

**FRUITA CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP  
SEPTEMBER 24, 2024  
6:30 P.M.**

**CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

The workshop of the Fruita City Council was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Mayor Matthew Breman. City Council members present were James Williams, Jeannine Purser, Rich Parrish, Andrea Stolarczyk and Amy Miller. Councilor Aaron Hancey was excused absent.

City Staff present were City Manager Mike Bennett, Assistant City Manager Shannon Vassen, City Clerk Deb Woods, Communications & Engagement Manager Ciara Amann, Planning & Development Director Dan Caris and Finance Director Joe Zaher.

**AGENDA ITEMS**

**1. PRESENTATION AND OVERVIEW OF THE 2025 CITY MANAGER'S  
RECOMMENDED BUDGET (6:30 – 7:30 PM)**

The purpose of this agenda item was for staff to present the draft 2025 Annual Budget and the calendar of upcoming Budget presentations at future Council meetings.

The first draft of the City Manager's Recommended budget for 2025 was included as an attachment in the Council packet and is available at the City of Fruita's website: [2025 City of Fruita Draft Budget](#).

City Manager Mike Bennett shared an overview and highlights of the 2025 Recommended Budget as well as a list of items that didn't make it into the Budget for next year.

Highlights of the 2025 draft Budget are as follows:

- **Community Engagement and Participation**
  - **Community Survey** - Included in the budget is funding for the Resident Satisfaction Survey. The purpose of the survey is to objectively assess citizen satisfaction with the delivery of City services, to measure trends from previous surveys, to compare Fruita's performance with other communities, and to help determine priorities from residents. The survey will be completed at the beginning of the year.
  - **Outreach Videos** – An additional \$7,500 (in addition to \$5,000 for the annual State of the City Video) budgeted to create videos for residents and visitors that focus on education, the City's strategic outcomes, and key priority and policy areas.
  - **New Accessible Website** - \$25,000 is budgeted to upgrade to a new, fully accessible, website.
  - **Police Officer Focused on Community Engagement** – The only new position included in this draft budget is a Police Officer focused on proactive policing and engagement with the public. This position was approved by the City Council in 2024 and is continued to this year.
- **Emphasis on Multi-Modal and Pedestrian Circulation Improvements**
  - The City of Fruita continues to invest significantly in road maintenance and traffic safety. For example:
    - \$500,000 is budgeted for Road Overlays

- \$400,000 is included to begin the process of making road, utility, and pedestrian improvements to J Road, east of the Fruita Middle School.
- \$210,000 is budgeted for chip sealing.
- \$100,000 is included for Sidewalk and Pedestrian Improvements throughout Fruita.
- \$100,000 is budgeted for contracted Engineering Services that can complete evaluation and design of capital projects and pedestrian improvements.
- Road and Patching Maintenance is budgeted to increase to \$100,000.
- \$75,000 is budgeted for street and bike lane striping.
  - In addition to these projects, three large capital projects will continue in various stages, including the replacement of the Maple Street Bridge, S. Mesa Street Improvements, and the 19 Road Improvements.
- **Five Year Capital Improvement Plan** – Included in this budget is an updated Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan, based upon significant feedback from the City Council and the community. Completing many large projects in 2024, and others that will be complete in 2025, the projects this year prioritize maintenance and the top priorities in the community’s master plans.
- **Employer of Choice** – The City of Fruita continues to focus personnel efforts on attracting and recruiting high-quality, innovative, and productive employees, as the organization and the community greatly benefits from staff who are experts in their fields. Pay and benefits changes include:
  - **Market Increase** – An increase of 5% for most employees. Police Officer sworn positions will receive between a 5 – 15% increase, to adjust the starting pay for these positions by \$10,000.
  - **Performance Adjustments** – A one-time bonus of \$1,000 will be provided to employees who received an “exceed expectations” in the most recent employee development assessments.
  - **New Benefits** – The City of Fruita is adding a High-Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) option and Health Savings Accounts for employees that are interested. The City of Fruita is also in the process of switching retirement providers to provide better customer service for our employees.
  - **Health and Dental Insurance** – The City’s health insurance continues to be the highest rated benefit amongst employees, and the City is going to continue with its current cost sharing absorbing a 9% increase in rates.
- **Maintenance of Existing Parks and Recreation Infrastructure**
  - With the improvements at Reed Park, the new water slide at the Community Center, and other amenities, the 2025 Budget focuses on maintenance of existing parks and recreation facilities for quality of place and community wellness priorities. Specifically:
    - Funding is being appropriated for the replacement of doors and ADA picnic tables at Parks throughout Fruita.
    - Contracted services are budgeted to increase safety and security measures at Parks at night.
    - \$40,000 for maintenance and expansion of the trail around Snooks Bottom.
    - \$30,000 to expand the detention pond for irrigation water at Little Salt Wash Park, to allow for more watering of the turf throughout the year.
    - \$55,000 to build a Community Garden at the Community Center for the use residents.
    - Replacement of several key pieces of equipment for the indoor and outdoor pools at the Community Center.

