City of Greeley, Colorado

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION PROCEEDINGS

SEPTEMBER 9, 2025

1. **Call to Order**

   Mayor Gates called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. in the City Council Chambers at 1001 11th Ave, Greeley, Colorado, with hybrid participation available via the City's Zoom platform.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

   Mayor Gates led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **Roll Call**

   Deputy City Clerk Jennifer Middleton called the roll.
   The following were present:

   Councilmember Tommy Butler
   Councilmember Deb DeBoutez
   Mayor Pro Tem Hall
   Councilmember Brett Payton
   Councilmember Johnny Olson
   Councilmember Melissa McDonald
   Mayor John Gates

4. **Reports from Mayor and Councilmembers**
   Councilmember Butler attended the Fiesta in La Plaza at Centennial Village, highlighting the participation of over 500 people. He noted recent body cam footage showing a candidate's inappropriate behavior towards the Police Chief.

5. **Review of the Principal and Primary Terms for Lease Agreement with the Colorado Eagles**
   Chief Operating Officer Blair Snow, introduced the item at 5:05 p.m.

   Ms. Snow presented the principal and primary terms for the lease agreement with the Colorado Eagles. She was joined by Brian Wildstein from Butler Snow and Ashley Stiles with Provident, who participated via Zoom. Ms. Snow provided background on the project, noting that the Eagles lease was just one part of the larger arena project. She emphasized that the Eagles were more than just tenants—they anchor the arena and bring in crowds that generate retail sales and hotel stays, funding the larger project.

   Ms. Snow presented key financial points, stating that the project was projected to generate $126 million in cumulative revenue over 10 years after economic development payments, debt service, and city expenses. She mentioned that arena revenue represents only about 15% of the total project revenue.

   Key benefits of the lease agreement for the City of Greeley included a 40-year agreement guaranteeing an anchor tenant for the life of the asset and debt, rent payments from the Eagles, retention of control over the arena, and the majority of revenue sharing. Additional benefits include termination safeguards and community advantages like youth hockey space, camps, and local programming.

Ms. Snow outlined key modifications to the lease terms from the original PDSA (Project Development and Service Agreement). These included an extension of the lease term from 30 to 40 years, a clarified rent structure with attendance triggers, an established facility fee, better-defined parking revenue share, outlined sponsorship and naming rights, and added details on suites and hospitality aspects.

Key revenue-sharing terms included rent with 10% escalation every 5 years (previously 5%), confirmed playoff rent rebates, and details on practice schedules and playoff use. The facility fees and convenience fees were confirmed, including parking revenue split and increased season ticket parking. The food and beverage share remained unchanged.

Councilmember DeBoutez inquired about the negotiation process and wanted assurances that the best deal for Greeley had been pursued. Ms. Snow explained that negotiations occurred over several months with input from consultants who confirmed the terms were within industry standards.

Councilmember Olson clarified aspects of ownership structure, noting that a 501(c)(3) would own the building while the City owned the land. He emphasized that the City maintained control over the budget and bonding decisions through the GID (General Improvement District).

Councilmember McDonald asked about contract continuity if ownership changed. City Attorney Stacey Aurzada confirmed that the lease would be binding for the full term regardless of ownership changes.

Councilmember Butler raised questions about specific revenue-sharing percentages, including the food and beverage split and revenue from college games. Ms. Stiles explained that these terms resulted from negotiations where they sought the best outcome considering the holistic financial model.

Mayor Gates noted that the negotiators hired by the City were recognized as industry leaders.

Mayor Gates thanked staff and consultants for the information.

6. **City Manager Fiscal Year 2026 Recommended Budget**

Director of Budget and Policy Nathan Mosley introduced the item at 6:51 p.m.

He was accompanied by City Manager Raymond Lee and Deputy Director of Budget and Policy Kalen Myers.

Mr. Lee thanked the budget team for their work, noting that many cities were similarly facing deficits requiring service cuts, but Greeley had successfully developed a budget that maintains service levels.

Mr. Mosley provided an overview of the budget process and outlined the challenges in the fiscal environment. The challenges included: economic uncertainty affecting sales tax collections, decreased revenue projections, increased expenses, and prioritizing employee compensation to attract and retain quality staff. He added that there was an extension of limited-term positions.

The presentation included information on the general fund budget gap of approximately $21 million, which was being covered by carryover funds from 2024 of $11 million, budget realignment work totaling $3 million, and a transfer from the 301-fund balance of $7 million.

The total 2026 Budget included $483.5 million in revenue across all funds and $507.4 million in expenditures. Charges for services and taxes were identified as the largest revenue sources, while enterprise funds, the general fund, and capital projects were listed as the largest expenditure categories.

