

- a. Minutes of the May 13, 2025 Legislative Budget Hearing and Public Hearing

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<https://www.KnoxvilleTN.gov/CityCouncil>



City Council Meeting
400 W Main St
Main Assembly Room
Knoxville, TN 37902

<https://www.KnoxvilleTN.gov/Agenda>

City Council – Legislative Budget Hearing – Minutes
Tuesday, May 13, 2025 - 8:00 AM

8:00AM - WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Attendance	Attendee Name
Present	Lynne Fugate, Councilmember Gwen McKenzie, Councilmember Amelia Parker, Councilmember Seema Singh, Councilmember Tommy Smith, Vice-Mayor
Late	Debbie Helsley, Councilmember Lauren Rider, Councilmember Andrew Roberto, Councilmember Charles Thomas, Councilmember
Absent	None

(The initial arrivals of Councilmembers are recorded in these minutes. Subsequent departures and returns to the meeting room are not recorded.)

Other staff in attendance

Will Johnson, City Recorder, Angela Hopper, Assistant City Recorder, Savannah Kirk, Internal Auditor, Rob Frost, Special Counsel and Advisor to City Council, David Brace, Chief of Staff, Boyce Evans, Chief Financial Officer, Kittrin Smith, Deputy Finance Director

Vice-Mayor Tommy Smith called the meeting to order at 8:09am.

8:05AM - MAYOR'S BUDGET INTRODUCTION

Mayor Indya Kincannon delivered introductory remarks.

Councilmember Debbie Helsley arrived at the meeting at approximately 8:12am.

8:10AM - SUMMARY

Internal Auditor Savannah Kirk provided a brief summary to Councilmembers of the materials at their seats.

8:15AM - BUDGET OVERVIEW

Chief Financial Officer Boyce Evans provided an overview of the proposed budget.

Councilmember Roberto arrived at the meeting at approximately 8:21am.

There was discussion about the format of the proposed budget document.

A dialogue ensued about budget amendments during the fiscal year.

Councilmembers praised for budget documents assembled and prepared by the Council Office Staff.

A discussion ensued about the proposed lump sum payment to the Knoxville Convention Center debt.

There was dialogue about the expected rate of return for the pension funds.

There was conversation about the overall fiscal health of the City's budget.

There was continued discussion about the lump sum payment on the Convention Center debt, including federal funding through grants.

There was dialogue about interest income as a revenue source in the proposed budget.

8:45AM - PUBLIC SAFETY**KNOXVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Chief Paul Noel introduced staff joining him, Assistant Chief David Powell and Deputy Chief Susan Coker.

There was a discussion about recruitment, academies, and retention in the Police Department.

Dialogue ensued about a shift in career trajectories for younger police officers compared to previous generations.

There was conversation about the authorized strength of the Police Department.

There was discussion about the funding of formerly grant-funded positions in the Police Department, as well as another new position in the department.

There was a conversation about support systems for retired police officers who faced trauma.

Dialogue ensued about what funding requests of the Police Department were funded in the proposed budget.

A conversation ensued about a bomb safety robot being funded in the proposed budget.

There was further dialogue how the City would fund a future possible increase in authorized police officers.

There was a conversation about overtime for police officers being incorporated into the budget.

KNOXVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Chief Stan Sharp introduced Deputy Chief Rob Cheesman, Deputy Chief Gary Compton, Julie Maxwell, Planning and Operations Manager for the department.

A dialogue ensued about recruitment and retention in the Fire Department.

There was a conversation about compensation studies and compression issues in the Fire Department.

There was a continued discussion about proposed targeted raises in the Fire Department.

There was dialogue about overtime and differences seen in younger generations.

At approximately 9:48am, Councilmember Thomas arrived at the meeting.

KNOX COUNTY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT

Tonya Cum, Director of Technology, was present on behalf of Executive Director Brad Anders.

KNOXVILLE-KNOX COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Director Colin Ickes was present.

There was dialogue about a personnel position requested but not funded in the

E-911 Office.

COMMUNITY SAFETY & COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Chief Community Safety and Empowerment Officer LaKenya Middlebrook was present.

There was dialogue about grant funding in this department.

10:25AM - RECESS

Vice-Mayor Smith announced a recess at 9:58am.

He called the meeting back to order at 10:19am.

10:35AM - OPERATIONS

OPERATIONS

Chief Operating Officer Grant Rosenberg introduced his departments.

ENGINEERING

Engineering Director Tom Clabo introduced his staff in attendance: Deputy Engineering Director Chris Howley, and Division Chiefs Shawn Fitzpatrick, Karen McKeehan, Curtis Williams, and David McGinley.

There was praise offered to both the Engineering and Plans Review and Building Inspections departments.

