MINUTES
ALTA TOWN COUNCIL MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING
Wednesday, October 9, 2024, 4:00 PM

Alta Community Center, 10351 E. Highway 210, Alta, Utah

PRESENT:	Mayor Roger Bourke Councilmember John Byrne (attended virtually) Councilmember Dan Schilling
STAFF PRESENT:	Chris Cawley, Town Manager Mike Morey, Town Marshal Jen Clancy, Town Clerk Molly Austin, Assistant Town Manager Brooke Boone, Deputy Town Clerk
ALSO PRESENT:	Cameron Platt, Legal Counsel (attended virtually) Craig Heimark, Treasurer
NOT PRESENT:	Councilmember Carolyn Anctil Councilmember Elise Morgan

PUBLIC HEARING

1. **CALL THE PUBLIC HEARING TO ORDER**

00:00:00

Mayor Bourke called the public hearing of October 9, 2024 to order to receive comments regarding the proposed FY 2025 budget amendments.

2. **PUBLIC HEARING TO RECEIVE COMMENT ON PROPOSED FY 2025 BUDGET AMENDMENTS**

00:00:20

No comments were received.

3. **MOTION TO ADJOURN**

00:03:10

MOTION: Dan Schilling motioned to adjourn, and John Byrne seconded.

VOTE: All were in favor. The public hearing was unanimously adjourned.

RESULT: APPROVED

REGULAR MEETING

1. **CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER**

00:03:24

Mayor Bourke called the Alta town council meeting of October 9, 2024 to order.

2. **CITIZEN INPUT**

00:03:04

Mayor Bourke invited members of the public to address the council. No public comment was received.

3. **UFSA POTENTIAL TAX INCREASE PRESENTATION FROM CHIEF BURCHETT AND CFO TONY HILL**

00:04:20

Mayor Bourke expressed admiration and gratitude for Chief Burchett and the crews of the Unified Fire Authority (UFA) who were deployed to Tennessee to assist with rescue and recovery efforts following Hurricane Helene. Mayor Bourke emphasized the honor of being part of a larger community that supports neighbors in need, even when they are far away.

Rachel Anderson stated their role as the district administrator and legal counsel for the Unified Fire Service Area (UFSA). They noted it had been a year since the last presentation and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to return. Anderson explained that UFSA collects taxes to fund fire services across 12 jurisdictions, including the town of Alta, and highlighted the two-part approach to the recent property tax increase. The decision to implement two smaller increases rather than a single larger increase is intended to lessen the financial burden on residents.

The presentation outlined the reasons for the proposed property tax increase, including rising service costs due to inflation, the need for upgrading and building new fire stations, staffing increases due to population growth, and maintaining a minimum fund balance approved by the board. For the average residential property valued at $525,000, the proposed tax increase would amount to approximately $93 annually, or about $7.77 monthly. The second phase of the tax increase would add around $41 per year, or $3.45 per month. Anderson indicated that Chief Burchett would provide further details on the financial challenges, including inflation, wage issues, and capital costs.

Chief Burchett outlined the factors contributing to increased costs for the UFA, presenting updated figures from the previous year. The chief highlighted inflationary impacts on various expenses over the past six years, including significant increases in the costs of gear, fuel, and medical supplies. They noted that while the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by approximately 27%, entry-level wages increased by only 22%, making it challenging to attract talent who can afford to live in the service area. The chief discussed the capital replacement plan, emphasizing the necessity of maintaining equipment and facilities, which had also seen significant cost increases. For instance, the cost of a type one engine rose by 32%, and ambulance costs increased by 27%. The chief mentioned that UFA had completed seismic upgrades to all fire stations and had fulfilled construction plans, but that the cost of building had surged, with recent projects costing $554 per square foot compared to $290 in 2016.

The chief then addressed the need for additional staffing due to population growth, which had increased by 35,000 over the past six years, leading to a rise of 7,000 calls annually. They specifically discussed plans to add staffing in Kearns, which serves a population of 36,000 and experiences the highest call volume in the service area. The current staffing model was insufficient for the demand, necessitating reliance on neighboring departments. Finally, Burchett noted that Eagle Mountain's population growth had shifted its status to an urban area, requiring a reduction in response times to meet urban standards. They proposed adding staffing to the existing station to improve response capabilities. The Chief concluded their remarks and handed the presentation over to the CFO, Tony Hill.