- Next year, the City of Fruita is celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Mike the Headless Chicken Festival, and to celebrate, there are increases in Entertainment, Supplies and Equipment, and Merchandise Resale.
- The addition of a new sign at the Fruita Park Bark.
- **Other Notable Changes**
  - **Retirement Change** – The City of Fruita is not making any changes to how much the organization contributes to employee retirement, but throughout the budget, you will see that the 1.5% 457 Match has been budgeted in the Retirement Line Item instead of the Personnel Adjustments Line Item. For example, in the General Fund, you will see increases in the retirement % change but a 100% decrease in Personnel Adjustments in the Non-Department Budget (110-490).
  - **TMDL Sampling** – An additional \$35,000 is included in the budget for sampling of Total Daily Maximum Load (TMDL) in washes around Fruita.
  - **Transportation** – The City’s Transportation contribution to the Mesa County Regional Transportation Planning Office (RTPO) and Grand Valley Transit is budgeted at \$93,050, an increase of \$16,000.

Assistant City Manager Shannon Vassen reviewed the items that were requested, but didn’t make it into the draft 2025 Budget. This list is kept in case there are changes in revenue and items may be added back in. This is requests that have been forward to the Leadership, and excludes a lot that was vetted before making it to them. These unfunded requests totaling approximately \$7 million include:

- \$32,000 purchasing procurement software
- \$11,000 concrete replacement on south side of Civic Center
- \$50,000 Engineering Total Unit
- De-commission of a fuel station at City Shops (\$150,000)
- Sandbag Units (10,000)
- Road Assessment Software - \$15,000 annually.
- Breach of Reservoir #2 - \$2.5 million
- Convert turf along Highway 6 & 50 to xeriscape - \$50,000
- Seasonal parks maintenance worker - \$40,000
- Electric utility vehicle - \$25,000
- Redundant centrifuge - \$2.5 million
- Wood Chipper - \$80,000

Staff is getting pricing on new cameras and upgrades to existing cameras to inhibit graffiti at City parks.

Big Capital Projects for next year include:

1. 19 Road Improvements (begins in November)
2. South Mesa Street Improvements
3. Maple Street Bridge (to begin at the end of next year)

There will be a heavier focus on maintenance and upkeep next year rather than on large Capital Projects except the three listed above.

Councilor Parrish was curious why staff was only budgeting a 1% increase in revenues. Mr. Vassen explained that there will be decreases in property taxes and sales tax on motor vehicles while county

sales tax will likely remain pretty flat. In addition, staff tends to budget fairly conservatively. Highway Use Tax funds will also be decreasing and Severance Tax dollars have not seen increases, either, although that may change further along in the budget process. Mr. Vassen noted that sometimes by December, staff has a little more confidence in those revenues. Concerning sales tax, the City has not seen the dramatic increases that were seen during the pandemic, which was affected by the addition of the online sales tax influx. Also, with inflation as high as 7%, Fruita hasn't seen as many new retailers as in previous years and thus, the rate of growth and spending is down.

Rate increases (over 2024) in sewer, irrigation and trash rates are proposed as follows:

- Sewer: 2% increase from \$52.55 per month to \$53.60 per month
- Senior Citizen Sewer increase from \$21.10 per month to \$21.50 per month
- Commercial sewer base rate increase from \$60.25 per month to \$61.45 per month plus volume charges as follows:
  - 1,000 gallons in excess of 5,000 to 10,000 gallons: from \$7.90 to \$8.05 per 1,000 gallons
  - 1,000 gallons in excess of 105,000 gallons: from \$4.90 to \$5.00 per 1,000 gallons
- Irrigation: no change
- Trash: increase from \$18.90 per month to \$19.85
- Senior Trash increase from \$17.15 per month to \$17.65 per month

For the past two years, staff has presented the draft Budget in a format like the one in the above link. Prior to that, Department Heads shared their individual department's budgets over several weeks. With a new City Council, staff is interested in learning if Council members would like to make any changes to the presentations for the Budget process or if Council had any other feedback on the Budget.

