HIGHLAND CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

Tuesday, August 11, 2026

Approved September 1, 2026

Highland City Council Chambers, 5400 West Civic Center Drive, Highland Utah 84003

6:00 PM REGULAR SESSION

Call to Order: Mayor Brittney P. Bills
Invocation: Council Member Scott L. Smith
Pledge of Allegiance: Council Member Ron Campbell
Respect Statement: Mayor Brittney P. Bills

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Brittney P. Bills as a regular session at 6:03 pm. The meeting agenda was posted on the Utah State Public Meeting Website at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. The prayer was offered by Council Member Scott L. Smith and those in attendance were led in the Pledge of Allegiance by Council Member Ron Campbell. The Respect Statement was read by Mayor Brittney P. Bills.

PRESIDING: Mayor Brittney P. Bills

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Ron Campbell	Present
Doug Cortney	Present
Liz Rice	Present
Kim Rodela	Present
Scott L. Smith	Present

CITY STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Erin Wells, Assistant City Administrator/Community Development Director Jay Baughman, City Recorder Stephannie Cottle, Finance Director David Mortensen, Library Director Karen Liu, Fire Chief Brian Patten

OTHERS PRESENT: Jon Hart, Will Robertson, Mark Ellingson, DeAnn Ellingson, Garth Jackson, Bryan & Tara Tarbet, Sean Slattery, Kristoffer Pagel, David Beck, Rita Jackson, Kandee Myers, Amy Brinton, GaeLyn Henderson, Harold Henderson, Michael Brinton, Paula Forbes, Pamela Parmer, Mila Hart, Rhett Weller, Lissa Bangerter, Solomon Bangerter, Lauren Bangerter, Madilyn Olsen, Megan Olsen, Scarlet Bushman, Claudia Bushman, Kris Patten, Neala Patten, Claudia Laycock, Ed Bunker, Helena Pockrus, Jessica Anderson, Rachel Farnsworth, Claudia Stillman, Dale Woolston, Susan LeBaron, Penny Curtis, Don Curtis, Nicolina Tanner, Kit Burton, Amy Lucas, Lynn Lonsdale, Stephen Farnsworth, Adele Farnsworth, Hank Bunker, Linda Sheffield, Wayne Tanaka, Kevin Tams, Brianna Hugh, Andrew Forbes, Vivien Forbes, Rafe Forbes, Caroline Otto, Wesley Warren, Leanne Spencer, Gordon Lonsdale, Brent Henderson, Hanna Bunker, Bruce Smith, Vicky Cervantes, Katie Davidson, Chris Dalley, Delicia Mills

1. ACTION ITEMS

Items in this section are to be acted upon individually by the City Council. A report will be given on these items.

a. PUBLIC HEARING/RESOLUTION: Truth in Taxation Hearing & Adoption of Certified Tax Rate *General City Management*
Erin Wells, City Administrator
The City Council will consider adoption of the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Certified Tax Rate.

City Administrator Erin Wells presented information regarding the proposed increase to the dedicated library property tax. The proposed increase would generate approximately $172,488 in additional annual revenue and would increase the cost to the average Highland home, valued at slightly more than $1 million, by approximately $2.38 per month or $28.49 per year. The purpose of the increase is to maintain the library's current level of service, including transitioning one part-time employee to full-time status, adding two part-time positions, supporting the Timpanogos Library Consortium (TLC), and addressing increased costs associated with Libby and other library services.

Ms. Wells reviewed library usage and funding information, noting that more than 63% of Highland homes have a current library card, library cardholders average approximately 52 checkouts per year, the library receives approximately 209 visitors per day, and more than 8,000 attendees participate annually in children's programs. The library represents approximately 2% of the City's overall budget, with approximately 75% of its funding coming from property taxes.

Ms. Wells explained that the dedicated library tax rate was established in 2007 and was reduced in 2010. She reviewed the proposed impact of the increase, including the effect on the average Highland property tax bill and comparisons with other Utah libraries. She also discussed alternatives considered by the Council, including increased fees, use of reserves, General Fund support, donations, exiting the TLC, reducing programs, and reducing library hours, all of which would not entirely support the library moving forward. As part of the truth in taxation requirements, Ms. Wells displayed the Utah County Notice of Proposed Tax Increase and the Proposed Property Tax Impact Schedule. She explained that the only other taxing entity proposing an increase in taxes for Highland City residents is Central Utah Water Conservancy. Ms. Wells stated that these documents are available on the back tables for residents.

Mayor Brittney P. Bills opened the public hearing at 6:23 pm.

Garth Jackson stated that his family had moved to Highland approximately three months earlier. He compared Highland's property taxes with those in the community where he previously lived, stating that his former property taxes had been approximately five times higher and had increased over 30 years to approximately $1,400 per month. Mr. Jackson cautioned the Council about the "cumulative effects" of taxes, noting that individual increases can eventually become difficult for residents to manage. He stated that he supports the library as a legitimate City function but encouraged the Council to examine each component of the proposed increase rather than approving an overall amount. As an example, he questioned the cost of the Timpanogos Library Consortium, stating that while sharing resources is a good idea, he did not believe it was necessary for staff to spend significant time delivering books between libraries. He noted that if he checked out a book through the consortium, it would take him approximately seven minutes to drive to the Highland Library and approximately twelve minutes to drive to another participating library. He also questioned whether senior programming should be funded through the library or through the City's General Fund. Mr. Jackson stated that he did not oppose the library but believed each proposed expense should be considered individually to determine an appropriate tax increase.

Kit Burton began by asking, "Why should I pay for something I don't use?" She compared the question to other community services funded through taxes, such as parks, bike paths, and portions of sidewalks that individual residents may not personally use. Ms. Burton stated that the community funds such services because it is making an investment in the community as a whole. She compared the proposed annual library cost with the price of a hardcover book from Amazon and stated that she would rather keep her investment in the local community than send it to a large corporation. She also shared that, as a young mother, she could not have afforded to purchase all of the children's books her family used, nor would she have had room to store them. She added that the library provided a place to take their children when she needed an escape. Ms. Burton concluded by asking the Council to support the increased library funding.

Shaun Slattery thanked City Administrator Erin Wells and Library Director Karen Liu for the information sessions and stated that the presentations had helped him understand the proposal. As a Highland resident of approximately ten years, he noted that his household was among the roughly 36% of Highland homes without a library card and stated that his family had not personally experienced the value of the library to the same degree as other residents. He said the presentation had made clear that the library needs additional staffing and employee relief. However, he questioned whether the City needed to continue funding all of the other proposed expenses, particularly Libby. Mr. Slattery questioned whether Libby was a service that originated during the pandemic that the City was now attempting to maintain and suggested that the additional funding might instead be focused on staffing and labor needs.

Paula Forbes began by asking residents whether they remembered Highland's former monthly bookmobile, the small collection of books available at Mountain Ridge Junior High, and the annual fee Highland residents previously paid to use the American Fork Library. She recalled the gratitude residents felt when the City established a library in the City building. Ms. Forbes, a recently retired schoolteacher and literacy specialist, emphasized the importance of strong literacy skills to individuals and the community. She described using Libby and the Timpanogos Library Consortium to access books from Highland, American Fork, and Pleasant Grove and stated that having books delivered to Highland is particularly helpful because residents do not have to drive to other libraries. She also discussed careful money management, explaining that she does not purchase books from Amazon or elsewhere unless she cannot obtain them through the library, and that she cannot afford an Audible subscription. Ms. Forbes stated that if residents checked out only one book instead of purchasing it, that savings would effectively cover the proposed increase for an entire household. She characterized the proposal as a “low cost, high impact increase.”

Wayne Tanaka stated that he has supported the library for approximately twelve years and discussed the value of being able to borrow books, audiobooks, CDs, and other materials rather than purchasing them. He noted that many books cost approximately \$25–\$30 but can be checked out from the library at no additional cost. Mr. Tanaka emphasized that the library's reach extends beyond Highland because residents from Cedar Hills, Alpine, and other communities also benefit from the system. He stated that access to knowledge is foundational to the success of children and young adults and expressed his belief that reading a physical book and “turning the pages” provides a different experience from obtaining information on the Internet. He encouraged the Council to support the library and its readers.

Kevin Tams explained that the proposed library funding had been under consideration for approximately five years. As a member of the Library Board, he stated that the Board had repeatedly discussed the library's ongoing financial challenges and possible solutions. Drawing on his professional experience managing multiple teams and multi-million-dollar budgets, Mr. Tams emphasized that the proposed increase was not a “knee jerk reaction” or a decision made casually, but rather the result of years of discussion and careful consideration. He described the proposed funding as “the most prudent” and “most responsible” action the City could take to address problems that had existed for several years. Mr. Tams also emphasized the impact of the library's financial limitations on its employees, stating that Highland has great people who do great things and that the City should support and care for those employees. He shared that the library has been a gift to his family and that his children have loved using it. Mr. Tams stated that he views the library as a gift the City can provide to other families as well, regardless of whether every resident personally chooses to use the service. He concluded by expressing appreciation for the Council's financial responsibility and support of what he characterized as a “modest increase.”

Nicolina Tanner thanked the Council and City staff for their work and specifically acknowledged their fiscal responsibility. She offered several ideas for generating additional revenue or community support rather than relying solely on property taxes. Ms. Tanner suggested exploring whether Libby could generate revenue through advertising or periodic donation requests like Wikipedia's fundraising campaigns, with donations allocated according to usage among participating libraries. She also suggested that the Friends of the Library could use social media to identify specific needs—such as “stools and couches and bean bags” or vehicles for transporting books—and invite residents to donate toward those specific needs. She acknowledged that public funding is often the most reliable source of ongoing revenue but stated that she believes in the good hearts of the people of Highland and their willingness to support the community.

