

AGENDA
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON March 7th, 2025 AT 5:00 P.M.
AT THE ELMORE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
150 SOUTH 4TH EAST STREET

CALL MEETING TO ORDER/ESTABLISH A QUORUM

TOPIC

1) Discussion with Elmore County Commissioners

ADJOURN

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MOUNTAIN HOME, ELMORE COUNTY, IDAHO,
HELD ON MARCH 7th, 2025 AT 5:00 P.M.
AT THE ELMORE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
150 SOUTH 4TH EAST STREET

The Council of the City of Mountain Home, Elmore County, Idaho, met at the Elmore County Courthouse, 150 South 4th East, Mountain Home, Idaho on March 7th, 2025. City Council established a quorum under Idaho State Statute 50-706 with, Councilman Harjo, Councilman Brennan, Councilwoman Wirkkala, and Councilwoman Garvey being present.

TOPIC

1) Discussion with Elmore County Commissioners.

Councilman Harjo started with the dispatch agreement. The Council has established between the four of them that they are interested in reestablishing an agreement and that a handful of things are in the works, but they are looking for feedback, whether it be reinstating the existing or coming up with a new one to be written. He said funds were already budgeted when the payment was due. He apologized that the City did not get the funds over in the appropriate amount of time per the contract. They tried to rectify this at the next Special Meeting by authorizing the payment to be made. He asked if there was anything outstanding with the County that would prevent us from entering a discussion about restoring a dispatch agreement.

Commissioner Hofer asked what is going to be done about the Chief and the Sherrif, it's a huge problem.

Councilman Harjo agreed that it is a problem.

Commissioner Hofer said that he heard from the Prosecutor's office that it's affecting all law enforcement.

Elmore County Attorney Phil Miller said this is the worst he's ever seen.

Commissioner Rodgers said that the difference is that theirs is an elected official.

Councilman Harjo suspended Robert's Rules of Order to continue the discussion.

Councilman Brennan agreed that there's a very different way in which these folks are hired. He brought up the Animal Control agreement. He said that he won't speak for our Chief ever, but it is his understanding that he came in and suddenly it doesn't work. Something that had worked for years previously just doesn't work. He thinks that it's a personality conflict. He's willing to stop that immediately and go back to the old way of doing business.

Councilman Harjo said that he and Councilwoman Garvey have met with Chief Thompson several times regarding Animal Control and the potential MOU. He asked if the County Commission has seen the MOU offering from the City.

Commissioner Corbus asked if he's referring to the one from six months ago, where the Sheriff's deputies were not capable of bringing the animals on weekends.

Councilman Harjo said that would have been the last version that provided the opportunity for Animal Control to radio in saying they were on duty at Animal Control, not out for patrol, but there to accept animals for the Sheriff's department to house overnight. He said that seems to be the sticking point.

Commissioner Hofer said he doesn't know why the city officer doesn't just go out and unlock the door and that's the way they used to do it.

Councilwoman Garvey said that she has 8-months left and she has started working on the "low hanging fruit", and the Animal Shelter seems like an easy fix. She said she talked to the Mayor this morning, and he is fully on board with Councilman Harjo and her decision. Next week she's going to sit back down with the Sheriff, she said and find out exactly what the problems are and find a solution. The idea is that within a month, pending meetings and accepting the MOU, she is hoping to have a new MOU written up and move on.

Commissioner Hofer said that he spoke with the Chief about a year ago and said if it's money, let's talk about it.

Councilwoman Garvey said yes, and that's what they talked about. Her solution was if there's a problem, let's get a group of volunteers or have part-time staff for after hours and weekends to open the doors. The Sheriff and her also came to the understanding that they will not drop off dogs that are injured, they'll be taken to West Vet. We're also going to put a fence and gate up on the North side and give the sheriffs a badge to unlock, and it tracks everything. All that language will be in the MOU. These things should eliminate the Sheriff's issue with the MOU.

Commissioner Corbus said that the County should be responsible for some of those costs.

Councilwoman Garvey said that they are going to implement a fee schedule for housing the dogs. She also said that she got the thumb drive with the information on the dogs that were dropped off in 2023 and 2024, and it's not that many.