The Council decided that the Strategic format for the Budget is preferred rather than individual funds by department.

Presentations on specific aspects of the budget and how they relate to the Strategic Plan are scheduled over the next several City Council meetings until it is adopted by Council at the first meeting in December. Mr. Vassen reviewed the Budget presentation calendar for upcoming Council meetings, and asked for feedback from the City Council. The City Council recommended no changes to the format.

*Mayor Breman called for a break at 7:52 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 7:57 p.m.*

### **CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION ON LOCALISM (7:30 – 8:30 PM)**

The purpose of this agenda item was for Fruita City Council to further discuss the idea of localism and provide city staff with direction on how to move forward with the localism concept. Some previous discussion concerning localism had occurred at the Council's Strategic Planning Retreat held on August 28, 2024.

Mayor Matthew Breman said he's been doing a lot of reading about the topic of "localism." He said that reaching as many people in the community as possible is a core value of Fruita and that it will always be a challenge reaching groups such as:

- Non-downtown community members

- Hispanic/ethnic community members
- New subdivisions' community members

The Council discussed how the City will need to continually work towards communicating with the public due to challenges such as miscommunication and misunderstandings. Mayor Breman said he is very interested in the idea of a “toolkit” that each City Board and Commission member could utilize, including City Council.

Councilor Purser pointed out that the Livability Commission and the Localism Committee both suggested that the City establish a separate “Localism” board and added that she values their opinions.

Councilor Miller stated that the Livability Commission doesn't really have a focus right now, although board members have talked about potentially working with other boards such as the Fruita Youth Action Council. She said she worries about staff taking on the additional workload of another board and has a hard time justifying another one when the existing Livability Commission doesn't currently have anything to do.

Councilor Parrish agreed with Council Miller, saying he didn't know why the City can't incorporate localism into an existing board(s).

Councilor Purser recalled that when the City Council originally talked about the issue, the conversation was about the Downtown Advisory Board (DAB) and at that time, she thought everyone was in favor of dissolving the DAB with the understanding that it would be replaced with a “Localism Board.” She said she never would have shut down the DAB if she knew the Council wasn't going to move forward with a localism board; she would have just redirected the DAB members instead.

Mayor Breman said it seemed like a good idea at the time and that the Council usually does a pretty good job of making decisions based on the information at hand.

Councilor Downs stated that she is confused about what the Livability Commission does or what a Localism Board would do. Councilor Williams agreed, saying he only cared about a potential new Localism Board out of respect for Councilor Purser. He added that he thought it should be a subcommittee under Livability at first and afterwards, if it did great, then they could establish their own board.

Councilor Parrish commented that the more committees a City has, the more confused and mixed messages there can be.

Matthew proposed going to each board and asking them to get their information out to locals in Fruita as a means of promoting localism.

Communications and Engagement Ciara Ammon proposed that staff ask each board to focus on a toolkit that would include methods of sharing information after the board creates a goal for itself for the year and that those ideas could include collecting feedback from the community or getting specific information out to the public.

Councilor Williams wondered what more the City Council could do to steer more “localism” within the context and purpose of the City's boards and commissions in addition to encouraging more communication with locals.

City Manager Mike Bennet stated that at the Strategic Planning session, the Council had concluded that staff could begin to work on a really good draft of a toolkit that would incorporate preserving Fruita's core values (which remain constant), stimulating progress, reaching certain populations and challenging boards to capture more people. He used the example of the new idea of Movie Nights at Civic Center Memorial Park, even though it is staff and not City board members who will be instituting it.

Mayor Breman said it seemed to him that a majority of the Council members were not really looking to create a new board, but rather, to make sure that "localism" is part of the Strategic Plan and to push the idea of it to existing boards through the use of a toolkit and bidirectional communication.

