

**ESCALANTE CITY COUNCIL MEETING
MAY 19, 2026
REGULAR MEETING/ELECTRONIC MEETING – 6:00 P.M.
WORK MEETING - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE REGULAR MEETING
ESCALANTE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS - 65 NORTH CENTER STREET**

Mayor Melani Torgersen called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Escalante City Council Chambers.

Present at said meeting were Mayor Torgersen, Council members Sally Orme, Marlene Stowe, Ryan Cottam, City Attorney Barry Huntington and City Recorder Stephanie Steed. Council member Chad Lyman was excused.

Also present were Tara Woolsey, Brent Pickering, Wally Dodds, Richard Crawford, Victory Crawford and Callie Ward.

Ashley Coombs and Micheal joined electronically.

Mayor Torgersen led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Council member Stowe moved to adopt the agenda as written. Council member Cottam seconded the motion. Motion carried with Council members Stowe, Orme and Cottam voting aye.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF APRIL 21, 2026 MEETING

Council member Orme moved to approve the minutes of the April 21, 2026 meeting as written. Council member Cottam seconded the motion. Motion carried with Council members Orme, Stowe and Cottam voting aye.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

WALLY DODDS

Mr. Dodds said he is running for County Commissioner and wanted to introduce himself and ask the community about their support from the County and if there are any questions they may have.

PLANNING AND ZONING ITEMS

PLANNING AND ZONING UPDATES

There were no Planning and Zoning updates at this time.

SCHEDULED ITEMS

APPOINT COUNCIL MEMBER

Mayor Torgersen noted that Tara Woolsey was the sole applicant for the City Council vacancy and invited her to introduce herself and share her reasons for seeking the position. Ms. Woolsey said she loves this community, and that she wants to be a part of shaping it, keeping it what it is today. **Council member Orme moved to appoint Tara Woolsey as the new City Council member. Council member Stowe seconded the motion. Motion carried with**

Council members Stowe, Cottam and Orme voting aye. City Recorder Steed administered the Oath of Office to Ms. Woolsey.

2026-2027 TENTATIVE BUDGET

City Recorder Steed explained the tentative budget and asked the Council if they had any questions. Council member Orme asked if the tentative budget accounted for the upcoming changes to employee benefits. City Recorder Steed confirmed that the budget includes all 401K adjustments and potential employee insurance costs. Council member Orme asked about the allocated funds regarding landfill maintenance, City Recorder Steed replied that \$25,000.00 has been set aside for that purpose. Council member Stowe questioned if there were provisions for Christmas lights, and City Recorder Steed noted a \$5,000.00 allocation. Council member Cottam expressed appreciation for City Recorder Steed's effort in preparing the budget. City Recorder Steed reminded the Council that as a tentative budget, adjustments can still be made during the Public Hearing prior to final adoption. **Council member Stowe moved to adopt the 2026-2027 Tentative Budget. Council member Cottam seconded the motion. Motion carried with Council member Orme, Stowe, Cottam and Woolsey voting aye.**

BILL WEPPNER - FIRE DEPARTMENT BATTERIES AND CHARGER FOR SCBA'S

City Recorder Steed explained this item and said there are funds in the budget for it. **Council member Orme moved to purchase the batteries and charger for the Fire Department. Council member Stowe seconded the motion. Motion carried with Council members Woolsey, Cottam, Stowe and Orme voting aye.**

PURCHASE SKID STEER

PUBLIC WORKS EMPLOYEE BRENT PICKERING

Mr. Pickering explained the options for a skid steer and said he would suggest the Case 370B for \$90,900.00. Mr. Pickering said they would also like to purchase a brushhog attachment for the skid steer, intended for mowing at the airport and in areas of town inaccessible to the street mower. City Recorder Steed asked how much the brushhog would cost, Mr. Pickering said approximately \$10,000.00. City Recorder Steed confirmed that the current budget can accommodate the skid steer purchase, but expressed uncertainty regarding available funds for the brushhog this fiscal year. Following a request for City Recorder Steed to review the budget, it was determined that the brushhog will be acquired during either the current or the subsequent budget year. **Council member Stowe moved to purchase the Case Skid Steer for \$90,900.00. Council member Orme seconded the motion. Motion carried with Council members Cottam, Stowe, Orme and Woolsey voting aye.**

