

OFFICIAL MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
CITY COUNCIL  
PROPOSED DEPARTMENTAL  
BUDGET PRESENTATIONS  
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

May 20, 2025  
3:00 p.m.

**Call to Order & Roll Call**

Mayor O'Brien called the regular meeting of the City Council to order at 3:04 p.m. in the Mike Balkman Chambers at City Hall.

Present: Dan O'Brien, Mayor Freddy  
Puza, Vice Mayor Bubba  
Fish, Council Member  
Yasmine-Imani McMorris, Council Member  
Albert Vera, Council Member\*

Council Member Vera exited the meeting at 8:57 p.m.

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**Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor O'Brien led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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**Land Acknowledgement**

Mayor O'Brien read the statement of Land Acknowledgement.

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**Community Announcements by Members/Updates from Commissions,  
Boards and/or Committees/Information Items from Staff**

Lisa Soghor, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), introduced day two of the budget presentations noting that she would come back after department presentations to ensure she is clear on any City Council direction related to any changes to the proposed budget and she indicated that contingency reserves would be discussed at that time.

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**Joint Public Comment - Items NOT on the Agenda**

Mayor O'Brien invited public comment.

Jeremy Bocchino, City Clerk, read the statement regarding hate speech.

Mayor O'Brien requested that the order of budget presentations be posted for the public to see.

The following members of the public addressed the City Council:

Amy Kim provided background on herself; urged the City Council to gather information and think critically before voting for the Jubilo Village project that requires a large loan; discussed understanding the lease agreement between CCSM (Community Corporation of Santa Monica) and the Church; she noted that a record of the agreement could not be found; questioned what happens to the building and who would own and operate it once the 30-year lease agreement is over; wanted to see an updated budget noting that costs had increased since the budget was last presented; discussed ensuring there will be no additional costs later on; statements from the City Manager indicating that the loan should be treated as a grant as the chances of being repaid are slim; lack of a guarantee that the affordable units would go to Culver City residents; concern with a potential violation of Article 16, Section 6 of the California Constitution prohibiting gifts of public funds without a direct and enforceable public benefit; limits on gift size; and she asked that the City Council engage with the community before spending more money.

Disa Lindgren, Culver Palms United Methodist Church, discussed her efforts to write up an explanation of the project from the Church's perspective; the agreement between CCSM and the Church

for a 75 year lease; the commitment to provide affordable housing for 75 years; the option to renew; and she noted that the significant investment for Culver City would have a lasting impact for the community.

Patrick Godinez indicated being an unhoused neighbor and serving on the Advisory Committee on Housing and Homelessness (ACOH) and on the Outreach and Engagement Subcommittee; he discussed the importance of prioritizing agenda and implementation of a Culver City Housing Trust Fund as part of the 2025-2026 budget; and he felt that taxpayer dollars should be used for services, operations, and maintenance as well as to leverage for more housing units and building opportunities.

Jeannine Wisnosky Stehlin was called to speak but was not present online or in person.

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#### **Receipt and Filing of Correspondence**

MOVED BY COUNCIL MEMBER FISH, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER MCMORRIN AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE CITY COUNCIL RECEIVE AND FILE CORRESPONDENCE.

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#### **Action Items**

Item A-1

**CC:HA:PA:SA - (Continued from May 19, 2025) Budget Study Session - City Manager's Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026: Presentation of the Proposed Budget for Each City Department by its Respective Department Head**

Mayor O'Brien invited public comment.

The following members of the public were called to speak but were not present online or in person:

James Richardson  
Crytal Alexander

Ted Stevens, Parks, Recreation and Community Services (PRCS) Director, introduced staff and provided a presentation on the

proposed Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026.

Crystal Alexander with one minute ceded by Kenneth Alexander, thanked the Chief Financial Officer and her team; noted that her remarks were being made as a citizen though she serves on the PRCS Commission and had served in a senior Finance position in Culver City; she requested that the budget item for the crossing guards be moved out of the PRCS budget and placed in the non-departmental areas where such things as refuse and sewer fees that go to the Culver City Unified School District (CCUSD) are placed to increase transparency; she noted that the crossing guards were not in the mission of the Culver City Police Department (CCPD) or PRCS; discussed the Parks Master Plan; aging parks; concern that the document would become obsolete; outreach to the City in the process; people who expect faster movement on the Parks Plan; plans for Tellefson Park; money proposed for the Jubilo Village project that could be spent in parks; reliance on money from Section 8 vouchers that might not be there; and she wanted to see movement on what can be done for the entirety of Culver City and the parks.

Discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding denial of the proposed Senior Management Analyst position focused on grants; the feeling that positions would be eliminated if the sales tax did not pass; the idea that the position would pay for itself; revisiting the idea if the sales tax measure passes; estimates on what new programs could bring in; the current fee structure; evaluation of new programs; positions that would apply for grants; the firm retained through Public Works that is available for use by other departments; and support for re-allocating crossing guard costs to a non-departmental area.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding the experience of preparing the budget for 2023 vs. 2024; financial uncertainty; the focus on being less reliant on the General Fund; appreciation for work done to update the fee schedule; support for the Senior Management Analyst position; implementation of plans; opportunities to activate and invest in; appreciation for providing an affordable option for the continuation of youth sports; strategy for responding to requests for expansion and support; budget impacts; the intent to be more financially sustainable long-term; optimizing use of space; the workplan; improving efficiency; financial sustainability; and appreciation for the monitoring and feedback.

Further discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding plans to improve Tellefson Park, and concern with earmarking money that does not benefit Culver City children, residents, and visitors.

Discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding the request for additional monies for MLK and Juneteenth; Juneteenth as being funded through Economic Development; a suggestion to combine the Senior Management Analyst position with a Management Analyst position; earmarking the position contingent on the passage of the sales tax measure; the mid-year reexamination of the budget; offsetting maintenance worker costs; and support for preventative maintenance.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding the timing system at The Plunge; utilization of rooms at Vets; lack of a functioning kitchen; grading of Field 4 at Bill Botts; support for moving the crossing guard to non-departmental costs; work to create scholarships for the sports league; and clarification that Juneteenth is fully funded.

Mayor O'Brien invited public comment.

The following members of the public addressed the City Council:

Dorothy Sadd with one minute ceded by Greg Maron, reported speaking on behalf of herself and the BPAC (Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee); discussed the Mobility Fund; multi-year projects; projects not on the docket; funded and unfunded projects; projects being taken out of the Mobility Fund; National Boulevard between Washington and Jefferson; increased mobility options; feedback from Turning Point School; people walking from Ivy Station; she asked that money be put aside for a study on traffic volume crossing at Wesley and National as well as walking down National; the really tight corridor; changes over the past five years; concern with delays to moving forward; she suggested examining parking for the different mobility options in Culver City; and she thanked the City for the opportunity to volunteer.

Michelle Weiner thanked Dorothy Sadd for her leadership in the BPAC; expressed appreciation to Public Works, and Mobility and Traffic Engineering; she encouraged the City Council to think about how public safety is centered in Culver City; discussed reflecting creating a community of care in the budget; intimidation experienced with the amount of uniformed officers

at the previous City Council meeting; difficulty discussing funding for CCPD with such an intimidating presence; the importance of discussion and consideration; ensuring that the budget reflects the values of the City; comparisons to other cities; and inflationary figures.

Yanni Demitri, Public Works Director, provided a presentation on the proposed Public Works Department budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026.

Discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding implementation of fiber optic signals; reprogramming opportunities; Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPI); connections between traffic signals; street sweeping; streets that need to be swept more often; the vendor request for an increase; the Pavement Condition Index (PCI); review of the PCI by the City Attorney to determine whether it can be made available to the public; City Council review of the PCI; fatalities on National Boulevard; work of the Mobility Subcommittee; an upcoming presentation on potential design changes on National; the feeling that it is too early to set aside funding; the process for people to request parking for biking and micro-mobility; funding; ongoing operational costs; the request for adaptive bike parking; AB413; the ability to do LPI within the existing budget; implementation of LPI wherever it makes sense; and appreciation for the work of staff.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding comparing the 2023 and 2024 budget processes; finding ways to cut costs wherever possible; staffing; active recruitment; retirements; the framework to determine which projects receive funding; safety; request levels; determining priorities; pursuit of grants; strategies for reducing liability; work of the Mobility Committee; the request for an examination of pedestrian fatalities and collisions over the past five years with an evaluation of potential quick builds or other solutions to address safety; potential implementation of a dashboard to share with the public; looking at how to best share the mapping of all incidents with the public; safety improvements to Fox Hills in direct response to past incidents; the need to slow cars down in Fox Hills; speed as an important factor; strategies to support safety in the community; acknowledgement of comments from Michelle Weiner about the difficulty of bringing up different solutions; ensuring that barriers are reduced for public participation; people who do not feel safe in City processes; the Fox Hills Safety Plans that

include measures to protect pedestrians and to slow traffic down; and hope for good feedback on investments happening.

Further discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding the effect of Public Works on every person in the City; costs to repave alleys; maintenance; ongoing challenges for Public Works; and mitigating long-term costs.

Discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding appropriate use of Mobility Funds for traffic lights; verification by the City Attorney's Office and Finance for all projects; the Facility Condition Assessment Plan; increased costs from year to year; the ten year plan done in 2019; and addressing projects as funding becomes available.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding appreciation for responsiveness of the department; increased funding for street improvements; sidewalk improvements; amount of money set aside as compared to the previous year; CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) funding; Better Overland/Safer Fox Hills funding; alleyways; deferred maintenance; the sidewalk on National Boulevard; tapping into Emergency Reserves; money committed to Jubilo Village; frustration and public concern; the fact that there is more work than can be funded; and appreciation to Michael Towler for help with the complicated Public Works budget and to the entire Finance Department.

Mayor O'Brien invited public comment.

The following member of the public addressed the City Council:

Michelle Weiner expressed appreciation for the Transportation Department noting there were many wonderful things that Transportation offered to Culver City; discussed being part of the Bike to Work Pitstop Plan in collaboration with the bus company; the free fare program for students; the groundbreaking bus lanes; support for having bike lanes too; hope that there would be bus lanes on Jefferson and on Sepulveda; and providing alternatives to freeways going through Culver City.

Diana Chang, Chief Transportation Officer, expressed appreciation to staff for their efforts; commended the Transit Operations Rodeo Team for their performances at the state, regional, and International Bus Rodeos; and she provided an overview of the proposed Transportation Department budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026.

Discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding appreciation to staff for their efforts and for their responsiveness; the Metro BikeShare request; the grant; the plan to establish Metro BikeShare; City Council consideration of the issue to determine support; unknown costs; the inability to fund from the General Fund without City Council direction; the Classification and Compensation Study; required periodic examination of classifications; comparative cities; ensuring that salaries are set appropriate to the market; service increases for fixed routes; returning to pre-pandemic levels; the goal to increase service levels 10% each year; operational funding necessary; analysis of funding impacts; role reclassifications; ensuring clarity for experience necessary for specific positions; providing efficient structure to get the work done; potential salary adjustments; MOVE Phase 2 on Sepulveda; funding from Metro; clarification that grants that have not yet been received are not included; the opportunity to include additional funding if the grant is awarded; the intent to return to the City Council about grants awarded for the MOVE project; constraints; and items included the Mobility Fund.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding a suggestion to allow public comment after presentations rather than before; appreciation to the Transportation Department; differences in the 2023 budget cycle vs. the 2024 budget cycle; financial sustainability; prioritization of the essential mission; sustaining core operations while thoughtfully planning for the future; the pivotal moment in the history of the agency; looking at expanding services into the future; transitioning into Zero Emissions; staffing levels; initiatives that had to be paused due to staffing issues that are now moving forward; normal attrition; a suggestion for Transit and Culver CityBus to have their own social media; helping people be aware of services; Metro and other transit agencies with robust social media; appreciation for the work of the Communications Manager to amplify free fare days; appreciation for expansion of fare free days and the Ambassador Program; plans for Culver City Your Way; providing a menu of options for the community; gearing up to have public transportation services ready for the Olympics; the 20 year plan; aligning services to the 2045 plan; setting the stage to achieve goals and objectives; and community engagement.

Further discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding appreciation for the complex document provided; challenges being faced as a community; the importance of keeping

a healthy reserve fund; continued requests for data on MOVE Culver City to be posted online; information on the data collection program to be provided to Council Members; resources and funding required to provide all the data; providing two sets of evaluations; data necessary to provide an analysis; data coming forward in the summer of 2026; the need to update and expand facilities in the future; looking at combining facilities use; sharing the Transportation facility; grant money; housing above a rail station in Pasadena; opportunities; the finite amount of real estate in Culver City; optimization of space and resources; funding and grants; funding for the Sepulveda Corridor; and appreciation for the proactiveness of the department.

Mayor O'Brien invited public comment.

Jeremy Bocchino, City Clerk, indicated that no requests to speak had been received.

Mark Muenzer, Planning and Development Director, provided a presentation on the proposed Planning and Development Department budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 and he thanked Council Member McMorris for her suggestion to add an online feedback and comments form to the department website noting the helpful feedback and comments received.

Discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding appreciation to staff for their efforts; the hotel study; revenue generation; the planning and land use aspect to hotels; world events coming to the Los Angeles area; streamlining the approval process; other types of hospitality uses permitted by other cities; City Council discretion; making a decision on the macro-strategy around the budget; increasing revenues or reducing expenses; studying attracting housing production vs. attracting hotels; changes made in the zoning code; data indicating that Culver City is a leader in streamlining in the county; changes made in the zoning code; balance; revenue that comes from commercial activity necessary to support the residents; community feedback on what to support; acknowledgement that residential does not pay for itself; utilization of the pre-approved ADU (Accessory Dwelling Unit) plans; best practices; utilization rates in other areas; clarification that the department does not have a dedicated grant writer; the consultant retained by the City to help any department search for grants; hostels as being included in the process; hostels as providing a less expensive housing option;

and the inability of a long-term co-living space to get permits due, in part, to that not being allowed in Culver City.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding appreciation for leadership and community outreach; the budget process for 2023 vs. for 2024; appreciation for the difference made with the addition of the Senior Planner that was added last year; the decreased budget for Planning as compared to last year; Housing Subcommittee meetings that are open to the public; community outreach to alert people to changes and improvements; appreciation for participation and engagement at community events; cross collaboration; and appreciation for the portal and other new projects.

Further discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding appreciation for work to streamline processes; acknowledgement of the need for balance; creation of a policy for AI (Artificial Intelligence); the AI Local Government Summit; use of AI to look up information in the codes and for staff reporting; consultation with different vendors; options being considered due to the denial of the request for consultant services; the Climate Emergency Action Plan; the Fiscal Impact Analysis requested by the City Council; City Council requests; and multi-departmental projects.

Discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding the need to find revenue sources; appreciation for the Pipeline Report; RHNA (Regional Housing Needs Assessment) numbers; projects moving forward from a Planning perspective; effectiveness of the grant writer services; use of AI to help with grants across departments; agreement that balance is necessary in Development and Planning; accommodating growth; the anticipated population increase; and the Jefferson/Slauson hotel project.

Mayor O'Brien invited public comment.

The following members of the public addressed the City Council:

James Richardson was called to speak but was not present in person or in Council Chambers.

Disa Lindgren expressed support for an improved budget process as presented by Council Members Fish and McMorris; discussed the importance of hearing from all kinds of residents; the expertise of City Council Members elected to represent constituent values; ensuring the public is educated and informed

on the budget process with opportunities to provide input; important decisions made with the adoption of the budget; the need for fiscally sustainable, effective operations, and healthy change; and she asked that changes proposed by Council Members Fish and McMorris be funded.

Michelle Dennis provided background on herself; expressed support for the call from Council Members Fish and McMorris to transform the City budgeting process into a community-based budgeting process; indicated willingness to provide recommendations to help move the City in that direction; discussed other community members with their own suggestions and recommendations; she urged the City to use \$250,000 to select and implement a mechanism to facilitate all the recommendations and suggestions; acknowledged the CFO for her expertise and efforts to explain the budget; discussed providing in-depth, substantive recommendations and a plan to go forward; informing and empowering the community to participate in the budget process; and she urged the City to move quickly so that the 2026-2027 budget would reflect a community-based budgeting process.

Crystal Alexander with one minute ceded by Kenneth Alexander, applauded the work of the Finance Department; discussed fees and charges; concern that parking citations had not been adjusted for 10 years; the update to PRCS fees; the City Council decision to include Jubilo Village in the budget; actions of Los Angeles to suspend allocations for their Section 8 housing program; she hoped that scenarios were being explored in the event that Section 8 monies are not available and the quarter cent sales tax does not pass; discussed the time-consuming, resource-intensive participatory budget process; the potential for unequal participation; the limited scope of the process; examination of only a portion of the budget; concern that the process is performative; and she asked the City Council to think about the matter carefully.

Karim Sahli noted that most residents would have varying ideas on how to allocate the budget, but never get a chance to weigh in; discussed the fiscal emergency; shutting out the public from the process; number of people that provided input in the last round of budget presentations; lack of engagement; growing services without a long-term plan; support for an improved, transparent, and participatory budget process as advocated by Council Members Fish and McMorris; community involvement for parks, streets, and equity goals; and he felt that a people-

driven process would lead to smarter choices and a stronger Culver City.

David Metzler was called to speak but was not present in person or online.

Jamie Wallace expressed confusion about how Council Members can spend time arguing the merits of something that has not come before the City Council yet; questioned what the \$250,000 would be spent on; asked for a staff report; discussed her research on participatory budgeting; assuming the public knows more than someone who has been educated in financial matters; and she acknowledged the need for a representative process.