Brianna Hugh identified herself as both a parent and a ninth-grade English teacher and stated that she reads approximately 150 books a year, including approximately 50–60 new young adult novels annually so she can recommend current books to her students. She explained that she could not afford to purchase that many books and does not have the time or resources to independently research every new young adult title, making the library staff's expertise particularly valuable. Ms. Hue also discussed concerns about declining literacy rates in Utah and stated that in 2025 approximately one in four adults read a book. She asked the Council to consider what kind of community Highland wants to be and whether it wants to be a community that values literacy. She shared that when her children were young, they went to the library every week and typically left with 10–15 books, something her family could not have afforded to purchase. As Chair of the Library Foundation, she also stated that the Foundation has contributed substantial money, time, and resources while being very careful with its funds. She concluded that the library has been “limping along” for at least the last five years and that the community needs to demonstrate that it values literacy and community.

GaeLyn Henderson stated she raised six sons in Highland. She recalled that her family previously had to purchase library cards from Lehi or American Fork and expressed appreciation that residents can now use the Highland Library without traveling elsewhere. Ms. Henderson discussed the importance of the library's senior programming, explaining that some seniors are lonely despite having church and other community activities available to them. She shared the example of a friend in Spanish Fork who is a widow and considers senior activities to be the biggest part of her life. Ms. Henderson stated that she uses Libby “almost every day of my life” and particularly values being able to obtain books from American Fork or Pleasant Grove when Highland does not own a particular title. She noted that her vision issues make it difficult for her to drive around collecting books and expressed strong support for maintaining the current services.

Andrew Forbes stated that he has lived in Highland for approximately four years and grew up in the community. As a father of young children, he said that he regularly uses Libby and the programs offered by the Highland Library. Mr. Forbes also described his experience as an active-duty military member, noting that the military uses Libby to provide access to resources such as the Marine Corps reading lists. He stated that it was valuable to return to Highland and still have access to the same resource. Mr. Forbes described libraries as making a community “stronger and better” and supported the proposed increase, noting that it is considerably more affordable than individual subscriptions to services such as Audible or Kindle Unlimited while also benefiting the broader community.

Hannah Bunker: who identified herself as both an American Fork resident and a courier who transports books between American Fork, Highland, and Pleasant Grove, stated that she loves the library and praised Library Director Karen Liu for managing a difficult situation. However, she expressed concern about what she described as a “slippery slope” created by increasing the dedicated library tax. Ms. Bunker questioned whether the City might gradually be asked to fund additional services that may not fit within the City's current budget.

She emphasized that she supports reading and children's programs but believed the City should carefully evaluate what it can afford and work toward adding additional services over time.

Bruce Smith stated that few things bring the public to a City Council meeting more reliably than a tax increase and cautioned that the issue could become emotional if it were framed as "who's for the library and who's against it." He stated that he believed almost everyone present supported the library but that the real question was how the library should be funded. Drawing on his experience as a teacher and his background in the library industry, Mr. Smith stated that he believed he understood both large and small library operations. He argued that the proposed increase should be evaluated on principle rather than simply the dollar amount, noting that even a small tax increase represents a permanent additional cost. He suggested that the library may need to "tighten its belt" just as residents are doing in response to rising costs. Mr. Smith also expressed concern that the Council may have already made up its mind and asked the Council to identify "what is the catastrophe that will befall the city of Highland if this tax increase doesn't happen?".

Vicki Cervantes stated that she loves the library and its services but questioned whether the City had exhausted other potential sources of revenue before increasing taxes. She specifically raised concerns about property encroachments in Highland and asked whether residents who have encroached on City property have been appropriately penalized or taxed. Ms. Cervantes stated that revenue from such situations "could have bought a lot of books for Highland." She encouraged the Council to conduct additional due diligence regarding City finances, expenditures, and contracting and questioned whether contracts were being awarded to the most cost-effective bidders or whether the City was "just giving money away." She concluded that the City should do more homework before asking residents for additional taxes.

Rafe Forbes stated that he does not pay taxes yet but uses the library and reads extensively. He explained that he frequently uses Libby because the Highland Library does not always have the books he wants. He gave the example of books with an eight-month waiting list, where approximately 32 people may be waiting for one of only two available copies. Mr. Forbes stated that additional funding for the library and Libby could allow more copies to be purchased and reduce the amount of time residents must wait for popular books.

Scarlet Bushman expressed appreciation for the Council's willingness to listen to residents and stated that, as a naturalized U.S. citizen, she found it particularly meaningful to see elected officials listen to residents rather than simply make decisions without public input. She stated that she believes taxes will continue to increase for various reasons and that residents will likely face additional taxes whether or not the library increase is approved. If she has to pay additional taxes, Ms. Bushman stated that she would rather see those funds go toward the library because it provides a safe place where children can spend time, parents can get "a little bit of a mental break," and adults can meet and have conversations. She concluded that if taxes are going to be paid, she would rather support the library with hers.

Neala Patten stated that she and her husband have lived in Highland for 28½ years and acknowledged that residents are unlikely to avoid taxes altogether. She questioned whether residents have any opportunity to vote directly on a property tax increase when they are the people providing the funding. Ms. Patton also questioned the library's attendance statistics, noting that the reported 8,000 children's program attendees appeared close to the total number of children in Highland and asking whether the number represented individual children or repeated visits. She similarly questioned what the reported 209 daily visitors were doing at the library and what the additional revenue would provide to residents who do not use the library. Ms. Patton also questioned the distinction between the City's library and school libraries, noting that a significant portion of her property taxes already supports the Alpine School District. She stated that while the information presented appeared thorough, she remained uncertain whether all alternatives had been fully explored and what residents would receive in return for the additional tax.

Katie Davidson described her family's long history with the Highland Library, including participating in summer reading programs approximately 20 years ago. She stated that she is now back at the library regularly with her three-year-old child, who has few children in the neighborhood to play with. Ms. Davidson described story time as her child's “favorite thing on the planet” and compared it to a “mini preschool.” She described the library's children's offerings, including Yodo cards, videos, Adventure Discovery packets, and other resources she had not realized were available until she returned to the library as a parent. She also discussed the increasing cost of family activities, noting that a Costco trip that once cost approximately $100 can now cost $200–$300 and that families can no longer easily spend less than $100 on a movie or restaurant outing. She stated that if families have to choose, “the library is going to be a big part of my family life.”

Chris Dalley: a Highland resident for approximately 40 years, recalled when the City's library was located at Mountain Ridge Junior High because Highland did not yet have its own library. She spoke specifically on behalf of older residents and discussed the importance of large-print books. She recalled that the library previously had an end-cap dedicated to large-print books but that the collection was later incorporated into the regular collection because the library could not afford to maintain it separately. Ms. Dalley questioned whether the City was being too restrictive in its library spending, asking, “Are we that cheap?” She compared the library's funding with the City's ability to construct other community amenities and stated that if Highland can build a playground and pickleball court, she believes her taxes can be used to adequately supply the library. She stated that the library is busy whenever she visits and wants her taxes to go to the library.

Rachel Farnsworth, a member of the Highland City Library Board, thanked residents for becoming engaged in local government and noted that the Library Board meets monthly. She stated that, during her four years on the Board, only three members of the public had attended a Board meeting, two of whom were children. Ms. Farnsworth explained that the library's financial situation has been discussed every single month during her tenure, with the Board continually asking how it can cut costs, tighten the budget, and maximize every dollar. She stated that library employees begin at wages lower than those earned by her 17-year-old son at Slim Chickens and that the library has never provided a merit-based increase to an employee in its 18-year history. She compared Highland's staffing with Pleasant Grove, noting that the libraries have similar circulation, but Pleasant Grove has approximately 35 staff members while Highland has 12. Ms. Farnsworth also explained the impact of the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services funding changes on Libby, technology grants, bookmobiles. She concluded that librarians are “magical with money” and stated that the library has been operating with extraordinary fiscal restraint.

Lauren Bangerter: expressed appreciation for Highland and for the Council's responsiveness to residents on other issues, including crosswalk and stop-sign concerns. She discussed her family's use of the library, including toddler programs, story time, and children's activities. She stated that her children enjoy checking out multiple books and that she would much rather have them reading books than spending time on screens. Ms. Bangerter shared a humorous exchange with her son, who had accompanied her to the meeting and asked if she would take him over to the library afterward to get a book. She stated that the library is “really, really special to kids, to families, to the growing generation” and that she wants to see it thrive.

Wesley Warren, a member of the Library Board, stated that he had spent approximately 5½ months tracking his conversations with Highland residents about the proposed tax. He explained that he had kept a personal record of each interaction because he did not want to advocate for an idea he believed was not supported by residents. Mr. Warren reported that he had spoken with 649 residents who explicitly supported the library tax and 46 who opposed it. He stated that, by nearly every measure—circulation, program attendance, daily visits, and library-card adoption—Highland's library performs better than other libraries in the area, despite being less well funded and staffed. He posed the question of “which library model is the correct one and which one is the broken one?” and contrasted the funding and staffing of Highland with other libraries. He also described conducting job-shadowing at the library and stated that residents would be surprised by how much the staff accomplishes. Mr. Warren concluded that the library needs the additional full-time position.

Megan Olsen stated that she has lived in Highland for approximately seven years and described the library as a "second home" to herself and her siblings. She estimated that the four family members check out approximately 200 books each year between Libby and physical books. Ms. Olsen compared the proposed $28 increase with the cost of approximately two paperback books and stated that the increase would be worthwhile for her family. She also explained that her younger brother has sometimes been unable to check out books from his elementary school library because the school librarian considered the books to be above his reading level, even though he is an advanced reader. As a result, he uses the Highland Library to access the books he actually wants to read. Ms. Olsen also stated that her family participates in many of the library's social programs and described the library as "probably the best thing that the city has for us."

