027, instead of the next available election cycle. She noted that some residents already mistakenly believe the city has raised taxes multiple times, illustrating the importance of clear communication. Council Member Oaks observed that articulating how overlapping projects and costs fit together would be a substantial messaging challenge for both staff and the council.

Participants agreed that communication and transparency would be essential regardless of when a bond question is ultimately presented. Several members emphasized the importance of clearly explaining the combined capital and staffing costs, documenting the city’s due diligence—including analysis of districting and other alternatives—and situating the fire station discussion within the broader context of other major needs such as the old library building and the operations center. Mr. Christensen added that if the city eventually pursues general obligation bonds for multiple facilities, combining them into a single proposal might prevent perceptions that the city is presenting projects in a piecemeal fashion, though further discussion would be required to determine priorities and sequencing.

Mr. Christensen introduced the next strategic priority, the Operations Center, explaining that the facility—constructed in 1991—no longer meets the needs of a city that has grown from approximately 14,000 to 34,000 residents. He noted that the building lacks adequate office space, resulting in staff working from converted storage rooms, portables, and repurposed maintenance areas. The facility also lacks a conference room and public lobby, requiring employees to travel to City Hall for meetings. In addition, the city’s fuel island is out of compliance with state environmental regulations, and the Department of Environmental Quality has directed the city to replace it by January 1, 2027. Failure to do so would force all city vehicles to refuel at commercial stations. Mr. Christensen also emphasized the absence of covered storage on the site, which has led to accelerated deterioration of heavy equipment, vehicles, and transformers.

Public Works Director Josh Belnap and Parks and Recreation Director Cole Stephens outlined the differences between the original Operations Center concept and the current scaled-down proposal. The initial plan, estimated at roughly \$39 million in 2024, envisioned relocating the Recreation Department from the old fire station to a fully rebuilt campus. As construction costs escalated and broader financial pressures emerged, staff reassessed the project and shifted to a more modest renovation and expansion of the existing facility. The revised plan—which is estimated at \$5.4 million—would add approximately 7,000 square feet of office space, relocate the fuel island, and construct covered storage for equipment, plow trucks, and power department assets. Mr. Stephens noted that this approach would address immediate operational needs while preserving space on the site for a larger facility in the future if required.

Staff also reviewed the operational impacts of storing vehicles and equipment outdoors. Power Director Brian Johnson noted that a six-year-old bucket truck stored outside had already required about \$80,000 in weather-related compliance issues, whereas similar equipment stored indoors elsewhere has remained in service for more than twice as long without major issues. Comparable concerns apply to snowplows, transformers, and other high-value assets.

The council discussed potential financing options. Mr. Christensen stated that because the Operations Center primarily serves enterprise functions—particularly power, storm water, and water—most of the \$5.4 million cost could be funded using enterprise revenues through a lease-revenue bond rather than a general obligation bond. He explained that on a 20-year bond at an estimated 4 percent interest rate, annual payments would be approximately \$397,000, with enterprise funds covering the majority. Council Member Oaks asked whether only a relatively small portion—around \$100,000 per year—might need to be covered by the general fund. Mr. Christensen said that enterprise funds would likely cover most of the cost but noted that staff would evaluate whether enterprise revenues could fully absorb the payment. He explained that the city

plans to incorporate the project into its Waterworth utility models early next year to identify long-term rate impacts, as last year's modeling did not include the Operations Center.

Mr. Stephens stated that the project is already designed through the 50 percent construction-drawing stage, completed in May of the previous year, and could resume once the council provides direction. Council Member Oaks observed that the project may warrant higher prioritization because it could potentially move forward without a tax increase and because operational impacts are immediate. Mr. Christensen said that staff would return during upcoming budget work sessions with more detailed cost and rate analyses. The conceptual site plan was displayed, which shows the building expansion extending into the grassy area north of the existing structure rather than building upward or displacing other functions. The discussion reflected general agreement that the Operations Center requires modernization and that the scaled-down proposal may offer a practical and financially manageable path forward.

Mr. Christensen next introduced the former library building as another major strategic issue requiring direction, noting that the city has explored a wide range of public-private partnership concepts over several years—including a food hall—but none have been financially feasible. He explained that architects have shown limited interest in the project, though the firm preparing the downtown small area plan (GSBS) recently provided a preliminary estimate of roughly \$3 million as a placeholder for preserving the existing structure. Mayor Tran clarified that this estimate reflects retaining the building largely in its current form and questioned what long-term purpose such an investment would serve, given the lack of a defined use. While several council members acknowledged that the building carries heritage value for some residents and that concepts such as a city museum have been discussed, no consensus direction has emerged.