Mr. Bennett pointed out that while it will take time and effort for the City's boards to get their messaging out and engage populations, it will likely also involve more funding, for which staff and the Council would have to approach the boards instead of the other way around.

Jeannine suggested that locals at HOA or PTA meetings be invited to the table. She also said that increasing voter registration could be something a localism board could work on, adding that she doesn't think there's enough energy on the City's currently existing boards to do something like that.

Mayor Breman asserted that he would like to see that energy put into the Livability Commission, which he said has a wider umbrella for more recruitment. He also said he would like to see some overlap of the boards more by having them work on projects together.

James wondered if the Council could get a couple of people from each board to meet quarterly in a workshop setting for the boards to become more cohesive, feel more supported by each other and create a lot of conversation. The Council and staff were excited about this idea, saying the City could provide the space and maybe snacks, but it would not be staff-driven. Another idea was that these meetings could be held at various times during the day such as at breakfast, lunch and dinner.

### **3. PROCLAMATION REQUEST – PROCLAIMING NOVEMBER 2024 AS “LUNG CANCER AWARENESS MONTH” IN THE CITY OF FRUITA TO BE VIRTUALLY ACCEPTED BY MOHAMMAD MOHSENI WITH THE AMERICAN LUNG CANCER SCREENING INITIATIVE**

The City Council had no objection to adding the “Lung Cancer Awareness Month” Proclamation to the November 5, 2024 Council agenda. They were not in favor of adding it to the list of pre-approved Proclamations for each year.

#### **OTHER ITEMS**

- Mike reminded the Council members of the headshot and group photos scheduled for Tuesday, October 1, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. before the Regular Council meeting. Dinner will be provided and everyone needs to meet at Civic Center Memorial Park.
- Mike also reminded the Council of the 19 Road Improvements Project Open House scheduled for Thursday, October 3, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. SGM will facilitate the event and answer questions. Matthew announced that he would be unable to attend.

James said that it was awesome that Reed Park is now open, but he has noticed that some visitors at the skate park are aggressively saying inappropriate things around little kids. He pointed out that if it's not stopped, it will just continue. Mike suggested more Police patrol presence to some degree as more of a deterrent-type thing. After discussing it a little further, the Council came up with an idea to talk to Parks and Recreation Director Marc Mancuso about installing signage for rules at the park that could perhaps list do's and don'ts or some other kind of light-hearted messaging that is not strictly authoritarian-sounding.

Staff and the City Council discussed Fruita Monument High School's traditional bonfire, which is an 80-year tradition and community event. It was noted that this is the first year the bonfire hasn't happened, and the Council expressed their wish to keep it going. Staff talked to Fire Marshal Travis Holder and he is 100% on board with continuing the tradition, although the location for it is tricky. Finance Director Joe Zaher said he would call the City's insurance carrier, CIRSA, to inquire about the City's insurance coverage for such an event.

Jeannine reported that the School District #51 luncheon was great; there was a more positive message given that made for a good experience.

Jeannine also said she was curious whether other Council members had an appetite to discuss Short Term Rentals (STRs) again. She stated that there is a much larger percentage of them located in the downtown core than the rest of the City.

James asked about staff's progress on reaching out to the people who own non-compliant STRs. Staff agreed to present the Council with an update at an upcoming meeting.

Matthew reported that a water line was hit in the City as ClearNetworx was putting in fiber cabling.

Matthew also noted that the Council members all received an email concerning how the Colorado Municipal League (CML) is accepting proposals for speakers at training sessions.

Matthew commented that he keeps hearing Rich and Andrea say they are new and therefore are not qualified to discuss some issues, but he wanted them to understand that all Council members have life experiences that bring a lot of value. He encouraged them to not discount themselves because they still have important perspectives in representing the Fruita community.

James offered to be a speaker for CML about the topics of music, festivals and concert series as they relate to economic development, history and building community.

It was also suggested that another topic for CML be affordable housing. Mike noted that the presentations could be given by a combination of staff and Council members or each Council member could do a presentation about a specific topic by themselves, if they prefer.

Andrea noted that she submitted a session proposal for the Colorado Creative Industries' (CCI) Summit to speak at the event. She added that the Council and staff need more discussion about the possibility of the City of Fruita becoming a Creative District.

#### **4. ADJOURN**

With no further business before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Woods  
Deputy City Clerk