

## **GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP SUMMARY MARCH 2, 2026**

**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 Scott Beilfuss, Laurel Lutz (virtual), Jason Nguyen, Anna Stout (virtual 5:55 – 6:44 p.m.), Ben Van Dyke, and Mayor Cody Kennedy. Councilmember Robert Ballard was absent

**Staff present:** City Manager Mike Bennett, Interim City Attorney Jeremiah Boies, Deputy City Manager Kimberly Bullen, Chief Financial Officer Jay Valentine, Assistant to the City Manager Johnny McFarland, Parks and Recreation Director Ken Sherbenou, Human Resources Director Shelley Caskey, Parks Superintendent Emily Krause, Deputy City Clerk Krystle Koehler, and City Clerk Selestina Sandoval.

### **1. Discussion Topics**

Mayor Cody Kennedy asked to move Orchard Mesa Pool to the beginning of the agenda due to the public present for that item.

#### **a. Orchard Mesa Pool – Next Steps**

City Council requested the Orchard Mesa Pool item come back to City Council in early 2026 for further discussion. With the expiration of the current agreement with the owner of the land and the building, School District #51, slated for December 31, 2026 and with the Community Recreation Center coming online in late 2026, continued discussion is needed. At the February 2, 2026 workshop, staff presented the history of the facility, described the current situation including level of service and finances, and reviewed the 2023 Orchard Mesa Study and Plan.

Staff provided an update following Council's prior direction to explore:

- Cost verification for pool rehabilitation
- Formation of a recreation or other special district
- Potential public-private partnership (RFP process)

Key Realities Identified:

- The City does not own the land or building; District 51 does.
- Current agreement expires December 31, 2026.
- An RFP cannot realistically proceed without:
  - Ownership, or
  - An option to purchase, or
  - A formal extension from District 51.
- Mesa County would lead any recreation district process.

- If no action is taken, demolition proceeds once the Community Recreation Center opens.

#### Updated Cost Information

- 2024 study estimate: \$5.7–\$6.2 million
- FCI high-level review estimate: \$7.6–\$8.1 million
  - This reflects bringing the pool to long-term operational condition — not adding major amenities.
- 2026 net operating cost: \$476,543
  - Does not include unexpected repairs.

#### Council Discussion Themes

- Strong agreement that conversations with District 51 must happen first.
- General support for requesting:
  - An extension of time
  - Clarification on willingness to sell, donate, or provide an option to purchase
- Discussion about:
  - Whether City ownership makes strategic sense long-term (adjacency to Eagle Rim Park)
  - Liability concerns if acquired without a funding plan
  - The need to identify a funding mechanism before committing to ownership
- Recognition that:
  - City taxpayers alone likely should not shoulder full renovation costs
  - A countywide recreation district may be more appropriate if pursued

#### Direction to Staff

- Engage District 51 to determine:
  - Willingness to sell or convey property
  - Extension possibilities
  - Timing constraints
- Return to Council with concrete information before further decisions on RFP or district formation.

### **b. Boards and Commissions Decision-Making Process**

Community participation at all levels of the governmental process is valued and encouraged. The City Clerk's office helps facilitate volunteer appointments to 14 boards, committees, commissions, and authorities on which over 100 citizens serve. Boards and Commission members are appointed by interview teams composed of two Councilmembers and their chair. This topic was requested for Council discussion to visit the Council decision-making process and its communication to the rest of the Council prior to going to a vote during a regular meeting. The Communications team outlined goals for increased community engagement in 2026.

City Clerk reviewed the current appointment process:

- Clerk's office manages recruitment and advertising.
- Two Councilmembers (including liaison) + board chair conduct interviews.
- Recommendations are brought forward for Council appointment.

Council Discussion

- General support for maintaining the core process.
- Interest in improving transparency and communication.
- Briefly discuss recommended appointments during the workshop prior to ratification.
- Provide a short written summary explaining the selection rationale.
- Discussion regarding:
  - Balance between transparency and discouraging applicants.
  - Public nature of application materials and discussions.
  - Review of board bylaws and clarity of board roles.
  - Use of alternates — potentially board-specific rather than uniform policy.

Direction

- Implement workshop-level discussion of appointments prior to formal action.
- Include brief explanation of selection rationale.
- Consider future review of board bylaws and expectations.

### **c. City Attorney Hiring Process**

City Council has directed that the City conduct a City Attorney hiring process similar to the City Manager recruitment, including City Council review of the Request for Proposals (RFP) and City Council selection of the recruitment firm. This workshop item is intended to review the proposed Scope of Services and Deliverables for an executive search firm, so Purchasing can finalize the full RFP package for release.

Human Resources Director Shelley Caskey presented the draft scope of services and deliverables for the recruitment process.

Council Feedback:

- Strong support for a structured, transparent recruitment.
- Emphasis on:
  - Cultural alignment between City Attorney and City Manager's Office.
  - Ensuring a broad and qualified candidate pool.
- Discussion about number of finalists (typically 3–5) and flexibility depending on market conditions.

Direction

- Proceed with issuing the RFP as drafted.
- Allow flexibility during recruitment to refine finalist pool size if needed.

## **2. Council Communication**

Updates included:

- Museums of Western Colorado ongoing evaluation of Whitman building.
- Terminal Project progressing; coordination with CDOT underway.
- DDA considering parking lot acquisition and property swap related to terminal project.
- Mesa County Libraries exploring development of vacant lot near downtown library for Friends of the Library facility.

## **3. Next Workshop Topics**

- Potential discussion on ranked-choice voting (pending conversation with County Clerk regarding feasibility).
- Possible cancelation of the March 16 Workshop
- March 30 workshop to include:
  - 7th Street conceptual improvements
  - Additional council-identified discussion items (GJ Auto Sales)
  - Councilmember Ballard deployment discussion (if Councilmember Ballard is not available on this date, this will be scheduled for March 16)

## **4. Other Business**

Council expressed support for the proclamation requests:

- Brain Injury Awareness Month (March 2026)
- National Donate Life Month (April 2026)
- Mesa County Libraries 125th Anniversary (July 2026)
- Global Love Day (Social Proclamation)

Preference to invite local representatives to attend proclamation presentations.

## **5. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the workshop was adjourned at 7:06 p.m.