

SOUTH JORDAN CITY  
CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING

November 8, 2023

**Present:** Mayor Dawn R. Ramsey, Council Member Patrick Harris, Council Member Brad Marlor, Council Member Don Shelton, Council Member Tamara Zander, Council Member Jason McGuire, City Manager Dustin Lewis, Assistant City Manager Jason Rasmussen, City Attorney Ryan Loose, Director of Commerce Brian Preece, Director of Strategy & Budget Don Tingey, Strategy & Budget Analyst Abigail Patonai, Associate Director of Strategy & Budget Katie Olson, Fire Chief Chris Dawson, Director of Administrative Services Melinda Seager, Director of Public Works Raymond Garrison, Director of Recreation Janell Payne, CFO Sunil Naidu, Director of Planning Steven Schaefermeyer, Deputy City Engineer Jeremy Nielson, Police Chief Jeff Carr, Human Resources Director Teresa Cook, IT Director Jon Day, City Recorder Anna Crookston

**Absent:**

**Others:** Laurel Bevans

5:16 P.M.  
STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING

**A. Welcome, Roll Call, and Introduction:** *By Mayor Dawn R. Ramsey*

Mayor Ramsey welcomed everyone present and introduced the meeting.

**B. Invocation:** *By Director of Strategy & Budget, Don Tingey*

Director Tingey offered the invocation.

**C. Dinner Served**

**D. Discussion:** Strategic Priorities, Revised Strategic Goals and Objectives, and future action items for Fiscal Year 2024-25.

City Manager Dustin Lewis reviewed the planned discussion topics for the meeting tonight, including future projects and setting the council schedule for next year. Regarding that schedule, he asked to discuss meeting only once in April to allow for council members and staff to attend the Utah League of Cities and Towns meeting.

The council agreed to remove the April 16 meeting.

Manager Lewis also asked if the council would like staff to schedule any combined meetings with the Planning Commission. The council agreed they would like to schedule two combined meetings, during work sessions, for the upcoming year.

**Council Member Zander joined the meeting.**

Manager Lewis then moved on to discuss the municipal courts and the possibility of legislation from the state to change the courts. He shared the city's research on the cost of those courts, the associated revenue streams, etc. It works out to a negative amount, costing the city money to have the municipal courts at the cost of about \$500,000 a year. The potential options for changes are to remove the municipal court, which requires notice being given and some associated costs. The city can keep the court as it is, or they can wait and see what the legislature decides to do in regards to possibly taking them over in the future. If the city removes the municipal court they will probably need to keep an administrative hearing officer for code complaints and cases, etc. They would also need to employ the prosecutors in the office of the city attorney because cases would still have to be prosecuted, just in a different court location. At the last city manager meeting he attended with The League, the topic came up and it was asked how many in attendance were considering removing their municipal courts, and nearly every hand in the room went up. The city is due for court recertification at the next council meeting on December 5, and he explained that not recertifying was not a viable option for removing the municipal court. His recommendation is to give strong consideration to ceasing the city's municipal court. The process for that is long and requires about a year and a half.

Council Member McGuire asked where those cases go if the municipal court is gone.

City Attorney Ryan Loose explained that they would most likely go to the county justice court, and throughout the transition an agreement would be made with neighboring cities to fill in. He also mentioned the judge's term having a part in the timing of that decision since the city still has to pay the judge for their entire term. If the judge is allowed to run for re-election then the city would be responsible for the next six year term, even if the courts are closed. Our city's judge is up for election in two years, and the closure is a two year process. There would be increased costs with our prosecutors having to travel to other courts after the closure, but an agreement with a neighboring city would help with some of those costs, keeping them closer to home. Chief Carr's officers would have to go to other courts to testify, which would be an additional cost. The state is discussing pulling all B & C misdemeanors out of the municipal courts, moving them to the district courts, leaving basically traffic and other infractions for the municipal courts. If all our courts were doing was traffic and other infractions, we would not be operating as a full-time court, while still paying the judge and staff for full-time work.

Manager Lewis expressed his wish to do this early if the city chooses to make those changes, before a lot of other cities make the same announcement and the state decides to change their mind due to the increased burden on them.