Delicia Mills said that her children are avid readers who enjoy the library. Her primary concern was the size of the proposed increase, which she characterized as approximately a 50% increase. She stated that she understands that costs have increased but believes such a large increase is difficult to justify for what she considers a non-essential, although highly valued, service. Ms. Mills also raised concerns about the placement of certain materials in the library and stated that she has stopped taking her children because she finds it difficult to monitor the shelves for materials she does not want them to encounter. She suggested creating a designated section for such materials so that children are not inadvertently exposed to them. She stated that before asking residents to provide more tax funding, the library should take greater responsibility for making the library a safe environment for children

Madilyn Olsen: stated that she has lived in Highland for approximately ten years and has always loved libraries and reading. She recalled visiting the library as a child while living in Florida and looking through children's books. Ms. Olson stated that residents who question whether the proposed $28 increase is worthwhile could consider the cost of purchasing two or three books themselves. She suggested that if a resident were to read approximately three additional books during the year, the value received would justify the proposed increase.

Will Robertson stated that he served in the Army for nearly 30 years and expressed appreciation for a representative form of government in which elected officials make decisions rather than allowing decisions to be determined by the emotions of a crowd. He stated that he is a strong supporter of libraries and that books and libraries have played an important role in his adult life. Mr. Robertson then addressed the argument that the proposed increase is only $2.38 per month, stating that this framing makes a permanent tax increase sound small while overlooking what the money permanently purchases. He expressed concern that the proposal would establish permanent staffing, salary, and benefit costs that would be difficult to reduce later, stating that "governments tend to grow, but they rarely shrink." He emphasized that supporting libraries and supporting this particular permanent tax increase are two different questions. Mr. Robertson acknowledged Highland's strong library performance, noting its circulation and early-childhood program attendance, and stated that the data indicate Highland already operates a strong and efficient library with relatively low funding. He urged the Council to maintain that lean model rather than expand permanent staffing costs.

David Beck stated that he believed that "a tax increase, for whatever reason, is the wrong time to do that." He questioned whether the economy and financial environment are as strong as sometimes portrayed and argued that the City should focus on using existing funding more effectively rather than increasing taxes. Mr. Peck pointed to the cost of the City's park development and stated that the money spent on the park could have funded library staffing for many years. He concluded that the issue is not whether Highland has enough money, but "how we spend it," and stated that the proposed tax increase was therefore the wrong approach.

Leanne Spencer described moving to Utah in the 1980s and initially feeling that she was not included or part of a community. She explained that she later returned to the area following the death of her son and to help raise two grandchildren with her widowed daughter. Ms. Spencer stated that she was excited to come to Highland but was surprised by how small the library was. She reflected on the common concern that residents do not want big government deciding where their money goes and stated that the local library provides an opportunity for residents to make that decision within their own community. She described the library as “the great equalizer of all communities” because it serves residents regardless of whether they live in multimillion-dollar homes or rent their homes. Ms. Spencer expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the public process and stated that she supports the proposed tax increase.

There were no comments online.

Mayor Brittney P. Bills closed the public hearing at 7:20 pm.

Council Member Smith thanked the residents who attended and began by putting Highland's tax situation into perspective. Drawing on his service on the City Council since 2010, he explained that Highland's dedicated library tax is among the smallest in the State and noted that the City has not increased its general property tax rate in approximately 18 years; in fact, the City reduced its property tax in 2010. He explained that while property values have increased, Utah's certified tax rate system generally adjusts the City's rate downward as values rise, meaning the City does not automatically receive additional revenue from increased assessments. Council Member Smith stated that other taxing entities, including school districts and the County, have increased their taxes while Highland has continued to operate efficiently. Council Member Smith emphasized Highland's fiscal efficiency by comparing the City's budget with that of American Fork, noting that American Fork has approximately twice Highland's population but a budget more than four times larger. He also noted that Highland was on track to pay off its remaining bonds and become essentially debt-free, stating that “there's not many cities in the whole America that can say that.” He argued that the proposed library increase should therefore be considered in the context of the City's overall fiscal responsibility and relatively low tax burden. Council Member Smith then used his own property tax bill as an example. He explained that his property is below Highland's average property value and that, because the City's general certified tax rate is decreasing, his overall City property tax would increase by less than $10 despite the library increase. He compared the library tax with the approximately $62.13 he pays for a State charter school in Alpine and stated that he would rather see his money support services that benefit Highland residents directly. He noted that the library accounts for a very small portion of the City's overall expenditures, compared to public safety and garbage, and stated that he believes residents receive “a lot of bang for our buck.” He emphasized that the library currently operates with only one full-time employee and that the proposal would increase that to two full-time employees while also providing a courier to support the three-library consortium. He concluded by stating his support for the increase and for libraries.

Council Member Cortney acknowledged that the library has strong usage but focused much of his discussion on the long-term sustainability of the proposed funding. He stated that the library conducted 233 programs in 2024 and questioned whether reducing programs would provide a meaningful solution. He noted that eliminating all library programming would save approximately $36,000 annually, which would not come close to covering the funding gap. Council Member Cortney expressed particular concern that more than 75% of the library's budget consists of salary and wage expenses and that those costs had increased approximately 6% annually since COVID. Under the proposed staffing plan, he calculated that the rate of increase would approach 9% annually over that same period. He stated that he was concerned about whether that rate of growth was sustainable and acknowledged that he wished he had begun those sustainability discussions earlier in the process. Council Member Cortney identified three options for the Council. The first was to subsidize the library from the General Fund for one year while the City and Library worked through sustainability issues and determined what level of future funding would actually be necessary. The second was to make significant cuts to the library, which he described as “taking a hatchet to the library.” He expressed concern that substantial cuts would result in the loss of experienced employees and institutional knowledge and could damage Highland's relationships with neighboring libraries if the City withdrew from the Timpanogos Library Consortium. He also acknowledged that continuing to participate in the consortium means Highland's partner libraries are providing some benefit to Highland, and he questioned whether it would be appropriate to withdraw after only one year and leave those partners with additional costs. The third option identified by Council Member Cortney was to approve the proposed tax increase and then work on long-term sustainability. He stated that he personally could not support “hacking away” at the library that Highland had built and warned that significant cuts could leave “scars” lasting at least a decade. In response to a resident's question about what catastrophe would occur if the tax increase were not approved, Council Member Cortney stated that the catastrophe he saw was the long-term damage that could result from failing to provide additional revenue. Council Member Cortney nevertheless acknowledged that his preferred short-term solution was subsidizing the library from the General Fund for one year while the City worked on sustainability. He stated that he had historically opposed using the General Fund to subsidize the library but recognized the risks associated with both approaches. He explained that if positions were expanded using one-time General Fund money and then had to be eliminated the following year, the City could lose good employees who would seek more stable employment elsewhere. He therefore concluded that additional revenue was necessary, although he remained concerned about the long-term sustainability of the library's staffing growth. Council Member Cortney also addressed questions raised by residents. Regarding whether residents could vote directly on the tax increase, he explained that Utah law does not provide the City with an option to proactively place the tax increase on the ballot; if the tax were adopted, residents could pursue a referendum to attempt to place the issue on the ballot. He also clarified that the reported 8,000-plus children's program visits and 209 daily visitors were not necessarily unique individuals because the library does not have a mechanism to deduplicate those figures. He stated that the benefit of the proposed increase was avoiding significant reductions to the library's services and infrastructure.

Council Member Campbell began by explaining that when he first joined the Council, he had a very different perception of libraries and was uncertain about their future. He stated that the City Council orientation process was his “single greatest enlightening” experience regarding the library because he had not realized the extent of the services it provides. He said the experience took him from “zero to 100 in light speed” and that he was particularly impressed by the library's youth services and Storytime programs. Council Member Campbell acknowledged that the proposed $2.38 monthly increase is permanent and stated that this consideration had caused him to think carefully about the proposal. He explained that Highland had reduced its property tax in 2010 but questioned whether the City would be likely to make another reduction in the future. He then considered what the proposed funds would actually support, particularly the Timpanogos Library Consortium and Libby. He stated that while Highland could discontinue the TLC, doing so would negatively affect neighboring libraries and could damage Highland's relationships with those communities. Council Member Campbell also spoke personally about Libby, explaining that all seven of his children use the service. He stated that if his decision resulted in defunding Libby for Highland, his children would be very unhappy with him. As a member of the Library Board, he said he had participated in the budget process and was confident that the Board had “sharpened the pencil” and examined the available options carefully. He stated that the library could not continue operating at its current funding level without losing Libby, the TLC, and other services, and he concluded that he believed the Council was making the right decision. Council Member Campbell emphasized the staffing issue, noting that the library would have only one full-time employee without the proposed increase. He pointed out that one part-time position within the city had been filled by eight different people over five years, illustrating the instability that can accompany part-time staffing. He expressed amazement that the library has been able to operate with 11 part-time employees and one full-time employee and stated that the library's ability to accomplish so much with so few resources is “magical.”

Council Member Rodela discussed the broader financial pressures facing municipalities and the impact of inflation and reductions in federal and state funding. She noted that cities are increasingly being asked to provide additional services without corresponding funding from higher levels of government. She explained that Highland spends approximately $17.15 per resident on library services, compared with a statewide median of approximately $36.62, and emphasized that Highland was not asking to reach the median level of spending. She stated that the City has also historically kept library employee wages below the median. Council Member Rodela emphasized that the library is about much more than books. She pointed to increasing circulation, digital use, and program participation, including Storytime and programs for seniors and families. She described the library as a “community center” and stated that it is one of the few places in Highland that brings people from throughout the community together. She noted that the library has accomplished these things while operating with 71% fewer resources than in 2006, because revenue has not kept up with inflation. Council Member Rodela stated that the Truth in Taxation process had worked as intended by providing public notice, opportunities for residents to attend information sessions, opportunities to submit comments, and an opportunity for the Council to hear directly from residents. She emphasized that the Council had listened to the public and reviewed the available data but stated that, after considering the information and resident feedback, she continued to believe the appropriate action was to increase library resources rather than continue asking employees to accomplish more with substantially fewer resources.