Greg Maron speaking on behalf of himself, stated that the process denied him the opportunity of giving an update on the recent BPAC meeting; expressed strong support for reform advocated for by Council Members Fish and McMorris; he read the language of the Mobility Impact Fee; noted that just because a project is put on a list of Mobility projects, does not mean that the project is intended to reduce vehicle miles; discussed support for the signal projects; funding from the appropriate source; the Public Works budget; projects that exceeded the cost of the projects that Mobility was seeking funding for; and he asserted that CCPD painting and flooring projects could be put on hold for a year during the fiscal emergency to provide money for improved traffic safety with traffic signals without raiding impact fees against their purposeful use.

Melissa Sanders agreed that spending money that one does not have during a fiscal crisis was not a good idea; asserted that Jubilo Village was not a project that the City could afford and that if it was a worthwhile project, it would have been funded by someone else; discussed money spent to date; lack of a guarantee that community members or residents would be prioritized; the Glorja Kaufman Foundation project that is not requesting any funds; focusing on what is best for Culver City; negative feedback she has received on the proposed sales tax increase; concern with dwindling reserves that could be needed for emergencies; and she asked that the Council do what is best for Culver City.

Jeannine Wisnosky Stehlin with one minute ceded by Jack Stehlin, discussed Jubilo Village; participatory budgeting; the urgent need for a lobbyist registry; connected issues; alternative uses for money proposed to be directed to Jubilo Village; misallocation of public funds at the expense of City-wide

services and infrastructure; a press release and non-agendized speech about participatory budgeting; domination by the loudest and most organized voices resulting in inequitable and fragmented outcomes; undermining long-term planning; she requested that the City Council agendize consideration of a lobbyist registry; discussed the importance of understanding who is shaping City policy behind the scenes; ensuring that the budget reflects the needs of everyone, not just the ones with access and connections; she asked that the City Council remove the \$20 million dollar allocation to Jubilo Village, take participatory budgeting off the table, and agendize and pass a lobbyist registry; and she noted the importance of leading with care, transparency, and equity.

Kira Pusch voiced support for participatory budgeting and expressed the desire to participate; discussed concern with doubling down on not getting public input; the importance of preserving the ability to provide public input; support for the Jubilo Village project; public good; and those who underestimate the amount of fiscal good that could be brought to the community.

Gary Zeiss observed that some people thought of Culver City as Mayberry; noted the fiscal crisis being experienced by Los Angeles and the county; discussed acting in accordance with what is going on in surrounding areas; looking at ways to save money; ensuring Culver City is getting what they pay for; and examination of other cities involved in community budgeting.

Lisa Soghor, Chief Finance Officer, expressed appreciation to staff for their dedication and provided a presentation on the proposed budget adjustments for the Finance Department for Fiscal Year 2025-2026.

Discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding feedback from almost all departments expressing appreciation to Finance staff for their leadership and assistance; efforts to better educate the public; support for trying out new things in the budget workshop; appreciation for accessibility of the CFO and willingness to implement new systems; differences between last year's budget presentation process and the current one; online accessibility; the partnership with the Communications Manager; the charge given to departments to identify savings where they can; the ongoing deficit; the sales tax measure going on the ballot; waiting to see what happens; past generosity of residents to approve measures to meet the increasing level of services provided by the City; cuts to services if the sales tax measure does not pass; Plan B; potential cuts to personnel;

evaluation tools to determine recommended cuts; defining what cuts mean to programs; severe cuts necessary if the sales tax measure does not pass; difficult decisions for the City Council to make; cuts being made in other cities; staff recommendations considered by the City Council; a request for additional guidance about what other cities are doing; providing the most complete picture to the City Council possible; information provided on potential impacts of position reductions; City Council determination of which services to be reduced and how much; assessing current conditions; and understanding potential impacts department by department.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding the potential for a low fund balance to negatively affect credit ratings; appreciation for creating opportunities for the public to engage; the proposal for a strategically valid survey; the duty to prepare and submit the annual budget to the City Council as required by the City Charter; previous examination of participatory budgeting that found it to be an expensive proposition; staff and consultant time; outreach and advertising; and creating policy and making budget decisions based on staff recommendations.

Further discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding appreciation for adapting and evolving; public engagement; money previously allocated to continuing public improvement projects in Culver City; the endless supply of projects to undertake; the Parks Master Plan; support for outreach efforts; the budget 101 Workshops; in-person and online participation; people who watch the videos after the workshops; promotion of the Budget In Box; social media outreach; amount of outreach and presentations as compared to other cities; and changes spearheaded by former Council Member Jim Clarke to allow Council Member input before staff starts preparing the budget that led to the creation of the work plan meetings.