Council Member Marlbor asked if closing the courts would cause a positive net effect on the budget in the end.

Attorney Loose said he believes so since we do not have to have a court, it currently runs in the red, and even with the additional costs of staff having to travel after a closure it still wouldn't be as bad as the current losses. In addition, the Public Safety Building would gain additional space from those areas being closed. Well over half the tickets being written in the city are for non-residents, so keeping a court here isn't necessarily benefitting the majority of the residents here.

Mayor Ramsey asked to draw attention to the fact that the courts are only servicing 30% of our residents; specifically that residents are only 30% of those being ticketed and utilizing the local court system. The current system isn't even serving 30% of all our residents, only those involved in legal issues.

Attorney Loose confirmed that of those being served by the court, only 30% of the traffic cases are residents of the city. There are other legal issues like shoplifting that encompass a slightly higher percentage, but he also pointed out that most of our "through" streets are used by non-residents passing through to get to another destination.

Manager Lewis then moved on to discuss potentially new programs that have been mentioned in the past year. First was the Urban Deer Mitigation Program. Several residents have shared concerns about the deer in their yards. The city's team has met with the DWR, animal control and looked at programs in other areas; most of which are no longer in practice due to changes in rules. If the program is implemented, it is overseen by the state with certain specific rules. The city would have to pay to get tags from DNR, pay someone to harvest the animal in its current location and do it in a humane fashion, disembowel the animal, take it to be processed and donated to food banks, etc. After looking at the program, it was determined it would require a full time employee. There are very few cities with these kinds of programs anymore due to the extensive rules and costs. His recommendation to the council is not to implement the program based on staff's extensive research. The next program was the Healthy South Jordan Program. Staff has looked at the requirements and application process for the program and award, including recertification, and his recommendation was to pursue the program and make it an official city program. Many of the requirements are already being met by the city's current programming, so the costs would be minimal. The next program discussed was the use of credit cards by developers for their fees, which are large amounts, and the costs to the city for allowing that. Staff has discussed ways to pass those costs back to the developers and his recommendation is to direct staff to go ahead with passing those costs back. So far, the council has decided to hold off on a decision for the courts, said no to the Urban Deer Mitigation Program, yes to the Healthy South Jordan Program, and yes to passing the costs of using a credit card for convenience back to the developers.

CFO Sunil Naidu gave some more details on implementing the credit card fee program. This would not apply to residents paying their bills through a credit card, only to contractors/developers paying their fees.

Manager Lewis moved on to discuss the possibility of an auto and plate detection system for the police department to implement that works with neighboring police departments who use the same technology. This is technology that puts cameras on poles in various locations in the city,

and those cameras can be programmed to look for specific types of vehicles with specific details to aid in solving crimes or finding criminals on the run. These cameras are only looking at the rear plates of the vehicles as well, and they are not used for enforcement. They can be used to help with Amber or senior alerts, as well as establishing leads for detectives of consistent travel patterns of wanted individuals. The council and staff discussed potential costs and details, as well as the other communities currently using the technology.

Police Chief Jeff Carr indicated there are some grant opportunities out there.

Manager Lewis also added they are researching whether or not restricted funds coming on for law enforcement can be used for this program. Right now he is just wondering if the council is interested in the concept or not. The next issue discussed was the high levels of police response to car break-ins and residents requiring a police report to file an insurance claim. The technology now exists to have a “digital officer” for those needing to report crimes like that to use their phone, computer or kiosk at city buildings to get that police report. If in the line of questioning from the computer it’s determined that the report is life threatening or an officer is needed right away, it has the capability to turn that call over to VECC and generate an officer response. Not only does this increase the service level for the residents, but it avoids tying up all those officers and the need for additional officers and vehicles.

Chief Carr added that the city currently has a form that can be filled out online, but that form goes to the sergeants who still have to have an officer contact the victim and fill things out the old fashioned way. Many times people are just waiting for a case number, and our department currently does about 600 of those online requests a year without advertising the ability to the general public. He believes they will not only save money on the officers, but also on the dispatch side. Once this system is ready, dispatch can share it with callers and send them over to the online system. Officers will still respond if requested, but this could potentially save the city one full officer and the associated benefits and costs.