Council Member Rice thanked residents for attending and acknowledged that the Council was facing difficult decisions. She explained that when she was elected the previous November, she had told the residents who supported her that she would not vote for a property tax increase, including a bond, and stated that she intended to honor that commitment. She also shared her personal history with the library, noting that she was a teacher at Mountain Ridge Junior High when the library was located there and that she would sometimes stay until 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. to help put books away. She acknowledged that the library has come a long way since that time. Council Member Rice stated that she agreed the library is a worthy cause but argued that the City “cannot continue to raise taxes for every noble or worthy cause.” She referenced Garth Jackson's earlier example of paying approximately $1,400 per month in property taxes in his former community and stated that residents would face additional financial pressures in the future. She also addressed Libby, explaining that although she knows many people who love the service—including her sister—“it's not free” and she believed the public needed to better understand its cost. Council Member Rice stated that she had personally spoken with or received communications from approximately 267 residents opposed to the tax and 65 in favor, while noting that many of those had served or previously served on the Library Board or City Council. She acknowledged that the City had characterized the increase as relatively small but stated that her own property tax notice showed a 52.65% increase in the library tax. She referenced her father's saying that “we dig our grave of debt one shovelful at a time” and encouraged residents to pay attention to the percentage increase rather than focusing only on the dollar amount. Council Member Rice further stated that she was concerned about residents on fixed incomes and families already experiencing financial pressure. She identified the Library Foundation, reserves, annual book sale, and grants as potential sources of funding that could help cover expenses for a period of time. She also expressed concern about the future cost of employee benefits and referenced anticipated increases in Pressurized Irrigation costs and potential taxes associated with the new Aspen Peaks School District. Council Member Rice acknowledged that she personally supports the library and noted that she had used some of her discretionary Council funds to purchase a cover for the pickup truck used to transport books between Highland, American Fork, and Pleasant Grove. However, she stated that while the consortium has increased library usage, she was not convinced that it has been entirely beneficial for Highland taxpayers. She emphasized that the proposed property tax is permanent and stated that the City should be “more conservative and deliberate” in its spending decisions. Council Member Rice also questioned whether some community programming could be supported through partnerships with local businesses rather than additional tax revenue. She praised the City's new full-time events coordinator and said the coordinator had done an “amazing job” with the America 250 activities, the Fling, and Colonial Village. However, she expressed concern that the full-time events coordinator could also be used to conduct library programs, effectively causing the City to fund a portion of a full-time position through the library's budget. She stated that she believed the current library tax revenue should be sufficient and that she had expected to see compromises such as adjusted library hours or other cost-saving measures. Finally, Council Member Rice stated that she believed Highland has other higher-priority infrastructure and community needs that will require funding in the near future and that the City cannot continue increasing taxes simply because a service is worthwhile. She referenced American Fork and Pleasant Grove reducing library hours and staffing as examples of other communities making adjustments to control costs. She concluded by stating that she was voting no and reiterated her concern that the City was moving down what she described as a “slippery slope.”

Mayor Brittney P. Bills thanked the residents who attended the meeting and the Council Members for the extensive discussion. She acknowledged that the decision before the Council was difficult and stated that she appreciated hearing the different perspectives expressed throughout the evening. Mayor Bills emphasized that the Council's responsibility was to look beyond the immediate dollar amount of the proposed increase and consider the long-term financial implications of the decision. Mayor Bills expressed concern about using the City's General Fund to subsidize the library's ongoing operating expenses. She explained that while using General Fund dollars could provide a short-term solution, it would not establish a sustainable funding source for the library's continuing staffing and operating needs. She stated that the City has many competing priorities and that permanently shifting library expenses onto the General Fund could undermine the ability of the General Fund to keep up with other City services. She also expressed concern about relying on volunteers, donations, or grants for long-term funding needs. Mayor Bills recognized the proactive decisions of Council Members who sit on other boards and committees and push back on increases from other taxing entities.

Council Member Cortney asked about the risks to subsidizing the library out of the General Fund for one year while working on sustainability issues regarding wages, to which City Administrator Erin Wells acknowledged that while if might be financial feasible, the delay and uncertainty will most certainly be felt among the employees. The bigger concern is the intangible aspects of that decision.

Council Member Ron Campbell MOVED that City Council approve the resolution adopting the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Certified Tax Rate of 0.000775, which includes 0.000630 for City operations and 0.000145 for Library operations.

Council Member Scott L. Smith SECONDED the motion.

The vote was recorded as follows:

Council Member Ron Campbell	*Yes*
Council Member Doug Cortney	*Yes*
Council Member Liz Rice	*No*
Council Member Kim Rodela	*Yes*
Council Member Scott L. Smith	*Yes*

The motion carried 4:1

b. **PUBLIC HEARING/ORDINANCE: Adoption of the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Final Budget** *General City Management*
Erin Wells, City Administrator
The City Council will hold a public hearing and consider adoption of the Highland City Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Final Budget.

City Administrator Erin Wells presented the final Fiscal Year 2026-2027 budget and summarized the changes from the interim budget approved in June. The changes were related to the library property tax decision, updated figures, and the removal of holding accounts that had been established pending the Truth in Taxation decision. The final budget therefore reflects the approved library tax increase.

Mayor Brittney P. Bills opened the public hearing at 8:17 pm.

There were no public comments.

Mayor Brittney P. Bills closed the public hearing at 8:17 pm.

Council Members expressed support for the final Fiscal Year 2026–2027 budget, with limited additional discussion following the extensive Truth in Taxation discussion earlier in the meeting. Council Member Rice reiterated her previously stated concerns regarding the library property tax increase and indicated that she could not support the final budget.

Council Member Scott L. Smith MOVED that City Council approve the ordinance adopting the Highland City Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Final Budget.

Council Member Kim Rodela SECONDED the motion.

The vote was recorded as follows:

Council Member Ron Campbell	*Yes*
Council Member Doug Cortney	*Yes*
Council Member Liz Rice	*No*
Council Member Kim Rodela	*Yes*
Council Member Scott L. Smith	*Yes*

The motion carried 4:1

ADJOURNMENT

Council Member Ron Campbell MOVED to adjourn the regular meeting and Council Member Liz Rice SECONDED the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 pm.

I, Stephannie B. Cottle, City Recorder of Highland City, hereby certify that the foregoing minutes represent a true, accurate and complete record of the meeting held on August 11, 2026. This document constitutes the official minutes for the Highland City Council Meeting.

Stephannie B. Cottle, CMC, UCC
City Recorder

Welcome to the Highland City Council Meeting

August 11, 2026

Please Sign the Attendance Sheet

Scan for Agenda

HIGHLAND CITY

6:00 PM SPECIAL SESSION

Call to Order – Mayor Brittney P. Bills

Invocation – Council Member Scott L. Smith

Pledge of Allegiance – Council Member Ron Campbell

Respect Statement – Mayor Brittney P. Bills

TRUTH IN TAXATION HEARING & ADOPTION OF CERTIFIED TAX RATE

General City Management

Item 1a – Public Hearing/Resolution

Presented by – Erin Wells, City Administrator

Summary – The Numbers

- Consideration of an increase to the dedicated library property tax
- Would add an additional $172,488 of revenue annually
- **Increase** of $2.38 per month or $28.49 a year for average Highland home ($1,036,000)

Summary – The Purpose: Maintain Current Offerings

1. Transition of 1 part-time employee to full-time & 2 additional part-time employees

2. Keep pace with demands from Timpanogos Library Consortium (TLC) & regular Programming

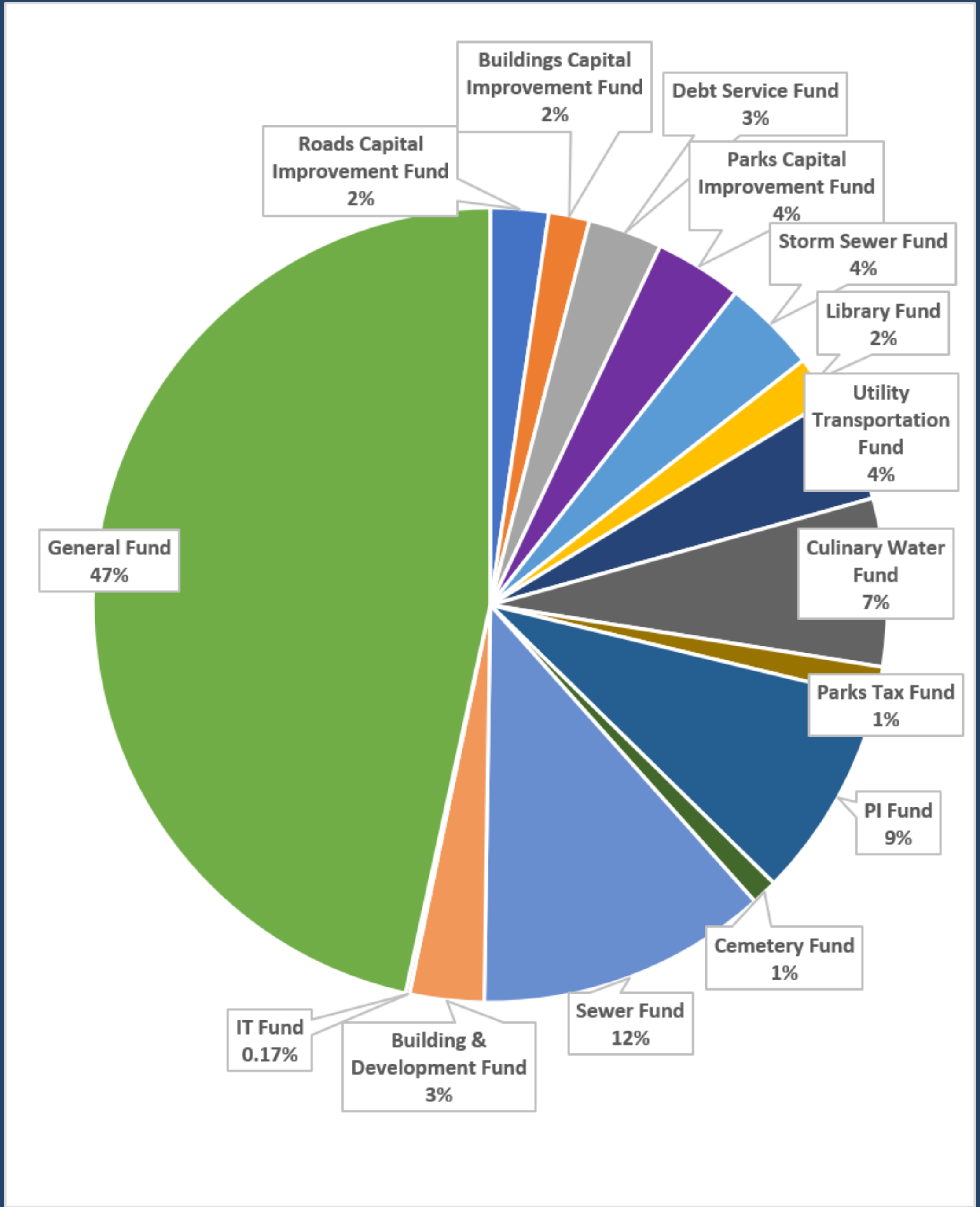
3. Replace revenue lost through federal and state budget cuts for Libby (electronic book service)