Tony Hill proceeded to present the financial details for the upcoming UFSA board approval in December. Hill outlined that an additional $6.3 million would be needed to fund the staffing increases discussed earlier, translating to an impact of approximately $51 per year or $4.32 per month for the average residential property. Hill summarized the total financial impact on residents, noting that part one of the tax increase was just over $5 million, and part two would bring the total to $11 million. Hill reminded the council of UFSA's history of tax increases since its inception, highlighting the importance of maintaining a minimum fund balance of 15%, which the board had established based on consultations with financial advisors. This fund balance is crucial for emergency situations, such as significant fires.

Hill presented projections showing the fund balance with and without the proposed tax increase, indicating that without the increase, the balance would fall significantly below the required level. With the increase, UFSA would be positioned appropriately in line with its financial policies. Hill also provided a historical overview of UFSA's tax rates, noting that while the maximum rate permitted by statute is 0.2300, the proposed increase would still keep the rate well below that maximum. He explained that UFSA's revenue primarily comes from property taxes, as they do not have other sources like sales tax, making up about 95% of their total revenue, which is projected to exceed $62 million in 2024.

Dan Schilling inquired about the potential for accessing federal grants or other subsidies for events related to emergency management, such as those from Homeland Security and the Olympics. Hill responded affirmatively, noting grants are primarily handled by UFA as the service provider, and that UFA does leverage various state and federal grants, including recent funding for behavioral health initiatives and FEMA grants for seismic upgrades to fire stations. Hill clarified that these grants were not included in the current tax calculations, as they pertain more to operational funding. Byrne asked how charges for emergency medical services fit into the $62 million revenue projection. Hill explained that these costs, managed by UFA, include a budget of $11 million for ambulance charges, which is separate from UFSA's property tax revenue.

Hill announced a public hearing scheduled for December 10, where the UFSA board would make a final decision regarding the proposed tax increase. Hill encouraged community members to attend and share their thoughts.

Jay Torgersen explained that in simple terms, UFSA is a taxing entity that residents and business owners contribute to directly for fire and emergency medical services. In contrast, UFA is a larger organization that includes UFSA as well as other member cities that pay separately for services. Torgersen highlighted that the Town of Alta transitioned from paying a fee to UFA to allowing individual taxpayers to pay directly to UFSA for services, which was seen as more cost-effective. He further clarified that both organizations operate under the same chief and have separate boards, with some members serving on both. Mayor Bourke was mentioned as a member of both the UFA and UFSA boards.

4. **SALT LAKE COUNTY UPDATE ON PUBLIC SAFETY BOND**

00:29:10

Councilwoman Theodore expressed regret for not being able to attend the meeting in person due to family obligations. She thanked the attendees and introduced the topic of the public safety bond, which would appear on the ballot this year. Councilwoman Theodore highlighted the collaborative efforts between the County Council and the mayor's office in presenting this bond, noting that it had been a long-term initiative. The councilwoman explained the background of the Oxbow facility, mentioning ongoing concerns about deferred maintenance and the deliberations about its future. She emphasized the importance of mental health in addressing public safety issues, citing the establishment of the Just Accountability and Receiving Center as a positive development. Councilwoman Theodore shared that the Salt Lake County Council voted overwhelmingly in favor of placing the bond on the ballot, reflecting strong support for the initiative.

Andrew Roberts, County Mayor Jenny Wilson's Chief of Staff, then provided an overview of the public safety bond proposal for Salt Lake County. Roberts outlined the urgent need for improvements to the jail system, emphasizing the age and maintenance issues of the Oxbow facility and the lack of new jail beds since 2001, despite significant population growth in the area. The proposal includes shutting down Oxbow, reallocating its beds to the Adult Detention Center, and building a new step-down facility for inmates transitioning out of jail. Roberts also discussed the creation of the Justice and Accountability Center (JAC) to support low-level offenders with resources like job training and mental health services, aiming to reduce recidivism. The total bond request is for $507 million, with additional costs making the overall project $602 million. Roberts noted that the average household in Salt Lake County would see a property tax increase of about $5 a month to fund the bond. Roberts invited questions and encouraged discussion about the proposal and its anticipated impact on the community.

Mayor Bourke inquired whether the funding for the entire project was sourced solely from Salt Lake County residents and whether there were opportunities for federal grants. Roberts responded that while federal grants were challenging to obtain for capital construction costs, there were significant opportunities on the operational side. Roberts mentioned ongoing efforts to secure federal and state funding, highlighting Medicaid's role in covering a substantial portion of the operational expenses for the Justice Accountability Center.