There was a conversation about maintenance for existing sidewalks in the budget.

A dialogue ensued housing affordability and approvals from the City for construction.

There was discussion about events planning as it relates to Engineering, especially as it relates to game-day road closures at Covenant Health Park.

There was dialogue about budget amendments being approved mid-year and reporting of same.

PLANS REVIEW AND BUILDING INSPECTIONS

Mr. Ahrens introduced his staff in attendance: Deputies Timothy Marcum and Bryan Berry, and his Executive Assistant Rachel Covington.

PUBLIC SERVICE

Ms. Butzler introduced her staff in attendance: Deputy Director Chris Webster and Sherri Bennett

There was praise offered for the Public Service Department.

There was discussion about a study done by the Baker School for this department, especially as it relates to brush pick up and sidewalks crews.

There was discussion about an unfilled budget request for the Urban Forestry Division.

FLEET SERVICES

Director Nicholas Bradshaw was present.

There was a discussion about an unfunded budget request, specifically dash-mounted cameras.

There was a conversation about Fleet's apprenticeship program.

KNOXVILLE AREA TRANSIT

Transit Director Isaac Thorne was present.

There was discussion about budget requests for staff, including staffing and recruitment.

There was dialogue about all the job duties of drivers at KAT.

A conversation ensued about micro-transit at KAT.

There was dialogue about safety issues around KAT buses.

There was discussion about retention and recruitment issues at KAT.

There was a conversation about a requirement to have trained KAT workers remain in their position for a period or reimburse KAT for their training.

CENTER FOR SERVICE INNOVATION 311/211

Director Russ Jensen introduced his staff: Deputy Director Carter Hall and Renae Bowman

There was dialogue about recent efforts in the 311 Office.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Director Kyndra Brewer was present.

There was discussion of the funded event approval system.

12:00PM - LUNCH

Vice-Mayor Smith announced a recess at 11:34am.

The Vice-Mayor called the meeting back to order at 12:19pm.

12:15PM - LEGISLATIVE

City Recorder Will Johnson and Internal Auditor Savannah Kirk were present.

There was discussion about additional funding requests.

A dialogue ensued concerning the department's travel budget.

This portion of the hearing occurred before the lunch recess.

12:30PM - INTERNAL DEPARTMENTS AND PARTNER AGENCIES

The meeting resumed after the lunch recess at this point.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Dr. Kelly Drummond introduced some of her staff that were present: Michelle Black, Mary Margaret Murray, Catareena Neuenschwander, Leah Pendarvis, and Dustin Hinshaw.

There was dialogue about the staffing levels in this department.

A conversation ensued about the Title VI report that the Human Resources Department provided.

CIVIL SERVICE

Interim Civil Service Director Nicholas Bradshaw was present.

There was discussion about publicity as well as advertising for hiring the new executive secretary.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Director Christine Stickler was present.

There was discussion about the enhanced deferred compensation plan for the City.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Director Mark Parker was present.

There was dialogue about ongoing technology security issues and prevention efforts.

There was conversation about approved funding for a new City website.

VISIT KNOXVILLE

President Kim Bumpas was present.

There was a discussion about Knoxville's standing in tourism statewide.

There was a conversation about visitation at the Sunsphere.

ZOO KNOXVILLE

President & CEO Bill Street introduced a member of his staff: Drew Rowan, Chief Operating Officer.

There was discussion about the Zoo's recent efforts.

There was a conversation about some closed areas of the Zoo and their plans to revitalize these areas.

There was a dialogue about approved City funding for new capital improvements at the Zoo.

TENNESSEE VALLEY FAIR

Executive Director Scott Suchomski was present.

There was discussion about the fair's recent statistics.

There was a conversation about direct City funding to support the Fair.

At approximately 12:45pm, Councilmember Rider arrived at the meeting.

Dialogue ensued about the ownership of various parcels at Chilhowee Park.

There was a conversation about free events at the Fair.

There was dialogue about the economic impact of the Fair.

KNOXVILLE CHAMBER

President & CEO Mike Odom was present.

Dialogue ensued about attracting and retaining young adult workers in the community.

There was conversation about business diversity and job creation.

There was discussion about the Chamber selling its existing headquarters and its relocation plans.

Conversation ensued about the funding support from the City, including that for Centro Hispano.

KNOXVILLE ENTREPRENEUR CENTER

Executive Director Jim Biggs was present.

There was a conversation about business startups and entrepreneurship, especially as it relates to pandemic patterns that are no longer present.

Dialogue ensued about business diversity, specifically about the 100 Knoxville program.

PUBLIC BUILDING AUTHORITY

Administrator and CEO Jayne Burritt introduced some staff: Robyn Smith, Kristin Grove, Alex Fusaro, Tom Dyer.