Council Member Oaks stated that although he originally supported preserving the building, he now struggles to justify the cost without a clear purpose and feels the council has delayed a decision for too long. He said he would personally support a legislative decision to demolish the structure rather than continue deferring action. Mayor Tran, who has also favored preservation, expressed similar frustration that despite extensive outreach to potential partners and donors, no viable option has developed. She said she would now be comfortable telling residents that the city has “tried everything” and that, absent a major donor contribution within a reasonable timeframe, the city may need to focus on other pressing capital needs. Council Member Adams emphasized that because the library is located in an historic part of the city and carries symbolic weight, he believes the final decision should rest with voters. He supported placing a general obligation bond on the ballot so residents could determine whether to fund preservation. He added that if substantial private donations emerged—such as half the project cost—the council could reassess, because the financial context would differ from a full public-funded preservation effort. Mayor Tran cautioned that moving forward with preservation after a failed bond could prompt public criticism.

The discussion then turned to potential future uses of the property were the building to be demolished. Ideas included selling the parcel for private development, creating a public plaza or open space with seasonal activities such as ice skating or roller skating, or retaining portions of the building's stone and architectural features to create a memorial honoring Kaysville service members. Josh Belnap and Council Member Blackham noted that salvaged stone and corbels from the building could be used for walkways, benches, or other features to maintain a connection to the site's history. Melinda Greenwood explained that a key reason the earlier food hall proposal was not viable was that the private partner would not own the underlying land and therefore would

not acquire a long-term asset.

Council members also discussed how the library question fits into broader ballot strategy. Several members stated that if the library were sent to voters, it should appear on the same ballot as the fire station bond so residents can weigh both needs together. However, they also acknowledged that the comparatively low cost of the library preservation bond—estimated by Mr. Christensen at about \$22.15 per year for the average home—could make it more appealing than the substantially larger fire station proposal, potentially resulting in the library passing while the fire station fails. Members agreed that such an outcome would create significant challenges. The group also discussed timing considerations and preliminary community feedback. Ms. Greenwood mentioned that early input from the downtown small area plan survey suggested a preference for eliminating the building, though more information would soon be available. Mayor Tran and others suggested using social media, informational videos, flyers, and QR-code-enabled surveys to inform residents that the building has been vacant for nearly a decade and to gather additional feedback before any ballot decision. Council Member Adams reiterated his view that both the fire station and the library issues are important enough to warrant voter consideration.

Mr. Christensen then requested a nonbinding straw poll on whether the council preferred targeting the 2026 or 2027 ballot and how the fire station and library questions should be sequenced. Council members expressed differing views: some, including Council Member Blackham, favored staggering the projects to avoid stacking multiple tax-related measures close to the implementation of the gym-related tax increase and other obligations; others, including Council Members Adams and Hunt, supported placing one or both questions on the 2026 ballot, or on consecutive years, emphasizing the value of voter input. The council concluded that no decisions would be made during the work session and that additional public outreach, data collection, and future discussions would be necessary before determining ballot timing and project sequencing.

A break was taken at 8:34 p.m., and the meeting reconvened at 8:42 p.m.

Mr. Christensen introduced the final strategic priority for the work session: developing a long-term employee compensation plan. He explained that each budget season the council and staff spend considerable time revisiting the same questions about new positions, merit increases, cost-of-living adjustments (COLA), and market adjustments. He suggested that a structured, multi-year compensation framework—similar to the city’s vehicle replacement plan—would be more efficient, reduce repetitive debates, and give both employees and the council clearer expectations. He emphasized that such a plan would not bind future councils but would establish general targets and principles. Mr. Christensen noted that when department heads met in September to refine strategic priorities, they identified employee planning as a key omission from the February retreat, and he reiterated that attracting and retaining high-quality employees is essential to delivering city services and fulfilling the mission to enhance quality of life for residents.

Mr. Christensen summarized themes from the department head discussion, stating that employees should be viewed as part of the city’s core infrastructure because service quality depends on their skills and continuity. He referenced prior efforts to keep pay within roughly 5 percent below market average and said there were concerns about whether that benchmark sends the right message to employees and residents. He highlighted the costs of turnover, including loss of institutional knowledge and the expense of recruiting and training replacements. He also observed that annual public debates about merit and COLA can be sensitive: employees watch these

meetings and may interpret comments as indications of how the council values their work. A consistent compensation policy, he argued, would help reduce uncertainty, improve transparency with the public, and avoid the optics of undervaluing staff.