Councilman Harjo provided the details of the drop offs for 2023 and 2024 and said we're seeing a decline in numbers, whether that's caused by a change in practice or not. He said that it is clear that in 2022 and 2023 there were working arrangements to make this happen.

Councilwoman Garvey said that's the whole goal, to find a working arrangement. She wants to start checking things off the list so that we can start working together.

Commissioner Hofer said it doesn't have to be this hard, he would hate to have to see a fence and gate put up. He said it's ridiculous.

Commissioner Corbus restated what Councilman Brennan said that this has worked all these years, and now it's broken.

Councilwoman Garvey said that when she talked to the Police chief and the Sheriff, she told them we all need to check our personalities at the door and get down to business, we have to let bygones be bygones because our citizens are going to be affected if we keep acting like this.

Commissioner Hofer said that it's the whole law enforcement.

Councilwoman Garvey asked legal if they are even allowed to discuss the Chief.

Geoff Shroeder, City Attorney, said that's not a thing we can do.

Councilwoman Garvey said that she doesn't think it is something they can sit here and fix today. They recognize it's a problem, but the Council doesn't govern him. She said what she's going to do is to start working through some of these little issues diplomatically.

Councilman Harjo said that he wants to make sure that it's understood that they're actively working on this topic. They know that it is a part of getting back to the full picture of having a dispatch agreement.

Councilman Brennan said that he thinks they're all in agreement that they're going to make it as easy as possible. He understands that Councilman Harjo and Councilwoman Garvey have discussed keypads and access codes, but he'd like to make it even easier and just go back to where a call to city police, they open the door, and let the dog in.

Councilwoman Garvey said that she doesn't disagree with that, but this is them working through the push back. She said they're receiving push back as well.

Commissioner Hofer said that what the Chief told him was that they just needed to build their own dog pound.

Councilwoman Wirkkala asked when that was said to him.

Commissioner Hofer said that it was a year ago, just like he said they need to have two dispatch centers. He said it's a waste to the taxpayers.

Councilman Harjo said that hopefully they'll see some traction out of an Animal Control MOU reboot here in the next couple of weeks.

Commissioner Corbus said that it can be felt how the deputies observe what's going on, like they aren't competent to get the animals there safely and do the right thing.

Councilwoman Wirkkala asked to clarify how it's currently done right now. She asked if for example it's after hours and a stray dog is picked up, deputies will take it down to Glenns Ferry, or what do they do.

Commissioner Corbus said no, they have nothing in place right now.

Councilwoman Garvey said that Mountain Home is not a drop off location, so if a deputy picks up a stray on say Highway 51, they bring it to the pound and drop the dog off. She said this is how it was in the past. After that it either gets picked up by their owner or if it doesn't there's a charge to the County and they eventually get adopted out or go into various organizations that take in animals.

Councilman Harjo said that in consideration of the taxpayer dollar it doesn't make sense to have duplicate facilities. He said they're trying to make sure that the County is not left with this as their only choice.

Councilman Harjo asked if Councilman Brennan had any follow-up on this topic.

Councilman Brennan said that he did not on this topic. He said that he spoke with Commissioner Corbus when he came to City Council about an idea on our ability to waive fees, like building permit fees, equally in all directions, without even asking to do it, with some sort of intergovernmental agreement.

Commissioner Hofer said that they've done that already with a little storage building with a delayed fee.

Councilman Harjo added that Commissioner Corbus has come forward at least twice in the last 14-months asking to waive building permit fees or fire inspection fees. He said these are the types of things in the intergovernmental agreement that they're hoping to assemble.

Phil Miller, County Attorney, said that he thinks the idea of a written agreement is a good idea rather than just something that just gets done and

then somebody says something different.

Councilman Harjo said that as a Council initiative they're going to engage with our legal to try and get some language on paper and get a draft over to the County.

Councilman Brennan said for the record that he's not sure that it's important by any means but for the fee that he's mentioning, they had already voted to approve that granted, but they violated open meeting law. Our City Clerk reached out to each of us independently to ask if they could waive this and he thinks they all said yes. They later corrected the violation and revoted, but by the time the action was taken they had already decided they were doing it.

