

**CITY OF UNIVERSITY PLACE
MINUTES
Special Meeting of the City Council
Saturday, July 12, 2025**

Attendance was noted as follows: Mayor Figueroa, Mayor Pro Tem Wood, Councilmember Worthington, Councilmember McCluskey, Councilmember Flemming, Councilmember Grassi, and Councilmember Boykin (virtual).

Staff: City Manager Sugg, City Attorney Kaser, Assistant City Manager Faison, Administrative Services Director Petorak, Public Works Director Ecklund, Business Outreach Liaison Metcalf, Senior Planner George, Deputy City Clerk Highlan, and City Clerk Genetia.

CALL SPECIAL MEETING TO ORDER/MAYOR'S REMARKS

Mayor Figueroa called the Special Meeting to order at 9:20 a.m. He explained the decision not to hire a facilitator, citing the cost savings of \$4,000 - \$6,000 and the confidence in the experience of staff and Council members to manage the agenda effectively. Mayor Figueroa emphasized the importance of keeping the conversation focused on the agenda items and suggested putting aside topics for future discussion if necessary.

2025-2026 COUNCIL GOALS UPDATE

Recreation: Establish a recreation initiative to enhance the quality of life for residents of all ages with a focus on youth and seniors. Partner with organizations to develop tailored recreational solutions, provide ongoing parks maintenance support and program development.

Youth Recreation - Public Works Director Ecklund provided an update on the City's youth recreation program. He highlighted a favorable agreement with the school district that allows free use of school facilities for youth activities.

Director Ecklund outlined a new partnership with the YMCA to offer a University Place-branded youth recreation program for children ages 5 to 12. The YMCA will administer the program, which will include seasonal sports leagues organized by age group. University Place residents will receive priority registration.

The proposed cost structure is as follows:

- University Place residents and YMCA members: \$95
- Non-residents: \$190

These rates were compared to those of Fircrest's recreation program. Director Ecklund noted that financial assistance may be available through YMCA fundraising efforts, particularly for YMCA members. He also mentioned the possibility of the City subsidizing participation for low-income families.

Council members discussed the potential for the City to mirror YMCA's financial assistance criteria to support low-income participants. They also reviewed a comparison between the YMCA and Fircrest programs, considering factors such as cost, program branding, and the established nature of Fircrest's offerings. Director Ecklund emphasized that the YMCA program would carry University Place branding, unlike Fircrest's program. He also noted that a decision would need to be made by early August to meet the winter league registration timeline. Council members expressed support for the YMCA partnership, citing its alignment with community values, inclusive approach, and branding opportunities.

Specialized Recreation Program – Public Works Director Ecklund presented an overview of a proposed specialized recreation program designed for residents with special needs. He noted that the County has requested a partnership with the City to support the program.

The program would offer a variety of inclusive activities, including sports, fitness, arts, and leisure opportunities. Director Ecklund estimated the City's potential contribution at approximately \$20,000 per year, which would help subsidize participant costs and improve accessibility.

Council members discussed potential funding strategies, including the use of Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and the reallocation of existing City funds. The goal would be to support the program while ensuring financial sustainability and equitable access for residents with special needs.

Senior Services – Director Ecklund provided an update on senior services and highlighted the robust program offered by Community Connection Place and the potential for future partnerships with YMCA to expand senior services and enhance community engagement.

Council members agreed to move forward with the YMCA youth recreation program and to explore grant funding for the specialized recreation program before committing general funds. Action plan includes scheduling a study session, gathering input, and acting by early August to meet the winter league schedule. It was also requested that representatives from YMCA be invited to the next Council meeting to present their proposal.

The Council took a 30-minute lunch break at 12:00 p.m. The Special Meeting resumed at 12:30 p.m.

Economic Development: Foster economic development by prioritizing the diversification of City revenue and strategic collaboration on projects that enhance the quality of life for our residents and drive sustainable growth for the City's business districts.

Business Outreach Liaison Metcalf provided a progress report on the City's economic development strategies. She highlighted the following initiatives:

- Business District Promotion: A consultant has been hired to produce promotional videos for each of the City's four business districts. These videos aim to enhance community awareness and support and are expected to be available on the City's website by the end of summer.
- Business Community Profiling: Staff have downloaded and normalized business data and are currently analyzing it to develop detailed community profiles. A report is expected to be presented to the Council in September.
- Wayfinding Signage: Four of six planned wayfinding signs have been installed. These signs are designed to match the City's entry signage and promote visibility of the business districts.

Senior Planner George provided updates on planning efforts and infrastructure projects:

- Business District Plans: The 27th Street and Town Center Business District Plans have been completed. These efforts included hiring a consultant, conducting zoning and market analyses, and forming a steering committee.
- Steering Committee Engagement: The Town Center Business District steering committee, composed of business community members and advisory commission representatives, has met twice to provide feedback on the plan.
- Community Survey: A public survey is currently open to gather community input on the Town Center Business District. The survey also aims to educate residents about the broader scope of the district.
- Infrastructure Projects: Positive outcomes were reported from the ongoing sewer collaboration, including the installation of grease interceptors for Lot 3; and cleanup of the Grandview Plaza area has been postponed for one year, with development anticipated to begin in 2026.

Housing: Stimulate affordable housing development in University Place by incentivizing developers to build condos, townhomes, and other alternative middle housing ownership opportunities. Prioritize the creation of attractive and accessible affordable housing options in the community.