There was a discussion about facility maintenance needed at garages at the Coliseum and Auditorium.

There was conversation about the proposed lump sum payment on the Convention Center debt.

PUBLIC ASSEMBLY FACILITIES

General Manager Mary Bogert introduced some staff: Misti Satterfield and Kyle Nelson.

There was conversation about capital funding needs and future requests at Chilhowee Park, including the needs of the Muse and Zoo Knoxville.

There was also dialogue about event usage of parking at the Coliseum and Auditorium.

KNOXVILLE COMMUNITY MEDIA

Executive and Creative Director J. Amos Oaks was present.

There was conversation about the diminishing funding sources for community media.

1:50PM - COMMUNICATIONS

Deputy Director Eric Vreeland was present.

There was a dialogue about the search capabilities in City Council's new meeting management system.

2:10PM - RECESS

Vice-Mayor Smith announced a recess at approximately 2:05pm.

The Vice-Mayor called the meeting back to order at approximately 2:25pm.

2:20PM - URBAN DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

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Chief of Urban Design and Development Rebekah Jane Justice introduced some staff: Daniellle Norman, Jeramie Walkup, Liz Albertson, and Wes Soward.

Discussion ensued about the federal Reconnecting Communities grant.

There was dialogue about capital projects in Urban Design & Development and the funding.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Director Sheryl Ely introduced her staff: Aaron Browning, Nathan Nease, Nikki Crutcher, and Angie Davidson.

Dialogue ensued about the department's master plan.

There was conversation about Safety City now being under Parks and Recreation and staffing of same.

2:30PM - POLICY

POLICY

Chief Policy Officer Cheryl Ball introduced her departments and partners.

There was conversation about proposed capital appropriations under Policy.

There was conversation about a desire to see the City fund collaboration between agencies to help with homelessness.

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Director Kevin DuBose introduced his staff: Michael Dunthorn, Wendy Rainey, Linda Rust, Beth Bacon, Jillian Love, and Hope Ealey.

There was a conversation about delays with the Annual Action Plan related to Federal funding decisions.

There was also dialogue about grant funding cuts for the department as well as delays in final City Council action on these plans.

A discussion ensued concerning the housing shortages in the community and the actions the City has undertaken to address this.

Dialogue ensued about the City's efforts to acquire and develop blighted property.

There was a conversation about the Homemakers Program.

There was also dialogue about the eviction prevention program of Legal Aid of East Tennessee.

Discussion ensued about proposed funding for a low-barrier shelter.

KNOXVILLE'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Chief Development Officer Jim Hatfield was present.

KNOXVILLE-KNOX COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION COMMITTEE

Chief Program Officer Misty Goodwin was present.

There was dialogue about CAC's street outreach case management workers.

There was conversation about possible federal funding cuts to CAC.

KNOXVILLE-KNOX COUNTY PLANNING

Executive Director Amy Brooks introduced Ally Ketron.

There was dialogue about the proposed funding for updating the Comprehensive Plan.

OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

Director Patience Melnik introduced some staff: Dawn Michelle Foster, Grace Levin, and Davy Ray.

There was a conversation about the recent projects and efforts of the department.

There was dialogue about solar panel programs and carbon reduction goals.

A dialogue ensued concerning City policies around carbon reduction.

There was conversation about solar power and battery storage.

Dialogue ensued about opportunities to recycle glass.

3:20PM - FINANCE

Mr. Evans introduced some of his staff: Kittrin Smith, Penny Owens, and Donna Dyer.

A dialogue ensued about the implementation of the disparity report's recommendations.

There was conversation about the new contract compliance officer position in the Purchasing Office.

There was discussion about how the City tracks spending.

Conversation ensued about the effects of federal executive orders with respect to the City's efforts to diverse business enterprises.

Discussion ensued about staffing levels across the City and stability of same.

3:30PM - LAW DEPARTMENT

Law Director Charles Swanson introduced some staff: Amanda Messer, Ron Mills, Anderson Gass, and Sanjay Raman.

3:40PM - CITY COURT

Judge Tyler Caviness introduced a member of his staff: Holley Marlowe.

There was dialogue about the budget not including a transfer of excess court costs to the general fund in the proposed budget.

There was further conversation about how the operations of the municipal court are funded.

ADJOURNMENT

The Vice-Mayor announced that the Legislative Budget Hearing was adjourned at 3:54pm.

4:00PM - PUBLIC HEARING

Vice-Mayor Smith called the public hearing to order at 4:00pm.

The following spoke at the public hearing:

Adam Hughes, 2506 Brice St

The Vice-Mayor announced that the Public Hearing was adjourned at 4:07pm.

Presiding Officer of the Council

City Recorder