FY2026 Library Usage Data Points

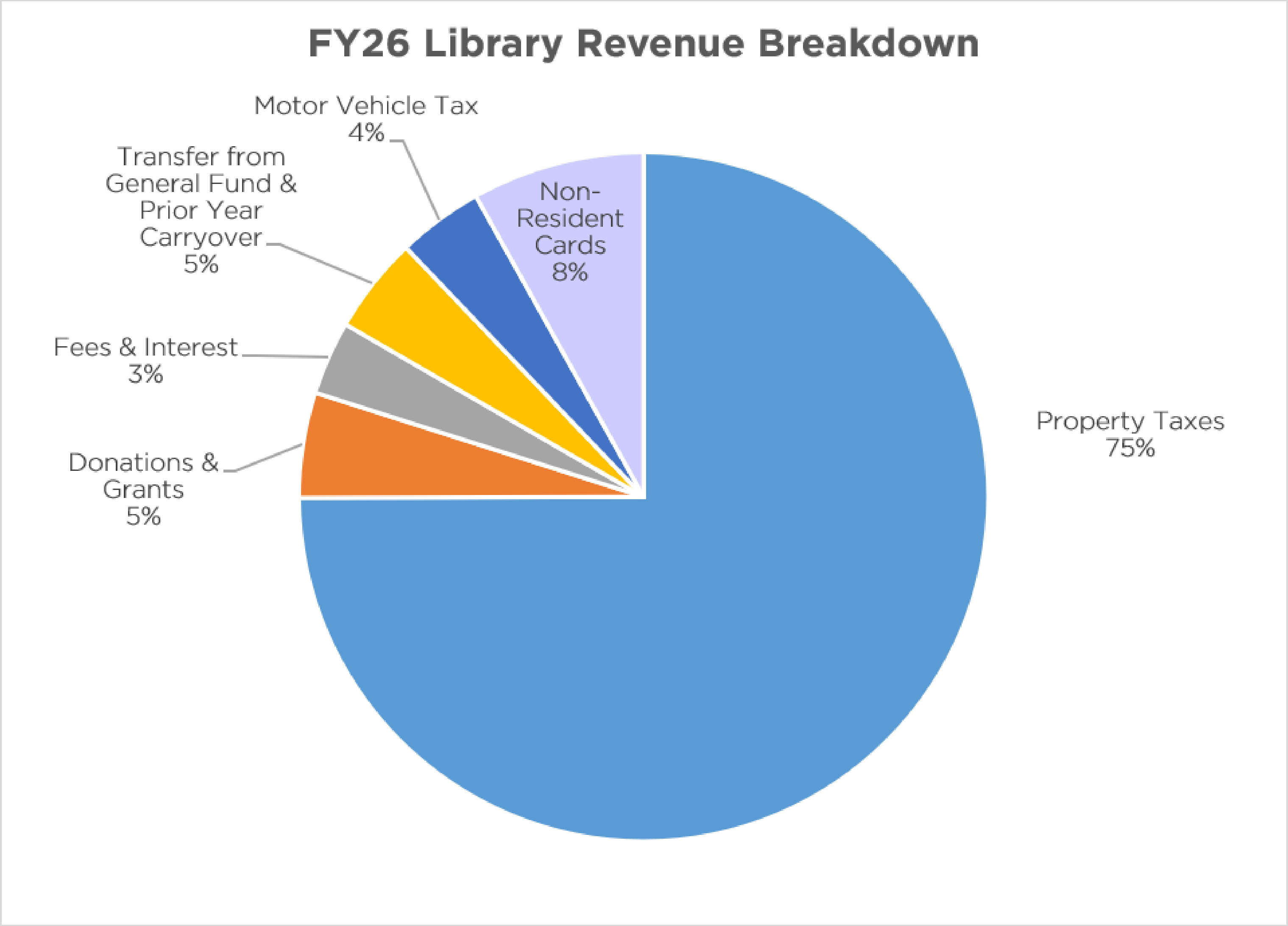
- 63.3% Highland homes have a library card
- 52.5 average number of checkouts per year per card
- 209 visits per day to the library
- 8,145 annual attendees at children’s programs

Total City Budget ~$31.5 million

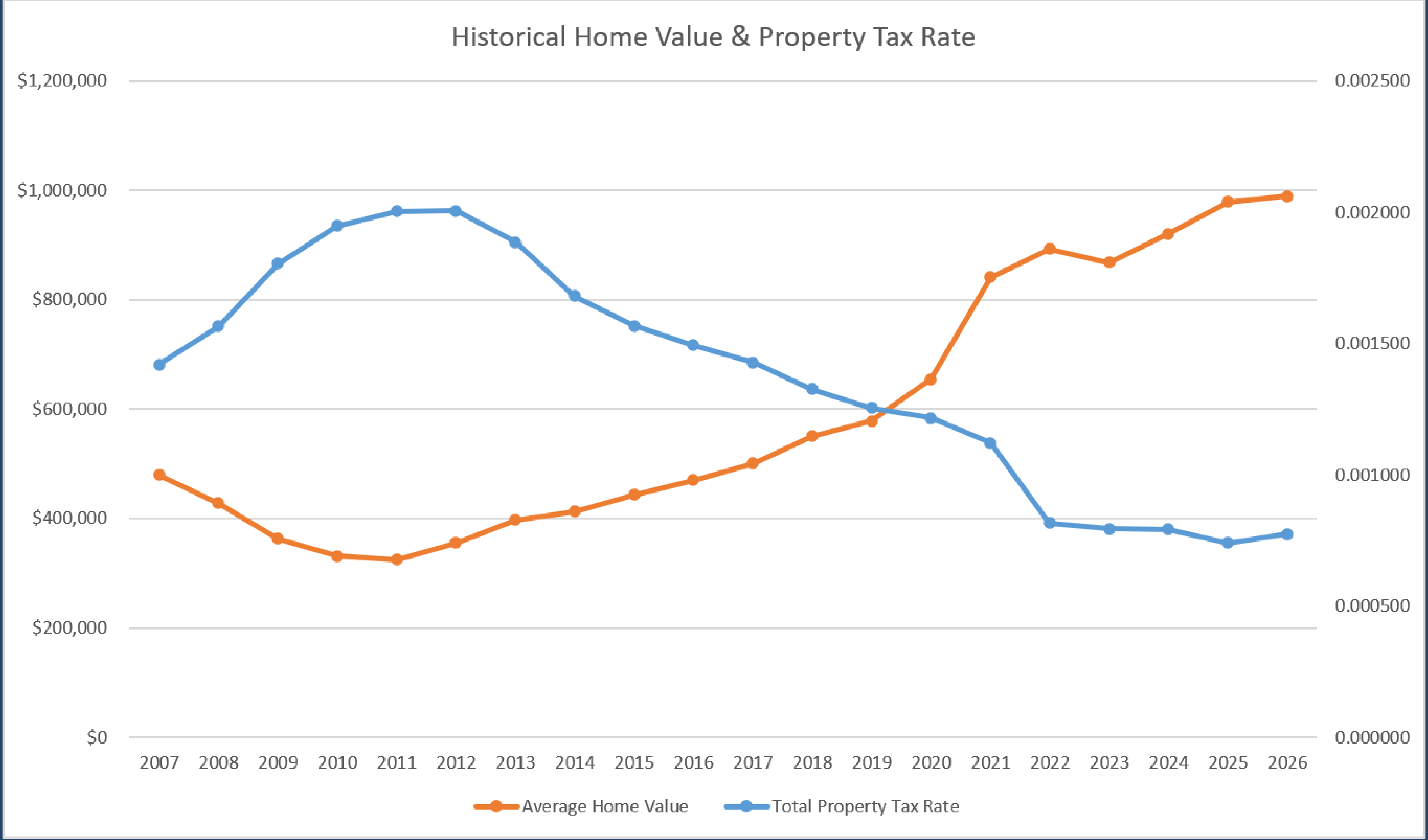
Library Budget $332,500



Where does the Library's money come from?