Senior Planner George provided an update on the City's progress toward its affordable housing goals. Key initiatives include:

- Legislative Alignment: The City is implementing strategies in response to the adoption of House Bill 1110, which supports increased housing options.
- Housing Action Toolkit: Staff are actively using the Toolkit to guide policy updates and development standards.
- Zoning and Ordinance Updates:
 - An R3 residential zone has been created to support a broader range of housing types.

- A cottage housing ordinance is being developed by updating the City's previous pilot program and formalizing it as a permanent regulation.
- Improvements to small lot development standards are underway, based on recommendations from the Housing Action Toolkit.
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs): The City is advancing a pre-approved ADU program to streamline permitting and encourage more affordable housing options.
- Developer Engagement: The City is planning to co-host a developer forum in partnership with the City of Lakewood, South Sound Housing Affordability Partners (SSHAP), and the Master Builders Association. The forum will focus on housing and development issues and is intended to foster collaboration and gather industry input.

Health in All Policies: Integrate health considerations into policymaking through a "health in all policies" approach aligned with the Growth Management Act. Establish a checklist for staff and commissions to assess and report on legislative choices, utilizing defined health considerations to ensure comprehensive decision-making with a focus on University Place.

Administrative Services Director Petorak introduced the Health in All Policies approach, which integrates health considerations into decision-making and policy development. The City plans to pilot this methodology with certain policies.

Climate Action Plan: Develop a climate action plan, either stand-alone or as part of the Comprehensive Plan. Look at the intersection between climate action and public safety (wildland/urban interface, coastal properties) and seek solutions. Apply for and seek grant funding to address these issues.

Administrative Services Director Petorak discussed the development of the Climate Action Plan, which will be integrated into the City's Comprehensive Plan update. The City plans to establish a baseline for tree canopy and heat maps and create an EV charger needs map.

DUCK DAZE DEBRIEF/30TH BIRTHDAY BASH

City Manager Sugg discussed the success of the Duck Days event, including the positive feedback, the use of golf carts, and areas for improvement such as parade flow and candy distribution. He also provided an update on the planning and implementation of the 30th Birthday Bash, including activities, sponsorships, and advertising efforts.

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CITY EVENTS

City Manager Sugg presented the budget for annual city events, highlighting associated costs, attendance figures, and the importance of cost management. He also discussed the potential for securing sponsorships to offset expenses.

Council members provided feedback and raised several points for consideration:

- A request for a detailed breakdown of the cost increase for the Twisted Cider Run.
- Exploration of sponsorship opportunities to reduce the City's financial burden.
- Consideration of alternative funding models to support event sustainability.
- Evaluation of the feasibility of co-sponsoring the Teddy Bear Picnic to ensure its continuation and provide necessary support.

Additionally, Council requested that staff provide a detailed explanation of cost increases for Music on the Square and Movies in the Park, including any one-time expenses that may have contributed to the changes.

At 2:20 p.m., Council took a 10-minute break. The meeting resumed at 2:30 p.m.

SISTER CITIES

City Attorney Kaser provided an overview of the existing Sister City Agreement with Jiangyou, China, which was authorized in 2005. Mayor Figueroa recently met with the Honorary Consul for Ukraine to explore the possibility of establishing a new sister city relationship with Fastiv, Ukraine. The Honorary Consul indicated that there is no immediate expectation for representatives from University Place to travel to Ukraine. Instead, the initial focus would be on formalizing the agreement and planning future collaborative activities.

Mayor Figueroa emphasized the potential for youth engagement through cultural and educational exchanges, similar to foreign exchange student programs. These initiatives would offer students from both cities opportunities to learn about each other's cultures and lifestyles.

Fastiv, with a population of approximately 44,000 and a primarily industrial economy, shares demographic similarities with University Place. This alignment was noted as a positive factor in considering the partnership.

Mayor Figueroa also clarified that the agreement does not require involvement from Sister Cities International and can be established directly between the two cities, allowing for greater flexibility and fewer formal requirements.

He requested direction from the City Council on whether to proceed with the proposed agreement and invited input on the most effective approach moving forward.

The Council engaged in a discussion regarding the financial implications of executing a Sister City Agreement with Fastiv, Ukraine. Topics included potential costs associated with hosting delegations and receptions, as well as comparisons to previous agreements with China and Turkey. Members considered the potential economic and cultural benefits of the partnership, including opportunities for youth exchanges, business development, and collaborative initiatives. Suggestions focused on low-cost programs such as pen pal exchanges and sharing city-branded items ("city swag") to foster engagement.

Concerns were raised about the current political climate, particularly regarding tariffs and international business relations, which could affect the effectiveness of the agreement. Additionally, the level of commitment required from the City was discussed.

Several Council members expressed support for a citizen-led approach, where the City would participate but not take the lead. This model was seen as a way to encourage community involvement and build more sustainable relationships. Ultimately, the Council decided not to move forward with a resolution at this time, with some members advocating for further community engagement before proceeding.

CLOSING COMMENTS/COUNCIL DIRECTION

Mayor Figueroa expressed his appreciation for the day's discussion and the thoughtful comments shared throughout. He thanked everyone for their participation and contribution and looks forward to recognizing more of this great work later in the year. Councilmembers expressed appreciation for the open and honest dialogue, highlighting the value of revisiting council goals and fostering spaces for candid discussion. They acknowledged the challenges faced by staff, thanked them for their dedication, and emphasized the importance of collaboration, professional facilitation, and constructive questioning to guide progress and strengthen decision-making.

Appreciation was expressed to Public Works Director Ecklund and team for their persistent efforts on the recreation program which evolved into a virtually free and accessible offerings.

ADJOURNMENT - The meeting was adjourned at 4:14 p.m. No other action was taken.

Submitted by:

Emy Genetia