Council Member Fish expressed appreciation for comments illustrating the continuing evolution of the process to further engage the City Council and the public; discussed the serious budget crisis being faced and the potential for serious cuts; potential revenue from passage of the sales tax measure that does not close the gap until 2031; economic uncertainty; the upcoming Olympics; the importance of a healthy, sustainable budget; big decisions in front of the City; increasing revenue; reducing expenses; the importance of community voices in decision making; the proposed \$250,000 enhancement to the Finance Department budget to create a new community-centered

budget process; engagement of Healthy Democracy; costs to create a new process from the ground up using staff expertise; the hope that the budget next year would be a result of community collaboration in development of the budget; other avenues to change the budget process to center community voices; appreciation to hardworking staff; education vs. participation; the need for budgets to be living documents that are flexible and respond to community need; shifting resources to successful programs and deepening investments that make life better; concern with weakening quality of services and public trust with decisions made in a vacuum; community buy-in; direction to staff to return with a plan to involve the public in shaping a new budget process incorporating best practices from peer cities including outreach strategies to meet people where they are and engage a representative cross-section of the community; justification of the enhancement during a fiscal emergency; the inability to afford the status quo any longer; investing in the long-term fiscal sustainability of the community; and he requested support for the proposal.

Discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding including the item in the current budget; speaker concern expressed that the item was not on the agenda; the appropriate time to make requests before the budget returns on June 9; the need to agendize a discussion of the work plan to direct staff and provide an opportunity for public input; allocation of funds for the budget; the ability to bring the item back for a budget amendment that would require four votes; appreciation for comment provided by the City Attorney; the quote from Healthy Democracy; other tools available; interest in City Council and public discussion of the item in an open process; support for creating new systems of transparency and accountability; the opportunity to expand upon the educational workshops to engage and obtain meaningful feedback; scheduling issues; earlier promotion of workshops; continuing to be in partnership with the community; building on efforts done with various plans; intentionally going where people are to gain feedback; incorporating feedback into the process of determining funding; providing an information point; continued improvement of the City; the program as a net value addition; value and impact; increasing public engagement to be delivered to the City Council and staff; engagement vs. participation; defining goals; shaping formation of the budget; different budgeting concepts; civic assemblies; and support for earmarking the money.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding year over year reserves; the increase in spending on

helping the unhoused two years ago to a level that no other city does; dealing with issues not addressed by the state and county partners; the marked difference since the program was created; positive comments received; improving the lives of many; data from CCPD and CCFD; reduced calls for service; quick depletion of reserves; presenting a balanced budget; concern with putting reserves into Jubilo while campaigning and educating for the quarter cent sales tax; needs not being addressed due to not wanting to deplete the reserves; the feeling that people lack the bandwidth to engage; unused childcare services offered; the representative democracy; experience gained as Council Members; institutional knowledge; personal values vs. knowledge; what is necessary to become truly educated to make a knowledgeable decision; support for the survey proposal; and not wanting to add enhancements that were not approved by the City Manager.

Further discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding caution moving forward; the message being sent with spending money on the process; money spent building a church; concern with not being fiscally responsible with the money the City has; the importance of ensuring that the quarter cent sales tax is passed; the proposal to look at the entire budget process and ensure community participation; allowing people a voice in the process; concern with how a panel of 30 people can adequately represent the community; ensuring that a fully representative, stratified sample of the community is engaged; the many tools available for a participatory budget process; the organization with the mission to increase public engagement; examination of the City's existing plans; efforts made to engage the public on the General Plan, Specific Plans, the REAP (Racial, Equity, Action Plan), and other items that have had more participation than the City budget has; and concern with spending money to educate the public to do the job the City Council is elected to do.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding learning more about the process; the ability to vote the item down if it is not a viable option; the value of exploration; level of promotion given to other projects and initiatives that should be provided to gaining input on the budget as well; support for having a community-based process for the next budget cycle; and City Council consensus was achieved by Vice Mayor Puza, and Council Members Fish and McMorris to agendaize consideration of a participatory budget process.

Mayor O'Brien invited public comment.

The following members of the public addressed the City Council:

Jeannine Wisnosky Stehlin with one minute ceded by Jack Stehlin, discussed the need for a lobby registry; lack of information on how the one consultant was chosen; transparency, accountability, and public trust; she expressed strong support for the Cultural Affairs Division; discussed the stark picture painted by the City Manager of what could happen if the sales tax does not pass; the importance of continuing to invest in Arts and Culture programs; consequences in how people interact; people talking over each other instead of truly listening; engagement with empathy; communication; the Performing Arts Grant and the Artist Laureate programs; the private entity offering a menu of budgeting services; what is required of artists applying for grants; fairness and accountability in the management of City resources; she urged the City Council to agendaize and pass a lobby registry to support the arts and put all decisions in the light; and she asked the City Council to support the arts and to lead with care, transparency, and equity.