Council Member Adams voiced strong support for adopting a structured plan, noting that the council spends significant time revisiting compensation issues even though outcomes rarely change. He said his primary concern is the use of the term “merit,” which he believes is not consistently tied to differentiated performance. He explained that subjective merit decisions are difficult for department heads to administer fairly without clear metrics. He described a model used in another jurisdiction where each department receives the total dollar amount needed to fund a uniform percentage increase, but the department head can allocate those dollars unevenly among employees—providing larger increases for high performers and smaller increases for others—while staying within the same overall budget. He asked whether a similar hybrid approach could be considered in Kaysville. Chief Erickson said he had used a comparable system as a civilian supervisor at Hill Air Force Base, where departments received 3–4 percent pools for distribution based on performance, and he felt it worked well there. Council Member Oaks noted that the Air Force has long used a similar approach for its civilian workforce.

Public Works Director Josh Belnap then described the challenges of applying performance differentiation in departments with limited promotional paths, such as public works, where most employees remain in maintenance worker positions for their entire careers. He explained that many employees share the same job classification and pay range, making it difficult to distinguish compensation between those who meet expectations and those who significantly exceed them when everyone receives the same annual increase. He said high performers can feel undervalued in that environment. Mr. Belnap emphasized that supervisors already address poor performance through coaching and, when necessary, separation, but he believed a better model is needed to recognize exceptional contributions. In response, Mr. Christensen shared his experience administering a performance-based pool system earlier in his career. He said that despite efforts to make it objective, employees perceived outcomes as subjective and dependent on which supervisor they had, leading to morale concerns. The city eventually returned to a standard step-based approach, which aligned with practices in other cities and provided predictability. He added that Kaysville regularly manages out underperforming employees, but that the vast majority—roughly 95 percent—are meeting expectations and earning their step or merit adjustments, making it difficult to implement truly performance-based pay in a non-quantitative municipal environment.

Council Member Adams clarified that his intent was not to avoid decisions but to reduce repeated annual council debates by having the council set an overall percentage (such as 3 percent) and then allow departments to determine internal distribution. Council Member Oaks noted that annual budget discussions are part of the council’s role but acknowledged that blending COLA and merit/step increases complicates matters, especially in years of high inflation. He and Council Member Adams agreed that the current “merit” label is closer to a longevity step than a performance tool, and that many employees value the predictability of step-like increases, particularly in long-tenured positions. Council Member Adams suggested giving department heads flexibility within the allocated amount, especially to provide more meaningful dollar increases to lower-wage employees, and asked department heads whether they would appreciate that discretion. Cole Stephens said such flexibility could be a useful motivator, while Mr. Belnap expressed interest in a model that balances recognition of exceptional work with the stability of a consistent structure. Council Member Elect Joshua McBride suggested a hybrid model,

guaranteeing a portion of the increase for all employees and allowing supervisors to allocate the remainder based on performance or specific needs.

Council Member Blackham described an evaluation system used by the Davis County Mosquito Abatement District, where employees and supervisors jointly define and weight job responsibilities at the start of the year. At year-end, performance against those self-identified responsibilities determines what portion of the available raise an employee receives. He noted that this approach ties pay more closely to documented expectations but requires detailed evaluation. He also reiterated his interest in the council setting the overall adjustment rate and leaving distribution to departments. Chief Erickson cautioned that reducing raises for individual employees is difficult when the city is already targeting compensation below market; cutting back on increases could widen that gap and affect competitiveness. Mayor Tran summarized the discussion, stating that the council wants to avoid politicizing compensation while preserving legislative oversight to prevent unchecked salary growth. She said there appeared to be consensus for staff to bring back a draft policy for discussion.

Mr. Christensen confirmed that staff would prepare a proposed compensation policy for future council consideration. He emphasized that the plan would function as a guiding framework rather than a binding rule, similar to the vehicle replacement plan, allowing future councils to adjust when fiscal conditions require. He thanked the council for their input and reiterated that the objective is to streamline the annual process, support recruitment and retention, and provide clarity for both employees and elected officials.

Mayor Tran then informally adjourned the meeting at 9:10 p.m.