The budget included 17 new FTEs, primarily in utilities and transit, and extended 54 limited-term positions through 2026. The total FTE count for 2026 would be 1,260.

Councilmember DeBoutez asked about the breakdown of revenue and mentioned the revenue stabilization fund, which was currently at $4.7 million and had not been used for the 2026 budget. Mr. Mosley confirmed that the stabilization fund remained untouched and elaborated that it served as a safeguard to manage revenue fluctuations.

Councilmember Olson inquired whether the budget gap resulted from spending issues or revenue projection inaccuracies. Mr. Mosley explained that it was a combination of both, noting that revenue projections had been adjusted to be more conservative, particularly concerning development fees, which were previously overestimated.

Councilmember McDonald was concerned with public safety's unfunded needs, particularly pointing out the nine firefighter positions. Likewise, Councilmember Butler recommended a future discussion on additional funding avenues to support first responders. Ms. Myers explained that the budget gap was addressed primarily through one-time carryover funds, departmental realignment, and capital fund transfers, with part of the capital funds coming from changed plans for downtown staff relocations.

Mayor Gates thanked staff for the information.

7. **Economic Development Strategic Plan**
Interim Economic Development Director Michelle Claymore, and Dan Gardner, Principal of Gardner Advisory and Consulting presented the item at 7:43 p.m.

Ms. Claymore explained that the purpose of the plan was to provide a framework for economic development activities, share key trends and challenges, outline the vision and strategic focus areas, and detail implementation strategies.

Mr. Gardner provided context on economic development by describing it as activities that enhance quality of life through a diverse economy, establish a robust tax base for municipal services, and foster job growth with greater access to opportunities for everyone. He explained the distinction between primary jobs, which inject new money into the local economy, and secondary jobs, which serve to support primary employers.

Mr. Gardner explained key findings from the economic assessment showing that Greeley was one of the fastest-growing cities in Colorado characterized by a younger-than-average population. Housing affordability was a challenge impacting workforce retention and attraction. Workforce availability and skill levels were vital elements for business location decisions. The City's digital infrastructure, utilities, and transportation systems were under pressure due to the rapid growth, and Greeley's access to water was a significant competitive advantage.

He explained that the vision seeks to position Greeley as Northern Colorado's leading destination for business growth, a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship, with a vibrant, diverse opportunities.

Ms. Claymore outlined eight key focus areas for economic development:

- marketing and promotion,
- business recruitment in targeted industries,
- retention and expansion of existing businesses,
- development of an entrepreneurial ecosystem,
- workforce development,
- attracting investment to development opportunities,
- promoting business-friendly policies,
- fostering commercial development growth.

Councilmember DeBoutez inquired about what constitutes "quality of life" and emphasized the importance of understanding workforce development needs. Mr. Gardner explained that "quality of life" included amenities, parks, recreation, services, entertainment, and shopping.

Councilmember Olson pointed out that 30-39% of Greeley residents commute elsewhere for work, citing the need for improvements in workforce development and reductions in business growth barriers. Ms. Claymore agreed that it would be important to address the gap between growing local labor force skills and business requirements. Mr. Gardner suggested collaborating with educational institutions for workforce development.

Councilmember McDonald noted that residents leave Greeley for jobs and recommended leveraging the new College of Medicine to attract higher-paying roles. Ms. Claymore responded that various factors, such as the lack of some high-paying jobs in Greeley, contribute to this issue and there were plans to address these areas to retain local workforce.

Councilmember Butler asked about the plan's approval timeline and suggested strengthening the inclusion of housing into the economic development strategy. Mr. Gardner clarified that there wasn't a set timeline for approval.

Mayor Gates thanked staff and the consultant for the information.

8. **2026 City of Greeley Employee Pay Plan**
Director of Human Resources Martha Lanaghen, presented the item at 8:24 p.m. Ms. Lanaghen explained that the current employee pay plan was complex, featuring 52 different pay bands and two separate pay plans. Additionally, more than 400 employees were within 5% of their maximum pay band. The new pay plan would address these issues by maintaining the same five job families, which included:
    - management,
    - professional,
    - support,
    - trades and operations,
    - senior management,
    - and keep the Fair Labor Standards Act exemption statuses unchanged.

The plan would revise pay grades and ranges to allow for more growth opportunities. Financial impacts of the new plan involved several adjustments, such as raising the pay of two employees whose current salaries are below the minimum of their new pay range increasing part-time employee wages from $14.81 to $15.00 per hour, implementing step programs for certain positions, and finally, increasing on-call pay from $1.50 to $2.50 per hour.