EMPLOYEE INSURANCE BENEFITS

The Council reviewed the insurance benefit options presented by City Recorder Steed. Council member Orme suggested a simplified \$500.00 flat incentive for those opting out of coverage instead of the current \$400.00 individual and family proposal. Mayor Torgersen explained that the County provides a \$900.00 family incentive and expressed that offering such an option encourages employees to use alternative insurance while saving the city money. Council member Orme asked if an \$800.00 monthly incentive would be more cost-effective than providing insurance, City Recorder Steed confirmed if employees received \$800.00 for opting out it would save the city money, noting that individual plans exceed \$1,200.00 per month. **Council member Orme moved to approve the updated insurance benefits for eligible**

employees, which covers 100% of the premium costs, and for those opting out of insurance, the city provides \$400.00 for individuals and \$400.00 for families (including spouse and/or dependents), totaling a maximum of \$800.00 in lieu of coverage. Council member Cottam seconded the motion. Motion carried with Council members Stowe, Woolsey, Orme and Cottam voting aye.

LANDFILL CONTRACT

Council member Orme proposed establishing a 1099 contracted position to manage the landfill opening and closing. Council member Orme said with the Public Work Department back down to three employees, having a contracted position for the landfill would save the crew significant time. Council member Orme said the position would require a personal vehicle for a few hours a day, six days a week, and would report to Brent Pickering. Council member Stowe supported the idea as it would free up the current staff. Brent Pickering mentioned that last summer, the landfill saw no use during its four-hour Saturday opening. Council member Cottam emphasized the need for an organized approach to ensure materials are placed correctly. **Council member Orme moved to issue an RFP for the landfill contract. Council member Woolsey seconded the motion. Motion carried with Council members Stowe, Cottam, Woolsey, and Orme voting aye.**

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

ADMINISTRATIVE

City Recorder Steed said the budget and financial reports are available for review.

City Recorder Steed said she will schedule the budget hearing for June 16, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

BRENT PICKERING

Mr. Pickering reported issues with the sewer system, noting that paper towels and wipes are being flushed but are not flushable.

Mr. Pickering explained that water restrictions have been issued with no outside watering during the hours of 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

BRENT PICKERING

Mr. Pickering said maintenance on fire hydrants is ongoing by the Fire Department, though concerns have been raised about continuing these efforts during the current water restrictions. Mr. Pickering suggested that while the hydrants should be greased and tested for functionality, they should not be flushed to conserve water.

COUNCIL REPORTS

MAYOR MELANI TORGERSEN

Mayor Torgersen reminded everyone of the annual Splash Pad Day June 5. Mayor Torgersen said there will be snow cones, popcorn, hotdogs and the Coalition will be giving out beach towels.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHAD LYMAN

Council member Lyman was not present at said meeting.

COUNCIL MEMBER TARA WOOLSEY

Council member Woolsey had nothing to report at this time.

COUNCIL MEMBER RYAN COTTAM

Council member Cottam informed the Council that the County crew is scheduled to return to the city for chip sealing operations on the remaining roads once their current projects in Tropic and at Hole in the Rock are concluded. Council member Cottam mentioned the cul-de-sac by the City Race Track, and Mayor Torgersen inquired about the road leading to the water tanks, which Council member Cottam confirmed both would be included. Public Works employee Brent Pickering stated he would be available to assist the County crew if needed.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARLENE STOWE

Council member Stowe reported on her attendance at the Utah League of Cities and Towns Conference, where she and Council member Cottam participated in a four-hour training session focused on conflict competence. Council member Stowe explained that while speaking with vendors, she identified a potential grant opportunity to acquire playground equipment for the old elementary school. Council member Stowe said she also received training regarding impact fees and housing. Council member Stowe said that the training was beneficial and would like to see other members attend in the future.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALLY ORME

Council member Orme had nothing to report at this time.

UNPAID BILLS

Council member Cottam moved to pay the unpaid bills. Council member Woolsey seconded the motion. Motion carried with Council members Stowe, Orme, Woolsey and Cottam voting aye.

Mayor Torgersen adjourned the meeting at 6:39 p.m.

Mayor Torgersen called the work meeting to order at 6:48 p.m. in the Escalante City Council Chambers.

Present at said meeting were Mayor Torgersen, Council members Stowe, Cottam, Woolsey, Orme, City Attorney Huntington and City Recorder Steed. Council member Lyman was excused.

There was no one else present.

The work meeting was to work on Surplus Items and Ordinances.

The work meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

/s/ Stephanie Steed
Stephanie Steed, MMC, UCC
City Recorder

Date minutes approved: 05/19/2026