5. **ALTA SKI AREA UPDATE, MIKE MAUGHAN**

00:45:15

Mike Maughan first mentioned a recent tour organized by the Central Wasatch Commission, during which they presented a proposal to the attending legislators for a new traction law in the canyon. This led to a meeting with Representative Bennion, UDOT, and representatives from the four Cottonwood Canyons ski areas to discuss implementing a new traction law. There was general agreement among the ski areas to adopt a traction law based on a sticker program requiring 5/32-inch tread depth on tires, to be in effect from November to early April. Maughan reported that UDOT was proposing to start enforcing the law based on weather forecasts rather than set dates or current conditions, and they expressed plans to activate traction restrictions based on forecasts this season—a positive development, according to Maughan. Maughan noted that Representative Bennion would be drafting a proposal for UDOT and the ski areas to review, and that they were working to get Senator Cullimore on board. Maghan encouraged the Town of Alta to participate in the process.

Maughan then reported that Alta had renewed its parking reservation agreement with Interstate Parking, keeping the system the same as the previous year but increasing the violation fee for parking without a reservation from $75 to $150. Maughan said this adjustment aligned with Big Cottonwood Canyon's practices and might help address the higher violation rate observed in Alta compared to other local areas. Additional updates included final preparations for snowmaking, the completion of a small snowmaking project, and the positive results from the hiring season, with over 500 job applications received—an increase from the previous year.

6. **QUESTIONS REGARDING DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS**

00:49:50

Mike Morey, Town Marshal, provided a brief summary of the activity report for the past month, highlighting two significant incidents involving threats of violence. Morey noted that both of these cases are still active investigations, so he couldn't get into the specifics too deeply. Morey noted that while incidents of this nature remain infrequent, there has been an increase, requiring adjustments in staff and facilities to manage such situations. Morey emphasized that these challenges are informing long range planning in the Alta Marshals Office.

Schilling asked Mike Morey about the status of a trailer sign, noting that a new sign was present. Morey clarified that the sign was actually one of the town's older trailer signs that had been refurbished. Morey acknowledged Deputies Chickvary and Roach for their efforts, as they disassembled, sandblasted, and refurbished the signs, aiming to extend their lifespan by another 5 to

10 years. Schilling also mentioned seeing a dog message displayed on the trailer sign, noting its usefulness, as the previous small "Dog by Permit" sign was difficult to read. In response, Morey shared that he had spoken with UDOT, who agreed to allow the town to use the back of a canyon roadway sign—normally displaying avalanche information—to post a more visible "Dog by Permit" message as visitors enter Main Street.

John Byrne raised concerns about the challenge of managing dogs in the canyon, especially with Snowbird appearing to allow dogs at Oktoberfest this year. Morey mentioned that Snowbird's staff had reported a rise in individuals presenting emotional support animals as ADA service dogs, leading to confrontations. Morey indicated these incidents were difficult for Snowbird's public safety staff, who are not law enforcement officers and are limited in their ability to enforce regulations. Morey added that while the town is sympathetic to people's needs, emotional support animals do not qualify as service animals under the ADA, meaning they are not permitted in the watershed area. The potential was noted for confusion and increased dog presence in the canyon drawing negative attention to Alta's dog program. Morey acknowledged this risk, emphasizing the challenges in managing confrontations involving both upset owners and their protective animals.

The discussion shifted to the traffic issues caused by Oktoberfest, with Mayor Bourke mentioning significant congestion on the highway. Schilling acknowledged the problem but praised Snowbird for efforts to widen the shoulder, restrict northside parking, and improve traffic flow, which he felt was a positive step for safety. Byrne and Schilling both observed that despite Snowbird's efforts, the large crowds and heavy parking overflow remained a problem, impacting the entire canyon.

Byrne expressed concerns about the Facilities Master Plan project, stating it seemed the council was not fully involved and questioned whether the obligations under town code 1-15-2 were being met by the town manager, suggesting a need for a review. Mayor Bourke suggested scheduling a special presentation or meeting to discuss the plan, noting that the project had only recently begun. Chris Cawley provided an update, stating that a team had been in town conducting structural assessments for several hours earlier the same day of the council meeting. The team gathered data, including floor plan measurements, inspections of plumbing, mechanical, and electrical systems, and interviews with staff about space needs and limitations. This on-site work was the first major step in the project workflow, which would inform the first substantial report to the council on the project findings in the next council meeting.

7. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA: SEPTEMBER 11, 2024, TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES, STAFF AND FINANCE REPORTS

01:02:25

MOTION: Dan Schilling motioned to approve the consent agenda including the September 11, 2024 Alta town council meeting minutes, and staff and finance reports. John Byrne seconded.

VOTE: All were in favor. The September 11, 2024 meeting minutes, and staff and finance reports were approved.