CITY PROPERTY TAX TIMELINE


Historical Home Value & Property Tax Rate
$1,200,000
$1,000,000
$800,000
$600,000
$400,000
$200,000
$0
0.002500
0.002000
0.001500
0.001000
0.000500
0.000000
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
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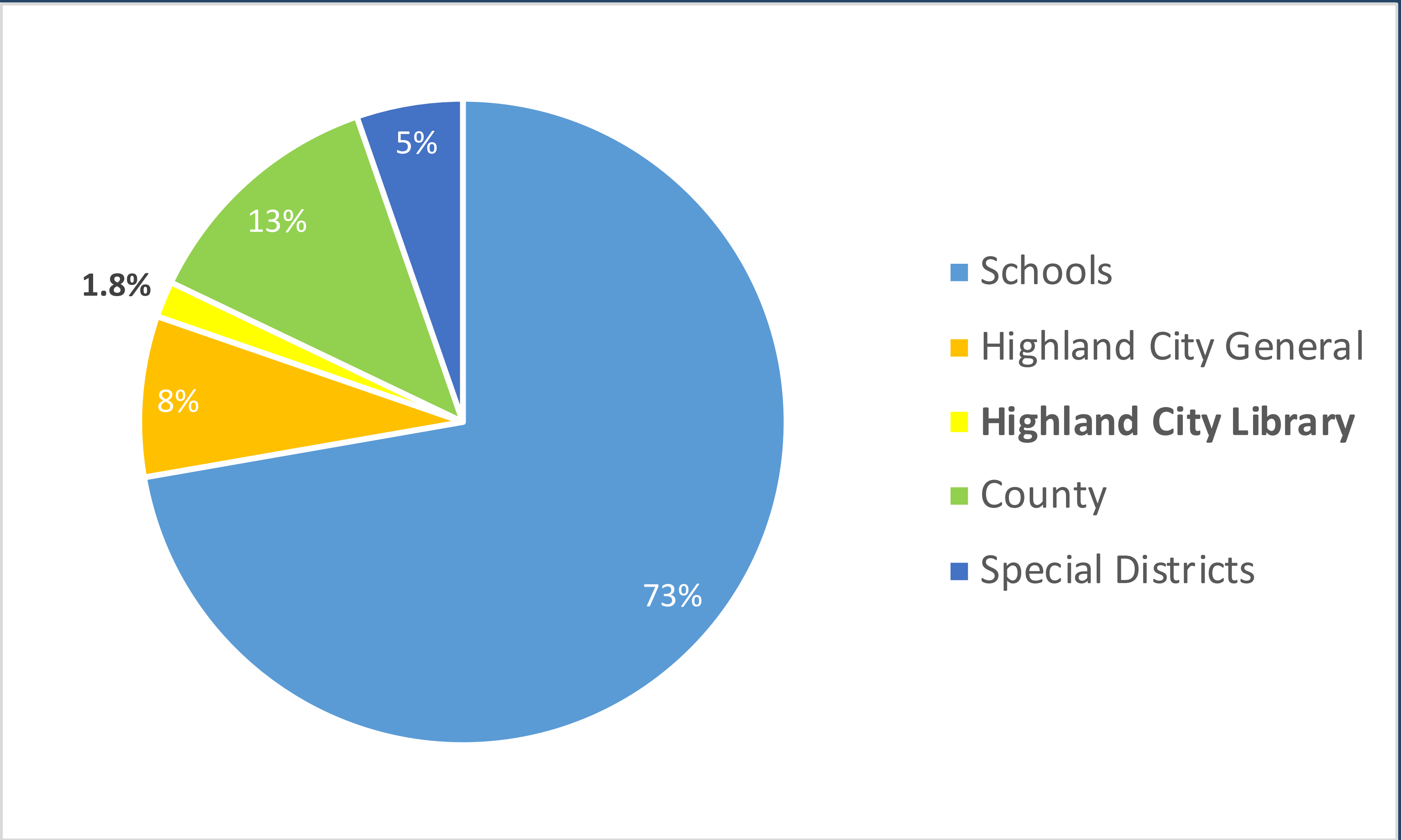
2024
2025
2026
Average Home Value
Total Property Tax Rate

Library Tax as a Percent of Total Tax Bill



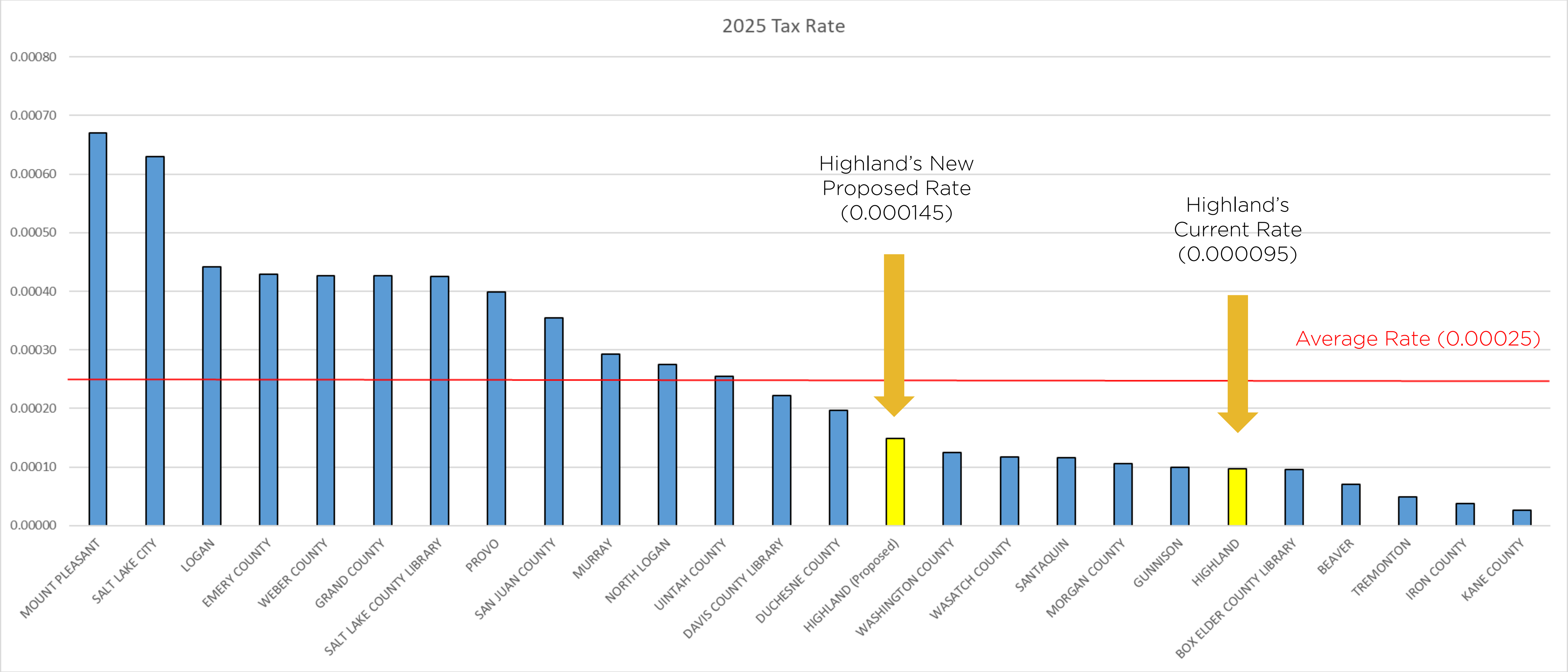
Property Tax Summary for Library

- Average Highland Home Value - $1,036,000

Property Tax Assessment		
	Annual	**Monthly**
Current	$54.13	$4.51
Proposed Increase	$28.49	$2.38
Proposed Total	$82.62	$6.89

- 52% increase for Library rate
- 5% increase of the City's total property tax rate

Library Property Tax Rate Comparison



Can other sources cover the expenses?

- Increased Fees
  - Utah state law does not allow public libraries to charge for "core services"
  - Being a public library allows City to charge a property tax, receive grant funding, and access to state Libby collection
- Savings/ Reserves/ Fund Balance
  - Best for emergencies or one-time expenses instead of ongoing costs
- City General Fund Subsidy
  - Change to philosophy of Library funding
  - Would compete with other General Fund departments
- Donations from outside entities
  - Not controlled by the City & fluctuate year-to-year

Can the Library cut its budget instead?

- Balance between costs and desired level of service

- Most Viable Cost-Cutting Options:
  - Exit TLC ~ $80,000
    - Implications with partner libraries & access to other libraries
  - Eliminate Programs ~ $36,000
    - Programming budget + one position
  - Reduce Hours ~ $10,500
    - Close 4 hours per week

UTAH COUNTY NOTICE OF PROPOSED TAX INCREASE

The following taxing entities are proposing to increase property tax revenue within UTAH COUNTY. Data is based on the taxing entity's average value shown below. The same value is used for both residential and commercial property. Concerned citizens are invited to attend the public hearings listed.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT THE INDIVIDUAL ENTITIES AT THE NUMBERS SHOWN BELOW.