Commissioner Corbus said they were frustrated enough that they just told whoever to cut the check because they didn't have time to play games over \$158.

Councilman Harjo said that in an effort to respect everyone's time, this is the nature of why they're going to approach an intergovernmental agreement to waive those fees.

Councilman Brennan asked the County Commissioners if they'd be open to that.

Commissioner Corbus said that they would look at it.

Geoff Shroeder, City Attorney said yes to Councilman Brennan, that they can do that.

Commissioner Corbus said that for the construction the City does and the construction the County does, they're both spending the same dollars from the same people. He said let's keep it simple, they shouldn't be charging each other. He'd gladly look at an agreement.

Councilman Harjo moved on to discuss that in the last City Council meeting Kari Hill, Terry Scanlan and Dylan Lawrence, were in attendance and that they are making positive headway. Dylan had sent over a draft to the City Clerk, and they are hoping to see it before the next City Council meeting.

Commissioner Rodgers asked if there would be a formal apology in that as well since there are apologies being made for everything else.

Councilman Harjo said that he thinks that they will find an apology from someone. He personally holds them with a lot of respect in reference to their documents and data going back many years. He thinks all of them were interested in maintaining interest. He said after the second meeting they have some language moving forward, they just need to finalize their letter of support back to those three and the County in support of the water project for the Snake River application.

Councilman Brennan stated that the Mayor sent the Council a message and said that from this point forward he would not be engaging in letters signed by himself and the Council, that he's only going to sign his own letters, and the Council will only sign their own letters. He has written his own and has sent it to Council even though their signatures won't be on it.

Commissioner Corbus asked if it could be explained to him how one political group can write two different letters.

Councilman Brennan said that from the Mayor, it's the Executive letter and Legislative letter, his words. He said the letter that Councilman Harjo is referring to would be from the four Councilmembers.

Councilman Harjo asked if there was any need for further discussion on this topic. There being none, he went on to say that these were the big items for the Council today, dispatch is their number one priority and water is shortly behind that.

Commissioner Hofer said that dispatch can be a priority, but dysfunctional law enforcement as a whole is an issue.

Councilman Brennan asked if he had any recommendations.

Commissioner Hofer said that he does not, that it's the Council's world.

Councilman Brennan said that it's a world he has to be careful in. He said he can acknowledge it, but he can't jump in the middle of it.

Commissioner Hofer said that he gets that, and he just doesn't know what to do about it and that it becomes about the public safety. He said he doesn't know if it's still ongoing, but the ambulance has called and asked for assistance and the Police Chief will get on there and stop his guys. He said he doesn't get this at all.

Councilwoman Wirkkala said what they do have control over is the purse strings. She said they do not want to put on the taxpayers the cost of a dispatch center. She said that's what they're trying to figure out.

Commissioner Hofer said that they're all a little bit over the back and forth of the last couple years of impact fees.

Councilwoman Wirkkala said that she understands, but they have a huge wastewater infrastructure problem. She said they have big price ticket items coming down that they have to figure out.

Commissioner Hofer said that they totally understand and that they have the same problem.

Commissioner Corbus said that they're sitting here having discussions about their ambulance service, that's their priority. He said that they need help from the City. He said that it's been over two years now that they've just been trying to talk with the City.

Councilwoman Wirkkala said that is why they're here, they want to be able to have this conversation to see where they can meet in the middle to help each other.

Phil Miller, County Attorney, said that the thing about impact fees is they don't pay salaries, it's only infrastructure and buildings.

Commissioner Corbus said that anything with a 10-year lifespan or more it all comes from the General Fund.

Phil Miller said that they are spending their savings.

Councilman Harjo said that what they can share about the impact fees from the City's side is that at the next City Council meeting they do have a vacancy on the Impact Fee committee that is hopefully going to be filled.

Commissioner Rodgers asked if they could be moved up the agenda for the City Council meeting.