Manager Lewis added that the software also allows users to choose the avatar of their digital officer, which could help make residents feel more comfortable being able to choose the gender or race of their officer. The system is also multilingual, which avoids issues with language barriers. The council agreed to have staff explore the program and integrate it into the budget. The next item to discuss was a parking division, is the city going to get into the area of parking enforcement. There are already sections of the city where parking is by permit only, but there isn’t currently a good mechanism to enforce that. As parking structures are added to the city, the opportunities will be given for the city to own or be a part of that infrastructure. Staff has looked into solutions for these problems, and there are many options. The city needs to decide if they want to be in the parking business in the future, and if so, the foundation needs to be laid starting now as it will require additional hiring and funding of the operational and maintenance costs. He doesn’t need a yes or no today, but he needs to know if there is potentially any interest. Staff shared some of their research and highlighted important information, including feedback from other cities based on their experiences.

Council Members Zander, Shelton, McGuire shared they were not interested in getting into the parking business.

Manager Lewis moved on to discussing an invitation to the Montessori school down by the river to work on a community garden.

Assistant City Manager Jason Rasmussen shared his insight on the project and what would be involved. A piece of city park property was identified by the school for this project. The school is willing to put a fence around it and do the leg work. Staff looked into it, and the city could allow them to lease the land for a small amount and period of time, with terms including rerouting any city sprinkler pipe. The city would not take on any of those costs, and would not be watering it. Regarding any public benefit, the school offered to have gardening classes for the community and residents, allowing them to come in and learn proper techniques. Staff felt that was a pretty good offer for the small piece of land, and recommends entering into an agreement to allow them to use the requested land.

Manager Lewis noted that the agreement would be written such that if the garden goes into disrepair the school would have to return it to its original state at their own expense. He moved on to discuss the city's recreation program, including their partnership with Bingham Baseball. After discussions with Bingham Baseball's leader, Dan Ramsey, it was shared that he is getting ready to retire and staff has been working with him on plans for the future. Manager Lewis proposed the city work to transition from having a partner provide that aspect of programming to the city providing it. The city would then run baseball like they do softball currently. Mr. Ramsey kindly offered to stay on during another baseball season to help make that transition, if the council would like to head in that direction. With the Bees Baseball Team making South Jordan their home, this could be an opportunity to capitalize on that and continue making baseball part of our identity. The baseball fields were turned over to the teams this year for maintenance, and that didn't work out as well as planned. He proposed taking the field maintenance back next year, and look to transitioning being the little league provider of baseball; along with taking it to a whole new level, run as a city program, and making it a premier recreation program. He discussed the associated budget costs, and that the city would also take over the concessions portion of the program, which is an additional revenue stream. This would also allow for community partnerships/sponsorships. The council discussed their thoughts on the potential program change. One benefit to this change is that competition for field use between comp teams and the little league teams would disappear, as the city programs would get priority on those fields.

Mayor Ramsey shared that Dan has been a volunteer all these years, and he can't run it by himself any longer. There is no one willing to take over, and the Ramseys are willing to donate all the equipment they currently have as it was purchased privately by them.

Council Member Zander asked about the potential return on investment for little league baseball.

Manager Lewis responded that the city runs many programs that cost money in the end, and gave Summerfest as an example. He doesn't know this little league would ever generate money for the

general fund, but the goal is to hopefully cover the costs. The city has many more resources available to them for funding that a private citizen doesn't, and they are hoping that will help them cover their costs. If the council is interested, he can have staff look more into this and get details on potential costs. He also discussed why the concessions at Mulligans doesn't generate profit, versus a concession stand at little league games. He discussed with the council that baseball fields do take a lot of work to maintain, but there are a lot of passionate people in the city who want to see this succeed. As they begin to put together Capital Improvement Projects for the year, he wanted to bring up three specific projects which will need to be factored into the budget in the near future; those are Fire Station 65, Water Tanks 7B and 8B, and the Public Works West Facility.

CFO Naidu discussed options for bonding to complete those projects, noting that interest rates are currently not doing very well. He will need to start working through the process and planning soon, and discussed the funds needed for those projects, along with what funds have already been allocated.