Entities Proposing a Tax Increase	Average Market Value	If approved, tax will increase	From:	To:	Additional Ad Valorum Tax Revenue	% Increase if Proposed Tax Increase is Approved	Public hearing information Date/Time	Location	Phone:
PROVO CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	$526,000	Residential:	$1,216.51	$1,249.49	$1,306,942	7.00%	Aug 05,2026 6:00 PM	280 W 940 N Provo	801-374-4800
		Commercial:	$2,211.83	$2,271.79					
AMERICAN FORK CITY	$502,000	Residential:	$394.27	$427.68	$660,000	8.48%	Aug 11,2026 7:00 P.M.	31 N Church St American Fork	801-763-3000
		Commercial:	$716.86	$777.60					
CEDAR HILLS CITY	$682,000	Residential:	$276.07	$330.09	$150,000	19.55%	Aug 11,2026 6:00 PM	3925 W Cedar Hills Dr Cedar Hills	801-785-9668
		Commercial:	$501.95	$600.16					
CITY OF DRAPER	$838,000	Residential:	$415.73	$519.90	$122,224	22.55%	Aug 12,2026 6:00 P.M.	1020 E Pioneer Rd Draper	801-576-6318
		Commercial:	$755.88	$945.26					
EAGLE MOUNTAIN CITY	$488,000	Residential:	$142.25	$456.28	$6,742,938	220.88%	Aug 06,2026 6:00 PM	1650 Stage Coach Run Eagle Mountain	801-789-6600
		Commercial:	$258.64	$829.60					
SARATOGA SPRINGS CITY	$542,000	Residential:	$291.54	$437.31	$3,100,000	50.03%	Aug 11,2026 6:00 PM	319 S Saratoga Rd Saratoga Springs	801-766-9793
		Commercial:	$530.08	$795.11					
HIGHLAND CITY	$1,036,000	Residential:	$413.11	$441.60	$172,488	6.89%	Aug 11,2026 6:00 P.M.	5400 West Civic Center Drive Highland	801-756-5751
		Commercial:	$751.10	$802.90					
OREM CITY	$520,000	Residential:	$168.74	$180.47	$450,000	6.95%	Aug 27,2026 6:00 p.m.	56 N State Street Orem	801-229-7074
		Commercial:	$306.80	$328.12					
PLEASANT GROVE CITY	$602,000	Residential:	$310.57	$337.72	$365,667	8.72%	Aug 11,2026 6:00 p.m.	108 South 100 East Pleasant Grove	801-785-5045
		Commercial:	$564.68	$614.04					
SPRINGVILLE CITY	$476,000	Residential:	$186.40	$191.90	$97,000	2.97%	Aug 18,2026 7:00 P.M.	110 South Main Street Springville	801-489-2708
		Commercial:	$338.91	$348.91					
CENTRAL UTAH WATER CONSERVANCY	$576,000	Residential:	$124.82	$126.72	$555,517	0.71%	Aug 25,2026 6:00 P.M.	1426 E 750 N Orem, Utah 84097	801-226-7100
		Commercial:	$226.94	$230.40					

***Additional Ad Valorum Tax Revenue does not include amount from Judgment Levies.**

****This list is for informational purposes only and should not be relied on to determine a taxpayer's property tax liability. For specific property tax liability information the taxpayer should review their "Notice of Valuation and Tax Change".**

Proposed Property Tax Impact Schedule

Highland City will consider an increase to its Library property tax rate from .000095 to .000145 (estimated) to generate an additional $172,488. The following information is intended to provide decision makers and the public with an explanation of how the City's operations would be affected if the proposed property tax increase is adopted.

Highland City's Current Library Property Tax Rate	0.000095
Highland City's Current Property Tax Revenue	$329,112
Proposed Revenue with Tax Change	$501,600
New Property Tax Revenue to Highland City	**$172,488**

Estimated Increase to Highland Library's Property Tax Revenue	52%

Estimated Increase to a primary residence of $1,036,000	$28.49 (a 52% increase)
Estimated Increase to a business valued at $2,177,845	$108.91 (a 52% increase)

Affected Department	Proposed Budget	Budget without Tax Change	Budget Change
Library	$602,079	$429,591	$172,488

Impact of Tax Increase - The Library intends to convert a part-time employee to a full-time position. The Library also plans to hire two part-time positions. These staffing changes will help the Library to manage workload in the department.

The Library also intends to use $10,000 of this new funding to pay for the Libby audio/e-book service for which state funding was removed in the prior fiscal year.

Finally, the Library intends to use this new funding to continue the Senior Citizen programming activities that have previously been grant funded.

Total Library Fund Change: **$172,488**

Motion to Approve

I move that City Council approve the resolution adopting the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Certified Tax Rate of 0.000775, which includes 0.000630 for City operations and 0.000145 for Library operations.

ADOPTION OF FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 FINAL BUDGET

General City Management

Item 1b – Public Hearing/Ordinance

Presented by – Erin Wells, City Administrator

Changes from Interim Adopted Budget

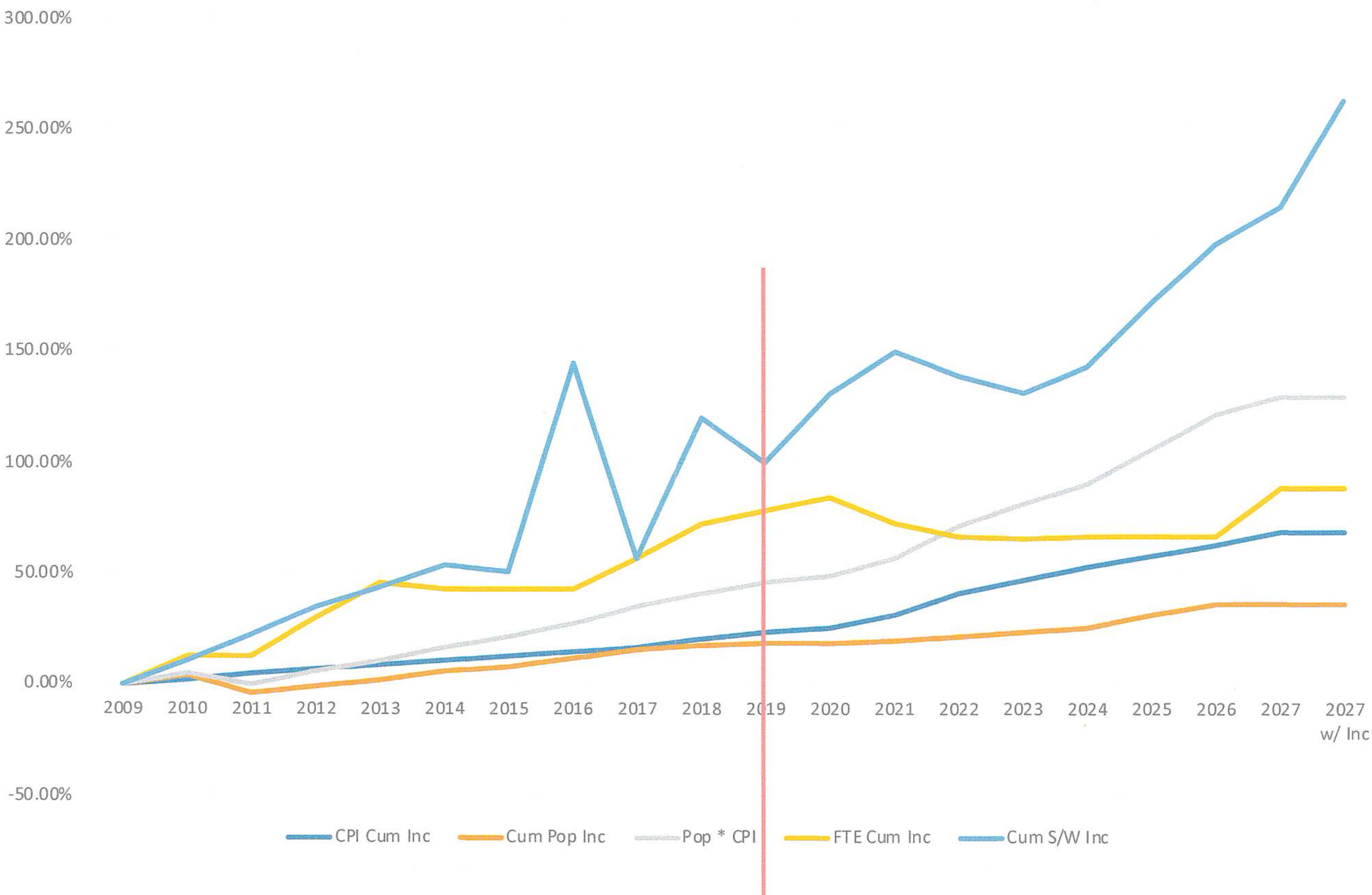
- Updates to numbers from State/ for Impact Schedule
  - Library property tax revenue updated from $330,000 to $329,112
  - Additional library property tax amount updated to $172,488 from $171,600

- Removed General Fund "holding accounts" required by State for Truth in Taxation
  - General Fund fund balance equal to Library property tax increase
  - Administration expense restricted to Library tax increase

Motion to Approve

I move that City Council approve the ordinance adopting the Highland City Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Final Budget.

Growth in CPI, Population, FTE, and Salaries/Wages since 2009 for Library



FY2019: Overhead staffing costs first allocated to the library.

From:	Erin Wells
To:	Stephannie Cottle
Cc:	Karen Liu
Subject:	Fw: Save our library benefits
Date:	Tuesday, August 11, 2026 4:56:40 PM

From: Bryan Smith [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2026 4:51 PM
To: City Council <council@highlandut.gov>
Subject: Save our library benefits

Hi Highland City Council,
I am a resident of Highland and I want to let you know that I am in support of funding our Highland City Library by adding to its budget and maintaining its current offerings and benefits. If there are ways to improve the library offerings, I am definitely in support of doing that. My daughter and grandchildren live in Highland also and are big big users of what the library has to offer and I do not want what they benefit from to be diminished in any way. I ask that you vote in support of the library.

Thank you,
Bryan Smith

From:	Erin Wells
To:	Stephannie Cottle
Subject:	FW: Library tax increase
Date:	Tuesday, August 11, 2026 8:22:14 AM

Sent from my Galaxy

-------- Original message --------
From: Bryon Tarbet [redacted]
Date: 8/11/26 8:11 AM (GMT-07:00)
To: City Council <council@highlandut.gov>
Subject: Library tax increase

To all members of the city council,

I have attended the information meeting and found few answers to specific questions about costs, needs and reasons. I believe this information should have been part of the presentation. I wish to remind all of you that many of us remember the promises that the library would be funded completely by donations. Now we have a tax and the library wants to spend more money. Government programs always grow (empire building). I don't use the library and don't believe that the money is needed. Many things can be cut first. Please vote no on this tax. This will influence how I vote in future elections.