Jamie Wallace questioned whether the proposed allocation would come from the reserves or from the General Fund; discussed disappointment that an experiment is getting an allocation of money when money needs to be spent on the streets; money spent to help people who are already here; offering money to a company that ran out of money; she asserted that she was not against affordable housing; noted the difficulty of getting people to participate; discussed reduced volunteerism overall; and she noted that she would work to support the sales tax but would have difficulty with the support of the proposed expenditure.

Melissa Sanders was called to speak but was not present in person or in Council Chambers.

Jesse Mayes, Assistant City Manager, provided a brief overview of the proposed budget for the City Manager's Office for Fiscal Year 2025-2026.

Discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding the office of Culture and Economic Development; the request from the Arts District BID (Business Improvement District); typical support given; ensuring equitable support for all neighborhoods; support from the City in the structuring and initiation of the BIDs; area included in the Arts District BID; assistance provided by Culver City; funds still available from hard financial assistance granted a few years ago to proceed with

four projects; the ability of the BID to request City Council approval of reallocating remaining funds from the grant; restructuring the Art Walk and Roll Festival; reductions to service level; examination of the Assessment District; similar collaboration with the DBA (Downtown Business Association); the Arts District BID vs. the DBA; reducing Assessment District boundaries; amount granted this year for Art Walk and Roll; the request for additional support from the Arts District BID; level of service provided to the Pride event; and a request for additional information about the request.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding the budget process; increased fiscal stress being experienced this year over last year; a request for a publicly assessable breakdown of department budgets by program area, equipment, staffing category, and overtime use; the goal to have the Cleargov tool being used to create the budget up and running once the budget is adopted; increased access and transparency with the Cleargov portal; work on data input and formatting; performance metrics; the ability to create custom reports; links to dashboards created by other departments; metrics included in the budget that is available online; regular updates to available dashboards; unavailability of a comprehensive dashboard for the City; inclusion of staffing numbers; position control; financial data; searchable and configurable items; procurement work; investment in software; the ability to search budget lines; the purchasing policy requiring City Council approval for anything over \$50,000; staff report records; requirements to come back every five years if the same vendor is used; daylighting all vendors being used; clarification that the budget does not contain every expenditure made by the City; approved cash disbursements; clarification on investments made from year to year by departments; maintenance and landscape services; approval of an ongoing dollar amount to pay for outside services to maintain the parks; clarification that the budget does not itemize every expenditure; annual agreements with specific companies for specific services; RFPs that come before the City Council; sewer charges; the On Call list maintained by Public Works in the event of an emergency; reports to the City Council on overages; the disbursement report; public records requests; whether other cities have searchable databases; the ability to understand if there are modules with the current system that could provide the requested information; different services provided by different departments; costs per call from Housing and Human Services; and the amount of work required to provide a breakdown of department spending per resident.

Further discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding appreciation to staff for their dedication and service, and appreciation for the continued funding for the Cultural Arts position.

Lisa Soghor, Chief Financial Officer, discussed the unique year; City Council direction to put Jubilo Village into the budget; different funding sources for the project; the Contingency Reserve; the resolution in consultation with the City Attorney based upon the language and the policy to pull out the funds; additional calculations with added items; receipt of an email from the county indicating a \$5.2 million dollar payment for the Real Property tax allotment based upon the Entrada sale; clarification that reserves would still need to be drawn upon; the projected \$35 million dollar use of reserves that has now been adjusted to \$15 million dollars; meeting downgraded budget expectations; recalculation of where the Contingency Reserve will land; research about where Contingency Reserves are for other cities; cities used for the Classification and Compensation studies; cities in the Council of Governments; recommendations by the GFOA (Government Finance Officers Association); maintaining two months of operating expenses; and staff to return with a resolution to decrease the Contingency Reserve from 30% if directed by the City Council.

Discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding use of reserves in the proposed budget; fluctuations in the multi-year forecast; costs that are not expected to continue; the cyclical history of claims; projected disbursement of Jubilo Village funds; savings with the move toward Wellness Village becoming an affordable housing site; projected increased revenue but not increased expenditures; benefit to putting the \$5 million toward the Jubilo reserve; further reduction to the Contingency Reserve in 2027 if the proposed quarter cent sales tax is not passed; Property Transfer Tax that is realized when sales occur; voter approval of Measure RE; the one-time payment for a single commercial sale; leftover money in the Housing Authority Fund from Redevelopment; expenditures and administrative costs funded by the General Fund; and the list of contingencies by cities.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding lowering the target; leaving the 30% policy in place even if the City goes below it; the policy requiring that the City take action similar as to was done when the reserve was established; the need to pass a resolution authorizing the

reduction to the reserve target specifically for 2025-2026; clarification that the change would not be ongoing; a suggestion to bring back a resolution to look at a plan to get the reserves back to the original reserve amount; understanding where others are in the region; and appreciation to former Council Member Fisch for his work on Measure RE and Measure BL.