Council Member Shelton asked about seeing the specific numbers before discussing raising taxes.

Mayor Ramsey discussed potential other funding tools that are becoming available, specifically potentially available low interest loans for infrastructure in areas opening up land for development. The League is still working on getting those ideas passed, and they still wouldn't be enough for what is needed. She then asked about any other funding mechanisms available.

CFO Naidu discussed some of the options the city has used in the past, and what could be available to them in a little bit to help with those projects.

Council Member Harris asked about options with developers the city has relationships with.

Manager Lewis responded that would be a topic for another night with the City Attorney's Office.

Council Member Marlors asked if CFO Naidu was predicting a Truth in Taxation in 2024.

CFO Naidu responded that they have looked at past rates, but based on the statistics he has seen the majority of Americans have dipped into their savings recently. The city needs money, but so do the residents. As much as he'd like to ask to raise taxes, he doesn't feel that he can. However, if every request needs to be funded, then raising taxes would be the only option.

Council Member Harris thinks the reality is that things are more expensive now, but he also agrees that the city needs to continue being conservative and careful.

Director Tingey noted that construction costs have also skyrocketed, giving examples of construction costs for neighboring city projects.

Council Member Zander asked if the city ever negotiated the land for the additional public works yard being given to the city.

Manager Lewis responded that yes, that land has been given to the city. The estimated costs for all three projects does not include a land cost because that was taken care of in the past and donated to the city. He shared that the compensation committee has met, the directors have all submitted their requests for new staffing. They are currently working through all that, and with the information shared tonight by the council they can better address those requests with the budget in mind. Staff will come back to the next budget meeting with all of that put together to fill in gaps, and that is currently planned for the last week in January.

Council Member Zander shared that she thinks we are in hard times right now. She has a team staff of 20 people and they are releasing two of them this week; that is not fun, and is a huge decrease in her staff. She suggested looking into to more AI, which is what she has started doing in her business to help.

Manager Lewis responded that they have had those discussions, but there isn't much more he can get out of city employees; many of whom are at their breaking point and that's the reason they are asking for more. Many staff are doing the jobs of more than one FTE. He understands what she is saying, and the directors can confirm that he has pushed every efficiency possible; to the point of people working across departments to get stuff done. He knows the requests this year are bare bones, and they will have to whittle that down.

Council Member McGuire noted that every year the council asks staff to do more, but they aren't hiring people at the same rate.

Manager Lewis added that there has also been more development, which results in more sidewalks, parks, streets, etc., that need to be maintained. If the growth in the city was stagnant, things would be different.

Council Member Zander asked again if we had looked at every possibility of using AI to help.

Manager Lewis responded that yes, that is why Chief Carr presented the digital officer option. Being in a service industry, many time the only option is boots on the streets getting stuff done.

Council Member Zander doesn't want to sterilize the experience, but they do need to ask how they expand each individual's abilities with AI included.

Manager Lewis noted that the city also has really good employees, so much so that other entities are trying to poach them all the time, and he referenced the streets manager that was lost yesterday to the private sector. He takes it very seriously, looking at that cost of living adjustment, to make sure they can compensate those employees, and the merit to reward the people working so hard and adding additional skills. Many employees have taken the initiative to learn new skills, allowing them to add more work to their day, and he can't burn them out. Salt Lake County announced they are having a hiring freeze, he is watching very closely to see what

other cities are doing in that realm. We have worked so hard to have a competitive workforce and he doesn't want the city to lose any ground because it's so hard to get caught up.

Council Member Zander agreed, noting that once the staff is trained it is so hard to bring on new employees and get them up to speed.

Mayor Ramsey noted that the last part of this meeting has made her thoughts about the court easier to sort out. If they are losing \$500,000 a year on courts and they can cut the court without taking away service, the conversation changes for her. She has the same thoughts for the credit card fees.

**E. Summarize Next Steps:** Fiscal Year 2024-25 Strategic Planning and Budget.

**Council Member Shelton motioned to adjourn the November 8, 2023 City Council Strategic Planning Meeting. Council Member Marlor seconded the motion; vote was 5-0 unanimous in favor.**

The November 8, 2023 City Council Strategic Planning Meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.