Ms. Lanaghen emphasized Greeley's compensation philosophy focused on being comparable rather than competitive, while offering strong benefits as part of the total rewards package.

Councilmember Butler asked about the on-call pay program. Ms. Lanaghen explained that it applied to positions such as water and sewer staff who must respond to emergencies, and also maintenance workers during snow and ice events.

Mayor Gates thanked staff for the information.

9. **Emergency Communication System Overview**
Director of Emergency Management Peter Perez, and Deputy Director Dom Tatti, presented an overview of the city's emergency communication systems at 8:38 p.m.

Mr. Perez explained that emergency alerts played a crucial role in rapidly warning the public of imminent threats, providing protective action guidance, building community trust, and ultimately saving lives. He discussed various emergency notification methods, which included the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), a federal system accessed through county systems, and mass communication systems such as opt-in systems like Code Red used by Weld County. He noted that outdoor warning sirens were not used in Greeley, so other methods like weather radios, social media platforms, traditional media, and websites were utilized for emergency communication.

Mr. Perez highlighted several current challenges faced by these systems. Opt-in systems require public action to register, and there can be a public distrust in providing personal information. Additionally, there were language and accessibility gaps and restricted access to systems like Code Red and IPAWS. To counteract these issues, future improvements include:
    - increasing community awareness and education,

- enhancing multilingual and accessible messaging, and
- exploring next-generation tools such as integrating emergency notifications with smart home devices.

Councilmember Butler asked about improving coordination with Weld County to shorten lag time for alerts. Mr. Perez explained that they were actively working with Weld County on improving the process. He noted that the current system tasks 9-1-1 dispatchers with sending alerts, adding workload to their existing duties. Ongoing efforts include seeking a new vendor and exploring limited access for cities to the county's alert database.

Councilmember Hall asked about the distinction between emergency and informational alerts. Mr. Perez emphasized that emergency alerts require immediate action to safeguard lives and properties, while informational alerts serve to provide general updates and warnings.

Mayor Gates asked about tornado sirens. Mr. Perez explained that cost, maintenance, and limitations in penetrating homes with basements. He mentioned that their effectiveness was primarily outdoors, and any implementation would need to focus on large gathering spaces with proper community education efforts.

Mayor Gates thanked staff for the information.

10. Utilities Customer Information System Project Update

Deputy Director of Utility Finance and Customer Service Erik Dial, and IT Project Manager Krystal Dilka introduced the item at 9:05 p.m.

Mr. Dial explained that the project was part of a broader effort to enhance customer experience, encompassing not only the new website but also Greeley 311. The approach involved several key aspects: appointing a strong project manager and a dedicated team while backfilling key positions allowed staff to concentrate on the project's execution.

Extensive data cleanup and business process mapping were crucial components of the project's groundwork. The selected vendor, Spry Point, provided a comprehensive suite of integrated modules tailored for various utilities. These included;

- Spry CIS for utility billing,
- Spry Mobile for handling work orders,
- Spry Engage as the customer-facing portal, and
- Spry Backflow, which is already live, as well as an interval data management system.

The implementation included a communication and change management plan using social media, the city website, flyers, events, bill inserts, and direct mailers. Mr. Dial noted that every customer account would have a new account number, requiring customers on autopay to set that up again in the new system.

Key benefits included:

- Enhanced customer experience with easier payment options
- Better data access and reporting capabilities
- Modern system that will grow with Greeley

Ms. Dilka emphasized adequate resources, appropriate timeline, staff training, and communications for successful project implementation. She noted that other cities have contacted Greeley to learn about this implementation approach.

The project was scheduled to go live in November 2025.

Councilmember DeBoutez asked about potential revenue collection delays during the transition. Mr. Dial responded by acknowledging that a slower revenue collection was anticipated due to potential billing confusion among customers. He explained that the implementation was intentionally scheduled during the off-season to minimize impact and clarified that revenues would ultimately be collected, though there might be delays.

Councilmember Hall asked about managing multiple accounts for property management companies. Mr. Dial explained that the new system, Spry Engage, allows users to link multiple accounts for consolidated payments. Property management companies would have the capability to manage accounts within a single system interface, providing a streamlined and efficient approach to handle multiple properties. Utility billing staff would be available to assist users in setting up and managing these linked accounts as needed.

Mayor Gates thanked staff for the information.

11. Scheduling of Meetings, Other Events

None.

12. Adjournment

With no further business to come before the Council, Mayor Gates adjourned the meeting at 9:28 p.m.

Approved

X

John Gates
Mayor

Attest

X

Heidi Leatherwood
City Clerk