RESULT: APPROVED

8. **UPDATE BY GAY LYNN BENNION, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DISTRICT 41**

01:03:30

Representative Bennion expressed appreciation for the Central Wasatch Commission tour, noting its value in understanding local issues. She acknowledged Mike Maughan and Dave Fields' support for the traction law and mentioned that she had submitted a bill file related to it. The drafting attorney had responded, indicating progress, and she was coordinating with Senator Cullimore to act as a co-sponsor.

Bennion highlighted a recent celebration by the Salt Lake Climbers Alliance, recognizing the historical designation for climbing in the canyon—the first of its kind in the nation. She also discussed a conversation with the Forest Service during the tour, which emphasized the privilege of accessing the watershed, contrasting it with other regions where access to watershed areas is restricted.

Representative Bennion said her primary focus areas were housing, water, and the Great Salt Lake. She said she participated in a commission on housing affordability and was involved in a new strategic housing plan working group initiated by the Governor's Office, meeting bi-weekly. In the realm of short-term rentals, she noted that Representative Neil Walter was preparing a bill to clarify regulations, aiming to reduce litigation and promote enforcement by municipalities.

In water-related updates, Representative Bennion mentioned recent efforts to control invasive species like phragmites in the Great Salt Lake and Utah Lake, as well as carp removal in Utah Lake. She outlined a meeting with the Timpanogos Special Service District's Executive Director, who suggested ecological restoration through native plants and clams. Representative Bennion also mentioned an upcoming bill related to the transfer of irrigation water shares through probate. She concluded by expressing her willingness to attend future Alta town council meetings, citing the value of learning from local discussions.

9. **MAYOR'S REPORT**

01:09:30

Mayor Bourke said he would wait to give a report until next month.

10. **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE 2024-R-21 TO AMEND THE FY 2025 BUDGETS**

01:09:45

Jen Clancy explained that some budget amendments had been brought to the council's attention the previous month, emphasizing the need to proceed before December to enable certain projects. Clancy had prepared a resolution and budget amendment for the council with a staff memo and invited questions from the council.

Byrne requested that the budget amendment address a FY 2024 debt payment from the water fund to the general fund. Clancy explained that the council had passed a resolution in December 2023 to repay debt (resulting from due to/from that accumulated over many years) starting in FY 2024, but that there was never a FY 2024 budget amendment to authorize the payment. It was suggested that this FY 2025 budget amendment double the annual debt service payment, allowing the council to catch up on the obligation per the resolution from the previous December. Clancy confirmed that the adjusted budget, which included the doubled debt service payment from the water fund to the general fund. Schilling inquired if these changes complied with the 2023 resolution, and Clancy confirmed they did. She outlined specific line-item changes for clarity, including adjustments to the budget for debt service and the Crosstow Waterline Project. Byrne added that clarity and documentation were crucial, suggesting a footnote be included in the financial statements to ensure a record of the debt paydown. Clancy agreed to note this with the auditors and outlined further adjustments in the general fund.

MOTION: Dan Schilling motioned to approve 2024-R-21 to amend the FY25 budgets including all discussed adjustments (as summarized below). Mayor Bourke seconded.

General Fund: Other Financing Sources (10-36-300) = $61,400
General Fund: Trans to Capital Project Fund (10-90-550) = $194,440
Water Fund: Use of water Reserve / PTIF Bal (51-39-200) = $148,643
Water Fund: Engineering / Water Projects (51-40-320) = $22,877
Water Fund: Debt Service – principle (51-40-810) = $61,400

ROLL CALL VOTE: Councilmember Byrne - yes, Mayor Bourke - yes, Councilmember Schilling – yes. All were in favor. Resolution 2024-R-21 was approved.

RESULT: APPROVED

11. **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE 2024-R-22 UPDATING THE CAPITAL PROJECTS PLAN**

01:20:05

Clancy explained that Resolution 2024-R-22 was a follow-up to the budget amendment, noting that adjustments to the capital projects plan accompany budget changes to ensure alignment.

MOTION: John Byrne motioned to approve the 2024-R-22. Dan Schilling seconded.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Councilmember Schilling – yes, Mayor Bourke - yes, Councilmember Byrne – yes. All were in favor. Resolution 2024-R-22 was approved.

RESULT: APPROVED

12. **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE 2024-R-23 REPEALING AND REPLACING THE WATER RATES RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE MONTHLY BILLING**

01:20:50

Clancy explained the need to shift from quarterly to monthly billing for water and sewer services to better integrate with new utility software. She acknowledged that while this change might initially seem to increase workload, the new system aims to enhance efficiency and customer service once fully implemented. Byrne expressed initial hesitation, noting the move seemed counterintuitive, but accepted Clancy's explanation about the software benefits and automated payment plans. Cawley noted information security improvements the new systems would bring.