Councilwoman Garvey said absolutely. She then asked about when St. Luke's had the ambulance service and the approximate cost difference between them compared to how it is now.

Commissioner Corbus said that when St. Luke's had it, they were paying anywhere from \$70,000 to \$90,000 a month out of the General Fund, plus all

of the tax dollars they were collecting, and St. Luke's got to keep all of the revenue they collected on top of that. Then the ambulances they had to buy out of the County's General Fund as well, and St. Luke's had the privilege to use them to haul patients back and forth, so the ambulances were being replaced every few years. He said at that time; we were only running about half the calls they are now running today.

Councilwoman Garvey said that she understands the problems, but her question was is it better off when St. Luke's had it or is it better off now that the County has it.

Commissioner Corbus said that it's better off now that the County has it.

Councilwoman Garvey asked that the County is not necessarily financially better off, however they have the control over it.

Commissioner Corbus said that he thinks they are.

Phil Miller asked that part of the problem is that it really wasn't transparent where all the money was going to with St. Luke's.

Commissioner Rodgers said that the quality of service is better.

Councilwoman Wirkkala asked what it is going to take for the City to get back on the dispatch agreement.

Commissioner Hofer said that they need to work through the Animal Shelter and take it one step at a time.

Councilwoman Wirkkala said that Councilman Brennan requested updates to the Council at every Council Meeting. As it stands now, the memo from staff says no update. She said that she's not okay with that. She said that the City is a year and a half away from losing complete 9-1-1 services. She asked what the City needs to do.

Geoff Shroeder, City Attorney, said that we won't lose 9-1-1, so please don't say that.

Alan Roberts, Emergency Services Director, said that 9-1-1 stays with the County, the City will lose the animal calls and the everyday non-emergency calls.

Councilwoman Wirkkala asked what happens when a non-emergency call turns into an emergency.

Alan Roberts said that they wait some time while they transfer the phone, or they call someone else.

Councilwoman Wirkkala said that's a liability.

Commissioner Corbus said that Councilwoman Wirkkala is right, it's all dangerous.

Geoff Shroeder said that he wants to clarify, the City had a community member say in a public forum that we didn't have 9-1-1 as of the day it was done, and he wanted to be clear that they do have 9-1-1 through the County.

Phil Miller said that he thinks the update is that negotiations are still ongoing.

Councilman Brennan said that he knows that impact fees have been brought up and that he believes they are a long way from being able to work through the legalities. He said that he's hopeful they can work through everything else. He said that they're not here to just give everything that the County

is asking for, but they are hopeful that they can negotiate. He asked if there are any other concerns, aside from impact fees, that they'd like to discuss.

Geoff Shroeder said that the legal issue that Councilman Brennan is referring to is not going to take two years to get through. He also clarified that at least a year and half of what happened previously was not going down a path that was legal. He said they are doing everything they can to do it the right way and as quickly as they can, legally.

Councilman Harjo said from his perspective that he's more than willing and committed to moving forward on things. He said they are willing to hold special meetings if necessary to get things moving faster.

Councilman Brennan asked that if there is a future public safety shortfall, if the County can let the Council know directly.

Phil Miller said that he'd be happy to forward that request over.

Alan Roberts said that part of this deal with the City and the County is that what trickles down to everybody comes down from the top; to fix that problem it's going to have to go to the top two department heads to figure out.

Councilwoman Garvey thanked Alan Roberts and asked how many years he'd been doing this.

Alan Roberts said almost 40 years, since 1986.

Councilwoman Garvey asked in his opinion, when he had seen some of these issues arise.

Alan Roberts said that most of it has been in the last two years.

Commissioner Corbus said even in the last year it has probably been the most significant. He said that he can remember in the past years when the City and the County would work together.

Phil Miller said that the Council needs to carefully review and be on top of what they can decide and what they can't as the Legislative body.

Commissioner Rodgers and Commissioner Corbus both said that they appreciate the Council requesting to come and discuss.

Councilman Harjo thanked the Commissioners for meeting with them.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 5:59 p.m. by orders from Councilman Harjo.


Scott Harjo, Council President

ATTEST:


Tiffany Belt, City Clerk

