CITY OF LANDER, WYOMING

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and Lander City Council
From: City Administration
Date: September 17, 2026
Subject: 2026 Half-cent Economic Development (ED) Tax Fund Remainder

Staff evaluated potential uses of the remaining half-cent Economic Development (ED) funds in the context of the adopted 2025 Strategic Plan and Master Plan. Council may choose to preserve and invest the remaining funds for long-term economic development purposes or distribute all or a portion of the funds in the nearer term. Staff has developed a framework for either approach.

Both approaches align with Strategic Plan Pillar 3, *"Investing in Quality of Life,"* which identifies as its highest priority: *"conduct a robust economic development strategic planning process to create a shared understanding and definition of Lander's economic development vision and **identify actions to support economic development**."*

Any long-term investment or distribution program should prioritize projects and programs that advance the economic development objectives established in the 2025 Master Plan:

- **EC1.** Strengthen and Diversify the Local Economy
- **EC2.** Enhance Commercial Corridor Vitality
- **EC3.** Address Workforce Challenges
- **EC4.** Foster a Resilient Community
- **EC5.** Enhance the Beauty of Main Street

Any distribution of all or a portion of the funds must also meet the requirements of the ballot language to *"retain and/or increase employment or result in a net gain of money into the community."* Staff recommends that Council establish and follow an application, evaluation, and approval process for future distributions to provide transparency, consistency, and oversight.

The current balance of the remaining half-cent ED fund is **$1,029,440.21**. Two formal funding requests have been received from WRTA and FAST totaling **$353,362.22**. Council has discussed both grant and loan options for these bridge-funding requests and whether they should be funded from the half-cent ED fund or another fund designated by Council.

Staff has developed the following two options for Council consideration and potential action at the October 13 Regular Council meeting.

Option 1 - Long-Term Economic Development Plan

This option preserves the majority of the remaining funds as a long-term economic development resource.

1. Award **$78,362.22 to WRTA** from the half-cent ED fund as a four-year loan.
2. Award **$275,000 to FAST** from the half-cent ED fund as a four-year loan.
3. With the remaining **$676,077.99**, create a dedicated economic development investment fund and authorize development of a long-term investment and distribution program consistent with the ballot language and adopted Strategic and Master Plans.

Option 2 - Near-Term Economic Development Plan

This option distributes the funds toward eligible economic development, recreation, and quality-of-life projects in the nearer term.

1. Award **$78,362.22 to WRTA**.
2. Award **$275,000 to FAST**.
3. Commit **$250,000 toward a pool endowment**, subject to Council-approved contingencies, including establishment of a nonprofit entity, City representation in its governance, compliance with the half-cent ED ballot language, and provisions requiring funds to revert to the City if the endowment is not established.
4. Dedicate the remaining **$426,077.99** to eligible recreation and quality-of-life projects through a Council-approved application, evaluation, and distribution process. Potential project areas could include golf, softball, rodeo, and other qualifying community investments. All awards would be required to comply with the ballot language and advance the objectives of the adopted Strategic and Master Plans.