Bryon Tarbet PhD
[redacted]

From:	Erin Wells
To:	Stephannie Cottle
Cc:	Karen Liu
Subject:	Fw: Tonight It is Up to You!
Date:	Tuesday, August 11, 2026 10:19:58 AM

From: Claudia Stillman [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2026 10:05 AM
To: City Council <council@highlandut.gov>; Brittney Bills <mayor@highlandut.gov>
Subject: Tonight It is Up to You!

Although the Friends of the Highland City Library has worked tirelessly to help supplement the Library budget each year, it is unable to make up the deficit. You as a City Council are the only ones who can correct its budget shortfall. As a City Council you have the opportunity tonight to benefit our community at a minimal cost.

We have great parks and trails that although they may not be used by all Highland residents are paid for by everyone. At least, when we walk each morning we only see a few of our neighbors using the Highland neighborhood trail near our house. But our parks and trails add value to us all and are there for all of us when we choose to use them.

Last week at the Budget and Information meeting on August 6, we learned that 66% of Highland households (with unique addresses) currently hold and use a Library card. This majority would suffer by a decrease in the Library programs and services they now enjoy if the small tax rate increase fails to pass.

Here are some thoughts shared by a few Highland residents who will be unable to attend the meeting tonight.:

"I really hope this passes. It's such a small increase for such a great community benefit. We would be there to support it, but we will be out of the country. Thanks for all you do!" M.C.

"I would totally support this! I am out of town until the 14th! I would be happy to sign something." G.N.

"We love the Library! Unfortunately we will be out of town that day, but we have no problem with the additional tax to support the Library." B.M.

"I love the Library! When my kids were little we attended all of the fun classes and crafts and storytimes. Now that they are teenagers we take full advantage of books and online resources! We still come and love going through "old" movies to watch together! We fully support the Library tax increase but unfortunately are on vacation this week." B.L.

"We are in Arizona serving a mission . I would love to be there Tuesday night to show my support if I were home." J.P.

Thank you for your vote on this proposed Library budget adjustment tonight. You are the only ones who can do it!

Claudia Stillman
Friends of the Library
[redacted]

From: Erin Wells
To: Stephannie Cottle
Cc: Karen Liu
Subject: Fw: Vote for the Libary
Date: Tuesday, August 11, 2026 4:11:40 PM

From: Trent Bezzant [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2026 4:11 PM
To: City Council <council@highlandut.gov>
Subject: Vote for the Libary

Hi! I just want to reach out letting you know I support the tax increase for the Library. My family loves the Library and all the options it provides for our community.
Thanks
Jenaway Bezzant

Get Outlook for iOS

From: Erin Wells
To: Stephannie Cottle
Subject: FW: In Support of the Proposed Library Tax Increase
Date: Monday, August 10, 2026 9:16:54 PM

Sent from my Galaxy

-------- Original message --------
From: Kevin T [redacted]
Date: 8/10/26 7:49 PM (GMT-07:00)
To: City Council <council@highlandut.gov>
Subject: In Support of the Proposed Library Tax Increase

Dear Mayor and Highland City Council,

My name is Kevin Tams, and I have lived in Highland for almost 17 years and served on the Highland City Library Board for the past four years. I'm writing to express my strong support for the proposed dedicated library property tax increase ahead of the Truth in Taxation hearing on August 11.

I want to start by commending the Council and City staff on this process. Rather than reaching for a quick fix, you examined multiple funding options, weighed the tradeoffs of each, and landed on a modest, data-driven increase. That kind of careful deliberation is exactly what residents should expect from their local government, and it deserves recognition. I've also appreciated the partnership between the Library Board and the Council over these past four years as we've worked through these options together.

The need is real, and it has been building for years after a long stretch of being underfunded. I know the Council is already well aware of everything this increase makes possible, but I'm glad to see it renew our aging collection, add a full-time employee to bring our staff to two, offset the loss of state funding for Libby, and grow programming for seniors and the community as a whole.

I also want to highlight the structural benefit of keeping this a dedicated tax. Because these funds can only be used for the library, this increase guarantees the money goes where it's needed and protects the library's long-term sustainability, rather than competing with other city priorities year after year.

On a personal note, my family has loved the Highland Library. Its collection and programs have been a consistent, meaningful part of our lives in this community, and I know we're not alone in feeling that way. It is, without question, one of the true gems of Highland.

I urge the Council to approve this increase on August 11. Thank you for your thoughtful stewardship of this process and for your continued investment in the library.

Kevin Tams Highland City Resident and Library Board Member

From:	Erin Wells
To:	Stephannie Cottle
Cc:	Karen Liu
Subject:	Fw: Comments for consideration - library tax increase
Date:	Tuesday, August 11, 2026 9:30:43 AM

From: Raymond V. Gessel [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2026 9:28 AM
To: City Council <council@highlandut.gov>
Subject: Comments for consideration - library tax increase

Dear Mayor and Highland City Council Members:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to ask questions regarding the proposed Library Tax Increase and for having the City Administrator provide a detailed and thorough presentation of the arguments in favor of the proposed increase along with supporting statistics. Both were informative and telling and I appreciate receiving the data via email.

However, the data provided by the library shows that only a minority of Highland residents use the library, based on both circulation numbers and program attendance. While circulation is up, so is the city's population. You would expect circulation to increase under such circumstances.

Proponents of the increase argue that the library's increased demands justify hiring additional staff. This increased demand is largely due to inter-library sharing programs which require librarians to spend time driving materials to other libraries.

The alternative offered if the tax increase is not implemented is cutting library hours. Given the limited number of residents using the library, cutting hours seems the most fiscally prudent solution. Because of the limited number of library uses, cutting the hours would not significantly inconvenience those who use library resources as they would simply adjust to the library's new operating times. Additionally, because of the proximity of libraries in American Fork and Lehi, residents can avail themselves of those libraries' resources at their more generous times. Notably, someone with a Highland Library card can use the resources of at least the Lehi Library without any additional fee.

By cutting hours, staff could fulfill all their duties without the burden of increased inter-library sharing.

Proponents argue that without increases some library programs will need to be cut. An example of this were classes offered by the library as well as Senior programs which, again, are accessed by a minority of residents. While such programs are favored by those who use them, they are better offered under a community services program through Parks and Recreation, some of which should be funded by charging fees. Certainly a Senior program utilized by only 20 of the city's citizens should not be subsidized by property owners.

I would also note that I do not believe the city should pride itself on offering photocopying services, business office, or conference room space to the cost of residential or business property taxpayers. I believe it is wrong for taxpayers to subsidize such services to for-profit businesses. Librarians should not assist in filling out forms such as an EIN; rather, they should direct individuals to professionals who can assist them.

While a $28 tax increase is not much, the argument that the increase is small misses the point: It is the duty of City Government to provide necessary services to its residents that maintain the city's infrastructure. Libraries are nice, but so are sidewalks, roads and common areas. Sidewalks, roads and common areas are used by the majority of the public and are an integral part of the city infrastructure that city administration is duty bound to maintain. While one can argue about whether minimum standards in these areas are being met, no one can argue that the maintenance of these areas needs improvement. I would much rather have the City decrease library services and focus its attention on a general tax increase that would maintain those areas. While $28 is not much in the grand scheme of things, logically, such an increase would better serve the community in areas affecting the majority of its residents.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Respectfully,

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Raymond V. Gessel
[redacted]

From:	Will Robertson
To:	City Council; City Council
Cc:	Brittney Bills; Doug Cortney; Ron Campbell; Kim Rodela; Scott Smith; Liz Rice; Stephannie Cottle
Subject:	Opposition to Library Tax Increase – Request to Explore Personal Services Contract Alternative
Date:	Monday, August 10, 2026 9:05:35 PM

Mayor Bills and Council Members,

I am writing regarding the proposed library property tax increase scheduled for consideration on August 11.

The Library has circulated data showing that Highland checks out more materials per capita than the state median and has higher program attendance per capita for ages 0-5, while ranking 58th out of 61 Utah library systems in local operating revenue and funding. Those figures are accurate. They demonstrate that the library is already delivering strong results relative to its budget.

That efficiency is precisely why a permanent tax increase of approximately $171,600 is not justified. The increase is driven primarily by expanding the permanent staffing structure — converting a manager position to full-time, adding an assistant, and creating a courier role — which would raise total dedicated library employee costs to about $431,000. High utilization on a lean budget does not require locking in higher ongoing personnel costs.

The Library Director's compensation is already substantial at approximately $96,000. Further expansion of full-time salaries and benefits moves the operation away from the lean model that has produced the strong per-capita results the City is highlighting.

A better path exists. I formally request that the Council explore a personal services contract for library staffing and day-to-day operations before approving any tax increase. Under such a contract:

- The City would retain full ownership of the building, collection, and capital assets.
- The City would retain complete policy authority (hours, collection standards, programming priorities, etc.).
- The contractor would be responsible for recruiting, managing, and supervising the staff needed to deliver core services.
- All staffing and operations would be required to stay within the Library Fund's existing revenue base of roughly $430,000 (the current budget without the $171,600 increase).

This model keeps the focus on results rather than expanding the permanent employee footprint. It allows flexibility, clear performance metrics, and cost certainty without creating additional long-term municipal employment obligations.

The data the Library is using to justify the increase actually supports the opposite conclusion: the current resource level is already producing above-median results. Adding permanent positions and raising taxes is not the only, or the most efficient, response.

I ask that the Council defer any tax increase until a personal services contract alternative has been thoroughly examined and publicly discussed.

Respectfully,

Will Robertson
[redacted]