City of Greeley, Colorado
City Council Work Session Proceedings
Tuesday, August 11, 2026

1. **Call to Order**
   Mayor Hall called the meeting to order at 6:00 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 Hall led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **Roll Call**
   City Clerk Heidi Leatherwood called the roll.
   The following were present:

   Councilmember Deb DeBoutez
   Mayor Pro Tem Melissa McDonald
   Councilmember Johnny Olson
   Councilmember Brian Rudy
   Councilmember Ryan Roth
   Mayor Dale Hall

   Councilmember Craig Huddleston had an excused absence.

4. **Reports from Mayor and Councilmembers**
   Councilmember Olson received emails regarding the closure of a bus route serving the Northridge and Toiton requiring students to walk the remaining distance to school. He asked Council to reach a consensus to pause the cancellation of the route pending further evaluation.

   Councilmember Olson alerted staff that the streetlights on 20th Avenue westward from the signal at the AIMS campus entrance were out for the third time. He requested that staff investigate and resolve the outage, given that the corridor is heavily used by pedestrians in the evenings.

   Councilmember Roth acknowledged the tragic loss of life resulting from a fire and emergency incident on Highway 34/85 in East Greeley from a weather incident. He thanked the Fire and Police Departments for their swift response and containment

   Councilmember Roth noted a public statement made by country music artist Ashley McBride characterizing Greeley's fans as the worst she had encountered in her career. He offered a lighthearted challenge inviting her to return to Greeley to experience its music and entertainment community firsthand.

5. **Greeley Urban Renewal Authority (GURA) Presentation and Discussion**
   Don Threewitt, Interim Director of Community Development, introduced the item at 6:05 p.m.

Members from the Greeley Urban Renewal Authority (GURA) Board were present: Chair Heather Utrata, Mike Bond, Cindy Welsh, Tyler Mowery, Mike Silva, Nicole Eitmann and Corey Hoffman, legal counsel for the GURA Board.

Mr. Hoffman showed a presentation of urban renewal law and the structure of GURA Deputy City Manager Kelli Johnson provided introductory remarks, noting that the session was intended to build a shared foundation of understanding between Council and the GURA Board as a precursor to future visioning work.

Urban Renewal Framework
Mr. Hoffman explained that urban renewal is a legislative tool for addressing and preventing blight in communities. A property must meet four of several statutorily defined blight criteria to qualify for urban renewal. He emphasized that the City Council is the policymaker responsible for identifying blight, approving urban renewal plans, and directing policy. GURA's role is to carry out these policies. GURA is separate from the city government in Colorado and executes the Council's plans, not its own.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
Mr. Hoffman explained tax increment financing (TIF) as a key urban renewal tool. When a plan is initiated, it sets a base property value. Revenue from the base continues to go to taxing entities. Redevelopment boosting property values increases tax revenue above the base; this increment goes into a special fund for blight reduction. The base value rises with general growth and inflation. Additionally, City Council can choose to apply a sales tax increment, not just property tax increment.

Councilmember DeBoutez asked if the TIF revenue from one plan area can be transferred to another plan area. Mr. Hoffman explained that it can with a demonstrable nexus connecting the expenditure to the remediation or if it prevents the spread of blight within the originating area. So TIF can be expended outside the physical boundaries of an urban renewal area if such a nexus can be established.

Councilmember Olson suggested that a proposed pedestrian underpass connection on 17th Street could potentially serve as that nexus to link the Greeley Mall TIF area to adjacent blighted properties.

House Bill 1348 (2015)
Mr. Hoffman explained that Colorado's House Bill 1348, effective January 1, 2016, significantly revised urban renewal law. Greeley has not yet enacted new plans or substantial modifications requiring compliance with HB 1348.

Compliance is triggered by new plans or substantial modifications, requiring expansion of the GURA Board to 13 members, including appointees from the Weld County Board of Commissioners, an elected official from a special taxing district, and a school board member. The City must notify all affected taxing entities and negotiate project impacts before Council review. If negotiations fail after 120 days, the statute mandates binding mediation.

Councilmember DeBoutez asked for clarification on what constitutes a substantial modification. Mr. Hoffman said that while there are objective criteria in the statute, the determination is largely subjective, and that in most cases modifications would be considered substantial. He said the best approach is to work with taxing entities to confirm the characterization. Routine undertakings or activities carried out within an existing plan area are not modifications and do not trigger HB 1348 compliance.

TIF Bonding Authority

Mr. Hoffman said that the bonding capacity of an Urban Renewal Authority was determined by the amount of TIF projected to be generated over the bond term, as assessed by public finance professionals and economists. Finally, Mr. Hoffman added that TIF can be collected for up to 25 years, and that any funds in the special fund not pledged to an undertaking at the end of that period must be returned to taxing entities on a pro-rata basis, with the exception of sales tax increment and grant-derived funds.

Mayor Hall thanked staff and the GURA board for the presentation.

6. MERGE Council Update

Public Works Director Seth Sorensen, Matt Bournonville and Scott Richrath of Infrastructure Strategies introduced the item at 6:48 p.m.