Further discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding uncertainties; concern with moving forward while counting on something the City does not have; concern with cost increases for labor and materials; agreement on the need for affordable housing; understanding when a project does not make sense; renegotiating the deal; bifurcating and pulling the church out of the deal; concern with unforeseen emergencies; concern that the project will need more money and continue to ask for it; and support for moving forward with a renegotiated deal that does not require so much from Culver City.

Discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding the opportunity to build housing for low-income families; generating revenue streams to support the project; covering project costs; adding restrictions that housing goes to Culver City residents and CCSM cannot come back for additional funding requests; appreciation that the project does not have ongoing expenses that Project Homekey has; the Contingency Reserve; taking responsible action; and concern with accelerating the timeline to reduce the Contingency Reserve.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding clarification that funding for a public participation project was the only addition to the budget; setting aside the Arts District ask as a contingency if they cannot fundraise; donations for Art Walk; support for Art Walk; concern with funding one event at twice the amount of the next highest event; waiting for the Economic Development Manager to return with additional information; allowing time for the Arts District BID to make efforts to fundraise; event attendance; looking at events on a per attendee basis; ways to measure value; consideration of the parks grant writer position that could be cost neutral; availability of the contracted grant writer service; resisting placement of grant writers in every department; efficiency organization-wide; looking at which departments get access to grant writers; the last minute Planning Department request to include additional consultant services on the Hayden Tract for the EIR (Environmental Impact Report); the height analysis; additional work that has to be done to complete the Hayden Specific Plan; the unavoidable cost;

unanimous City Council consensus was achieved to add the \$100,000 request from the Planning Department; City Council consensus was achieved from Vice Mayor Puza and Council Members Fish and McMorris to confirm that staff is to return with a resolution to pull money from the Contingency Fund; and unanimous consensus was received to agendize a discussion of grant writing.

Further discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding use of the Mobility Fund for reduced Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT); analysis indicating that use of funds for changing out copper wire for fiber optic is permissible; efficient use of all forms of transportation; vetting of eligible uses by the consultant; clarification on how the project would reduce VMT; ensuring the appropriate fund is being used; the nexus study prepared by a traffic engineering firm that identified the items; the category of intersection improvements included in approved items; agreement to provide the nexus study; costs for police flooring coming out of the Facilities Planning Reserve; the fund specifically set aside to address aging infrastructure and buildings; ongoing restoration projects; monies that can only be used for facilities; and additional funding available for Veterans Auditorium.

Discussion ensued between staff and Council Members regarding the previous request for the lobbyist registry that is already agendized as a non-urgent item.

Council Member Vera exited the meeting at 8:57 p.m.

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**Public Comment - Items Not on the Agenda (Continued)**

Mayor O'Brien invited public comment.

The following member of the public addressed the City Council:

Melissa Sanders was called to speak but was not present in person or online.

Gary Zeiss discussed the decision to wait on the sales tax determination before proceeding with certain items; possible layoffs if the sales tax measure does not get approved; the message being sent to employees with the decision to move forward with Jubilo Village regardless; knowing that moving forward with Jubilo Village reduces chances of the sales tax

measure passing; and he asked the City Council to see if the sales tax measure passes before deciding to spend the money on Jubilo Village.

Philip Lelyveld was called to speak but was not present in person or online.

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**Items from Council Members**

None.

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**Council Member Requests to Agendize Future Items**

City Council consensus was achieved to agendize the following:

- consideration of a participatory budget process
- agendize a discussion of grant writing

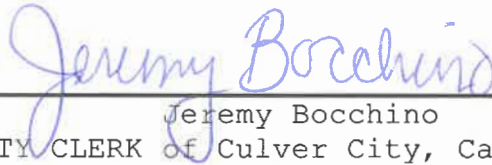
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May 20, 2025

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, at 9:00 p.m., the City Council adjourned to a regular meeting to be held on May 27, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

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Jeremy Bocchino  
CITY CLERK of Culver City, California  
EX-OFFICIO CLERK of the City Council  
Culver City, California



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DAN O'BRIEN  
MAYOR of Culver City, California

Date: June 9, 2025