

GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP SUMMARY

August 18, 2025

Meeting Convened: 5:30 p.m. The meeting was in-person at the Fire Department Training Room, 625 Ute Avenue, and live-streamed via GoTo Webinar.

City Councilmembers Present: Councilmembers Robert Ballard, Scott Beilfuss, Laurel Cole, Jason Nguyen, Ben Van Dyke, and Mayor Cody Kennedy. Councilmember Anna Stout attended virtually.

Staff present: City Manager Mike Bennett, City Attorney John Shaver, Assistant to the City Manager Johnny McFarland, Community Development Director Tamra Allen, Housing Manager Ashley Chambers, Chief Financial Officer Jay Valentine, Deputy City Clerk Misty Williams, and City Clerk Selestina Sandoval.

1. Discussion Topics

a. Grand Valley Connects Overview

Grand Valley Connects is a Mesa County Public Health program that helps residents access essential resources and support services. It has become a critical resource for hundreds of community members as they work to improve their well-being. Xavier Crockett (Executive Director, Mesa County Public Health) and Michelle Trujillo (Health Promotion Division Director) of Grand Valley Connects presented to provide an overview of this program and the resources it provides.

Key points included:

- Program Purpose: Enhanced resource navigation to assist residents facing complex challenges by actively helping them access services (e.g., housing, mental health, public assistance).
- Locally funded, flexible, and unrestricted by state/federal grant deliverables.
- Serves all populations regardless of income or need type.
- 88.3% of individuals served in 2025 have been successfully connected to at least one resource.
- Top Needs Addressed: Mental health, financial assistance, housing.
- Return on Investment Examples:
 - Reduced ER use by connecting individuals to primary care.
 - Economic productivity through employment support.
 - Housing support reducing social costs (estimated \$30K–\$40K savings per person).
- Ask to Council:
 - Attend Connecting Council meetings.
 - Consider integrating Grand Valley Connects into city programs.

b. Salt Flats Project Update

Community Development Director Tamra Allen introduced this item, which was presented by Housing Manager Ashley Chambers.

Key points included:

- Project Purpose: Develop ~21.8 acres in central Grand Junction to address the affordable housing shortage.
- Funded via \$2.2M state grant (Prop 123 land banking) + \$1M city match.
- Additional \$2M state grant for infrastructure with \$800K city match and \$1M seller contribution.
- Affordable Housing Need:
 - 44% increase in rent since 2019.
 - Median rent: \$1,500; median home price: \$420,000.
 - 2,200-unit deficit for those below 60% AMI.
- Project Goals:
 - Build 400–550 housing units over 10 years; 70% must be affordable (60% AMI for rentals, 100% AMI for ownership).
 - Include housing for seniors, veterans, and working families.
 - Promote housing diversity: multifamily, townhomes, ADUs.
- Development Partners:
 - Brickwell: Master developer (Phase 1: 144 units via 4% LIHTC targeting 58% AMI; Phase 2: 120 units mixed income).
 - Rural Homes: Affordable modular homeownership (under 100% AMI).
 - Vertical: Homeownership (mixed AMI).
 - Volunteers of America: Already approved 2-phase veteran housing with Housing Authority.
- Pending Council Items (for Aug 20):
 - Lease of 4.2 acres to Brickwell.
 - Letter of Intent to explore the possibility of a partnership and land contribution (~11% equity stake for the city).
 - Letter of Intent for a sale of 4.2 acres to Brickwell.
- Council Discussion Highlights:
 - Questions on lease contingencies, deliverables, and developer qualifications.
 - Concern over the city's perceived role as co-developer and tax implications.
 - Clarification that the project remains subject to zoning, environmental standards, and affordability covenants.

c. Budget Process Overview

Presented by: City Manager Mike Bennett and Chief Financial Officer Jay Valentine

Key points included:

- Two workshops in October and potentially a third in November to review the 2026 budget.
- Budget presentations will be organized by the strategic plan pillars rather than by department.
- Focus on aligning spending with council priorities and core services.
- Changes Considered:
 - Economic partner updates may be moved to regular meeting slots.
 - Reduced departmental presentations for more strategic discussions.

d. Urban Trails Committee Letter

Council discussion led by Mayor Cody Kennedy regarding concerns over the Urban Trails Committee (UTC) operating beyond its intended advisory scope.

Key points included:

- Mayor's Proposal:
 - Temporarily pause UTC operations.
 - Have staff review and potentially revise the committee's scope and bylaws to align with its original purpose (focused on trail planning, design feedback, and public input).
- Council Discussion:
 - Some supported the pause, citing overreach and concerns about tone and appropriateness of advocacy efforts.
 - Others defended the committee's work, noting their contributions to trail connectivity, bike/ped safety, and insights on mobility challenges faced by non-drivers.
 - Some members emphasized the value of community input on active transportation and suggested the committee remain within its advisory role.
- City Attorney's Clarification:
 - The UTC is advisory only.
 - Cannot create policy or apply for grants.
- Staff will compose a letter to be approved by Council, giving the UTC direction of their role as an advisory committee to Council.
- Council asked that the UTC meetings be recorded for transparency, and there was a general consensus that staff should research options for all boards and commissions to record their meetings in the future.

2. Council Communication

There was a discussion on Council potentially interacting with homeless advocate groups.

3. Next Workshop Topics

City Manager Mike Bennett outlined future workshop topics.

4. Other Business

Interview Committee Volunteers for Forestry Board (Councilmember Beilfuss), Historic Preservation (Councilmember Nguyen) and Visit Grand Junction (Mayor Kennedy).

Council approved the issuance of two proclamations: Competitive Cycling and Tour of the Moon, and Grand Mesa Baseball Senior Baseball Day

5. Adjournment

There being no further business, the workshop adjourned at 8:49 p.m.