Mr. Sorensen noted that this is the first of what will become a regular update cycle to Council, with subsequent updates planned for October and December.

Progress Milestones

Mr. Bournonville outlined the project's progress since its 2026 Rebaseline:

- The RAISE grant, pivotal for advancing the RURAL grant (construction-only), has been finalized.
- RSNH was awarded a Master Services Agreement and has initiated the first task order, advancing towards the 30% design milestone.
- All sub-teams, focusing on interchanges, environmental, utilities, and right-of-way, are fully mobilized.
- A CMGC RFQ has been issued, with responses evaluated and interviews for shortlisted firms scheduled for August 25 and 26.
- An award is expected by early October.
- Collaboration with City staff, CDOT, and the U.S. Department of Transportation has been effective.

Schedule and Delivery Method

Mr. Bournonville confirmed that the project schedule milestones have been met. Initial construction is set for late 2027 or early 2028, with the project concluding in 18 to 24 months and federal grant funds must be used by September 30, 2030. He explained that the CMGC approach involves collaboration between the designer and contractor.

Councilmember Olson commended the project team for the progress made since March and highlighted that the CMGC method is intended to maximize savings.

Budget and Cost Range

Mr. Richrath discussed the cost outlook for the project, noting that the initial estimate from the 2025 federal grant applications was developed prior to engaging a design engineer and cost estimator. The revised cost range is now $160 million to $190 million, reflecting a clearer understanding of the project’s complexity, which involves improvements to two interchanges and a mobility hub on US Highway 34.

A specific cost figure cannot yet be provided until the CMGC contractor is involved in the estimating process, but the range will become more precise as design efforts progress.

Councilmember DeBoutez asked whether the TIFIA loan application could be rejected. Mr. Richrath said that while a compliant application was expected to be submitted there was also important timing related to the rural discount interest rate, requiring congressional engagement. Councilmember Olson confirmed that the rural designation was a limited resource and that the City will need to actively engage its congressional delegation to support the application.

Mayor Pro Tem McDonald asked whether the project would actually be completed. Mr. Richrath and Mr. Bournonville said they see a clear path forward based on current progress, and that additional certainty will be available once the CMGC contractor is on board. Councilmember Olson said that in his professional opinion, the project team is in a strong position to execute.

Mayor Hall asked whether increased state involvement was a realistic possibility. Mr. Sorensen said that hope exists but that the City's current strategy is based on funding sources within its control.

Councilmember Olson noted that voter-approved funding from the 2016 ballot measure (referenced as KGM funds, approximately $30 million) remained part of the project's funding structure, and said it is important for constituents to know that commitment is being honored

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Mayor Hall thanked staff and consultants for the presentation.

7. **2026 Ballot Question Discussion**

City Manager Brian McBroom presented background on the potential placement of a ballot question before voters in November 2026.

Mr. McBroom summarized the two projects under consideration:
The Civic Campus project involved $85 million in new debt. Estimated maximum debt payments were approximately $8 million annually, funded through the Quality-of-Life tax, the food tax, and the general fund. Council directed staff to proceed with funding, with the first COP issuance tentatively scheduled for September 1, 2026.

The Catalyst (West Greeley) project had existing debt of approximately $115 million, with approximately $92–93 million spent to date. Estimated debt payments if converted to long-term debt would be approximately $7 million annually. The project requires an economic development payment beginning at $12 million annually, escalating at 2% per year over a 40-year bond term. Mr. McBroom noted there was currently no viable financial model to execute the project without a financial partner or a dedicated revenue source.

Mr. McBroom outlined the proposed tax rate increase (0.5%) including the duration of the tax, and the intended use of revenues. He noted that a resolution placing the question on the ballot must be adopted no later than September 1, 2026.

Council discussion ensued including 10, 20 and 40-year terms, aligning bonds to enhance credit, bond ratings and borrowing terms. Concerns were discussed that included voter confusion from combining projects (Catalyst and Civic Campus funding), deferred capital projects and the burden of a tax increase and the risk of a flat budget without seeking increased revenue.

Mr. McBroom said that based on current projections, the structural deficit is expected to be resolved in the 2027 budget, and that absent a ballot measure, the City has identified sufficient revenues to cover the three major projects. However, the deferred capital project list would continue to be affected.

Chief Financial Officer Allena Portis clarified that the $12 million economic development payment was structured to provide a 1.5x debt service coverage ratio and would be deposited into a supplemental debt service reserve fund. If the project performed as projected and reserve funds were not drawn upon, the appropriated amounts would return to the City in future fiscal years.

Council agreed that further discussion should be placed on the August 25 work session agenda, allowing additional time for the new information to be circulated and reviewed.

8. Scheduling of Meetings, Other Events
None.

9. Adjournment
There being no further business, Mayor Hall adjourned the meeting at 8:23 PM.

Approved:

X Dale K Hall

Dale Hall
Mayor

Attested:

X

Heidi Leatherwood
City Clerk