MOTION: John Byrne motioned to approve 2024-R-23. Mayor Bourke seconded.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Councilmember Byrne – yes, Mayor Bourke – Yes, Councilmember Schilling - yes. All were in favor. Resolution 2024-R-23 was approved.

RESULT: APPROVED

13. **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE 2024-R-24 REPEALING AND REPLACING THE SEWER RATES RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE MONTHLY BILLING**

01:23:20

MOTION: Dan Schilling motioned to approve 2024-R-24. Mayor Bourke seconded.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Councilmember Schilling – yes, Mayor Bourke - yes, Councilmember Byrne – yes. All were in favor. Resolution 2024-R-24 was approved.

RESULT: APPROVED

14. **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO ADOPT ORDIINANCE 2024-0-8 TO UPDATE ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CLASSIFICATIONS**

01:24:30

Clancy introduced the need to update the Alcohol Beverage Ordinance to address a missing section inadvertently left out during a previous overhaul aimed at aligning town regulations with state language. Schilling noted this addition was familiar, referring to past discussions, while Byrne emphasized the ordinance's relevance, particularly in clarifying responsibilities for single-event liquor licenses. Byrne stressed that event organizers, not lodges, should provide evidence of liquor liability insurance to mitigate risks.

Platt confirmed that the ordinance applies to single events requiring permits, depending on who is managing the event—either the venue or an outside organizer. Austin clarified that the lodges are generally covered by their own licenses, noting that this type of license is rare and hasn't been issued recently. Schilling and Byrne discussed potential ambiguities regarding responsibility, ultimately agreeing on the ordinance's coverage.

MOTION: John Byrne motioned to approve 2024-O-8. Dan Schilling seconded.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Mayor Bourke – yes, Councilmember Schilling – yes, Councilmember Byrne – yes. All were in favor. Resolution 2024-O-8 was approved.

RESULT: APPROVED

15. **REPORT ON DRAFT TOWN OF ALTA MISSION/PURPOSE STATEMENT AND COUNCIL RETREAT DISCUSSION**

01:30:00

Cawley provided an update on the progress toward drafting a mission statement for the Town of Alta, which followed up on suggestions from the January Council retreat. Cawley outlined a series of workshops held in September, where staff collected mission statements from other municipalities and brainstormed Alta's unique attributes. Each participant developed a draft mission statement and identified key values. Cawley emphasized that the mission reflects what the town does, while the values indicate how it is done, crediting Town Marshal Mike Morey for his guidance. Cawley recited the proposed mission statement:

The mission of the Town of Alta is to provide municipal services that promote safety and quality of life for Alta's community; protect Alta's alpine environment and unique heritage; carefully manage growth and development; and support Alta's local economy.

Cawley reported that the core values were condensed to accessibility, accountability, transparency, and equity, reflecting common themes from the workshops.

Cawley then highlighted plans for another retreat within the next three months, including an engagement with the facilitator from the previous retreat as funded in the FY 25 budget. Cawley acknowledged scheduling challenges and a busy year but emphasized the importance of collaborative input to refine the mission statement during the retreat. Schilling added that these retreats offer a flexible and valuable space for open discussion among councilmembers, unlike the regular monthly meetings.

(Dan Schilling left the meeting 1:35:55)

Byrne addressed Craig Heimark as Treasurer and suggested incorporating a focused discussion on tax revenue impacts at the upcoming retreat. Byrne highlighted concerns about the town's changing tax structure due to "mega passes" and redemptions, which do not generate tax revenue. Byrne proposed a deep dive into how this shift might affect lift ticket sales tax revenue, potentially decreasing it by up to 50%. He emphasized the need to explore the financial implications and consider possible responses. Heimark agreed, noting that the topic relates to the broader issue of the town's long-term financial viability, including future capital budget considerations. Both Heimark and Bourke supported including this discussion in the retreat.

Heimark also acknowledged that he was not involved in drafting the mission statement due to being out of town in September, but he expressed satisfaction with the outcome. Byrne appreciated the staff's efforts to develop the draft, noting that while it was inclusive, it could be refined. He looked forward to adopting a finalized version.

16. **NEW BUSINESS**

01:36:15

No new business.

17. **MOTION TO ADJOURN**

01:39:25

MOTION: Mayor Bourke motioned to adjourn, and John Byrne seconded.

VOTE: All in favor. The meeting was unanimously adjourned.

RESULT: APPROVED

Passed this 13th day of November, 2024

Jen Clancy, Town Clerk