GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP SUMMARY
October 26, 2026

Meeting Convened: 4:00 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 (virtual), Scott Beilfuss, Cody Kennedy, Jason Nguyen, Anna Stout, Ben Van Dyke and Mayor Laurel Lutz.

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, Transportation and Engineering Director Trent Prall, Parks and Recreation Director Ken Sherbenou, IT Director Scott Hockins, Communications Manager Kelsey Coleman, General Services Director Jerod Timothy, Human Resources Director Shelley Caskey, Interim Community Development Director Thomas Lloyd, Fire Chief Peter Skeris, Police Chief Matt Smith, Deputy Finance Director Brandon Hinze, Visit Grand Junction Director Elizabeth Fogarty, Budget Manager Matt Martinez, and City Clerk Selestina Sandoval.

1. Discussion Topics

a. 2027 City Manager's Recommended Budget

City Manager Mike Bennett and staff continued their presentation of the proposed 2027 budget, focusing on enterprise and internal service funds, utility rates, capital improvements, and one-time funding requests.

Key Points:

Budget Overview and Fund Balance

- Staff reviewed efforts to address the structural deficit through strategic expenditure reductions, personnel adjustments, cost reallocations, and use of fund balance.
- The proposed budget includes 20 additional positions, primarily supporting public safety and expanded recycling operations.
- The projected General Fund balance is $42.8 million, approximately $13 million above the City's minimum reserve requirement.
- Fund balance will continue to support the First Responder Fund expenses while the City pursues a long-term funding solution through a potential fire district.

Internal Service and Special Revenue Funds

- Staff reviewed the Visit Grand Junction, Information Technology, Equipment, Facilities, and Communications Center funds.

- Visit Grand Junction's budget includes deferred marketing expenditures from 2026 to 2027 to maximize their economic impact.
- The Equipment Fund includes $4.87 million for fleet replacement. Council discussed the aging fleet, replacement priorities, and opportunities for sharing equipment with neighboring jurisdictions.
- Staff reviewed facility maintenance needs, regional emergency communications funding, investment earnings, and changes to the City's financial partnership with Colorado Mesa University.

Enterprise Funds and Utility Rates

- Staff presented proposed budgets and rates for water, wastewater, Ridges irrigation, solid waste and recycling, golf, and parking operations.
- Council discussed proposed utility rate increases, water conservation, infrastructure investments, and the long-term sustainability of utility funding.
- Staff highlighted improvements planned for the Juniata Ditch, which experiences approximately 1,400 acre-feet of water loss annually, and discussed the proposed dam expansion.
- Council discussed utility availability charges, tap fees, and their relationship to housing affordability.
- Staff reviewed the expansion of citywide recycling and optional seasonal yard waste collection, including associated rate adjustments.
- Council discussed proposed golf course fee increases, particularly their impact on affordability at Lincoln Park Golf Course.
- Staff reported that the Parking Fund has stabilized following operational adjustments and public outreach, although reserves remain limited for future infrastructure expansion.

Capital Improvement Program

- Staff presented the proposed $93.5 million capital improvement program, including approximately $19.1 million from the dedicated capital sales tax fund and $8.1 million for transportation capacity projects.
- Major projects include the next phase of the Persigo wastewater treatment facility expansion, water infrastructure improvements, street maintenance, bridge repairs, and transportation safety projects.
- Council discussed project prioritization, maintenance of existing infrastructure, and opportunities to leverage outside funding.
- Projects reviewed included North Avenue improvements, the C 1/2 Road Riverfront Trail connection, school safety routes, intersection improvements, and storm drainage infrastructure.
- Staff explained the reallocation of approximately $2.1 million in personnel expenses to capital projects to more accurately reflect project costs.

One-Time Funding Requests

- Council reviewed funding requests from organizations serving individuals experiencing homelessness, including Joseph Center, Catholic Outreach, Hilltop, Homeward Bound, and Mutual Aid Partners.
- Discussion focused on the importance of these services, available City resources, accountability, and the sustainability of using one-time funding for ongoing operations.
- Council expressed differing perspectives regarding additional funding outside the established request-for-proposals process.
- Council requested that Homeward Bound submit a revised written funding request with updated financial information before further consideration.
- Staff noted that additional funding would require Council direction and would come from available one-time funds.

Budget Adoption Schedule

- Staff reviewed the remaining budget process, with the first reading scheduled for November 4, 2026, and public hearings and final adoption anticipated for November 18, 2026.

2. Council Communication

There was none.

3. Next Workshop Topics

- Council reviewed potential upcoming workshop topics, including Council norms of conduct and other pending discussions.
- Council discussed requests for additional public engagement regarding the Police Department's use of automated license plate recognition cameras.
- Staff reviewed the updated departmental policy and information available to the public.
- Council expressed interest in an educational update and an opportunity for community input. Staff will explore an appropriate public engagement format outside the regular workshop setting.

4. Other Business

a. Visit Grand Junction Interview Team Discuss Appointment Selections

- The interview team shared their recommended the appointments.
- The team highlighted the candidates' qualifications and the additional tourism perspective the new applicant would bring to the Board.

b. Planning Commission Interview Team Discuss Appointment Selections

- The interview team shared their recommended the appointments.
- The team noted the strong qualifications of the applicants interviewed.

5. Adjournment

There being no further business, the workshop was adjourned at 7:47 p.m.