

GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP SUMMARY

September 14, 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, Cody Kennedy, Jason Nguyen, Ben Van Dyke and Mayor Laurel Lutz. Councilmembers Robert Ballard and Anna Stout were absent.

Staff present: City Manager Mike Bennett, Interim City Attorney Jeremiah Boies, Deputy City Manager Kimberly Bullen, Chief Financial Officer Jay Valentine, Interim Utilities Director Ashley Firl, Assistant to the City Manager Johnny McFarland, Management Analyst Andrea Brush-White, Deputy City Clerk Misty Williams and City Clerk Selestina Sandoval.

1. Discussion Topics

a. Water Supply Element – Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Key Points:

- Staff presented the new Water Supply Element required by Colorado Senate Bill 24-174. The element will be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan and must be adopted by the Planning Commission by December 31, 2026.
- The document draws from existing regional water-efficiency and drought-response plans and has also been aligned with the Colorado Water Plan.
- Staff reported that current water supplies are sufficient for current and projected needs. Conservation efforts and declining water use per tap have improved the City's long-term supply outlook.
- Council discussed the effects of population growth and demographics on demand, coordination among area water providers, drought and increasingly arid conditions, and benchmarking Grand Junction's water use against other communities.
- Staff noted that water-supply projections incorporate drought and worst-case conditions and currently indicate supplies could extend to approximately 2049 without significant infrastructure investments.
- Staff will consult with local water providers and irrigation districts, incorporate feedback, and take the amendment to the Planning Commission.

b. Temporary Moratorium on Data Centers

Key Points:

- Staff proposed bringing forward an ordinance establishing a temporary moratorium on large data centers while the City develops appropriate land-use regulations.

- The City's current code does not specifically address data centers, creating uncertainty regarding how applications would be evaluated, particularly given potentially significant electricity and water demands.
- Staff emphasized that no applications are currently pending or known to be forthcoming, although the City has received inquiries.
- The proposed moratorium would last up to 365 days or until Council adopts applicable code amendments, whichever occurs first.
- Council discussed coordinating with Mesa County, neighboring jurisdictions, water providers, and energy providers because a data center outside city limits could still have regional infrastructure impacts.
- Council also raised whether the review should consider other high-water or high-energy industrial uses, such as water bottling or chip manufacturing.
- Staff will refine the draft moratorium ordinance and use the moratorium period to evaluate best practices and potential development standards.

c. Local Preference for Procurements

Key Points:

- Staff reviewed options for giving local businesses an advantage in City procurement.
- Staff identified examples of local-preference programs in Colorado but noted concerns including potentially higher costs, reduced competition, administrative complexity, reciprocal disadvantages for Grand Junction businesses bidding elsewhere, and conflicts with some state or federal grant requirements.
- Councilmembers expressed differing perspectives. Some emphasized the economic benefit of keeping City contracts and employment local, particularly when competing against out-of-state firms; others were concerned that preference policies could discourage bidders and reduce competition.
- The possibility of a broader Colorado-based preference rather than strictly local preference was raised, although legal staff noted that interstate-commerce and constitutional issues would need review.
- There was substantial interest in gathering better information before considering a policy change.
- Staff will begin tracking local versus non-local participation and contract awards, bid-price differences, local subcontracting, and reasons local businesses may not bid. Staff will also continue outreach and education on how local businesses can compete for City contracts.

2. Council Communication

- Council discussed information from the Colorado Basin Roundtable concerning water conservation and statewide water issues.
- Staff clarified that regular meetings among local domestic water-provider managers primarily address operational issues, regulations, supply, and short-term planning.

- Council revisited drought-related water rates. Staff indicated proposed 2027 rates will address the rate structure and potential future drought-rate adjustments.
- Council also discussed an opportunity to advocate for additional Mountain Rail passenger service to Grand Junction. A potential resolution would demonstrate City support without committing funding, and Council expressed interest in coordinating support with regional partners. A resolution demonstrating support will be placed on the September 16, 2026, regular agenda.

3. Next Workshop Topics

City Manager Bennett summarized list of next workshop topics.

- The next three workshops will focus heavily on the City budget.
- October workshops were confirmed for October 5 and October 26 at 4:00 p.m., rather than the usual first and third Monday schedule.
- Staff is preparing a comprehensive review of boards and commissions, including voting structures, bylaws, ordinances, charter provisions, and the roles of Council and staff liaisons.
- Council's norms of conduct are also expected to return for discussion following the budget process, with draft information anticipated beforehand.

4. Other Business

- Council reviewed an invitation for the Mayor to join the Mayor's Alliance to End Childhood Hunger.

5. Adjournment

There being no further business, the workshop was adjourned at 6:56 p.m.