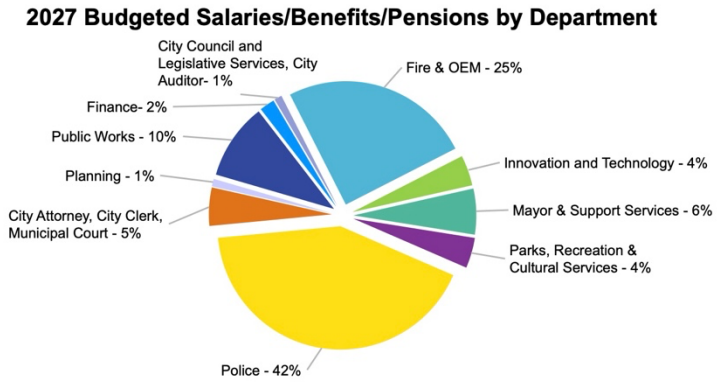
In the Loop with Nancy November 2026

Newsletter from Colorado Springs City Councilmember Nancy Henjum

Happy November to all District 5 friends and neighbors! I'm so glad to connect with you through this edition of my Newsletter. Each month, I share updates on city projects, events you can join, resources for residents, and stories from around our community.

Grateful to serve,
Nancy
Councilmember, District 5 - Colorado Springs

Your 2027 City Budget: Investing in Public Safety, Parks, and the People Who Serve Us



On October 29, City Council held its markup session on Mayor Mobolade's proposed 2027 City Budget. On November 10 the budget ordinance passed the first of two readings. The power of the purse is arguably City Council's most significant power, and I want to share what happened because it touches everyday life in District 5 and across our city.

On a personal note, I experienced that markup session as one of the most collaborative and positive working meetings in my six years on City Council. We addressed real needs and kept our focus on what is right for the City as a whole, meaning all residents, and on the wellbeing of the staff who serve our City every day. I'm grateful to my colleagues and to City staff for the spirit they brought to the table.

Public Safety

Council advanced an additional 1% pay increase for sworn members of our Police and Fire Departments. This is on top of the step increases for sworn employees in the 2027 budget case presented by the Mayor. This raise will start to close the significant pay gap with other public safety departments of comparable sizes on the Front Range. This should help reduce the number of trained firefighters we lose to other departments. See this story to learn more. We also agreed to buy the Fire Department's needed cardiac monitors outright instead of leasing them, avoiding eight years of substantial financing costs, and getting important lifesaving equipment in place.

Parks

We appropriated an additional $469,000 for Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services. Specifically, this new funding will:

- Restore a park maintenance position that had gone unfunded

- Add a skilled maintenance technician and a new safety position
- Fund another high-priority position the department identified
- Purchase a new graffiti removal machine
- Repair the Deerfield Hills Spray ground

Paying for It Responsibly

To help cover these investments, Council proposed roughly $163,000 for two new sales tax enforcement positions in the Finance Department. The City expects these positions to net $1.2 million in additional sales tax revenue next year, so they more than pay for themselves.

Council is also moving about $138,000 from the City Attorney's Office into a separate account for City Council's legal services. We also voted to remove the temporary mill levy credit on property taxes, with that revenue going into a TABOR-restricted reserve account. This offers the new council in 2027 the option of going to the voters to address additional capital or one-time needs without raising taxes. Nothing has been determined at this point, and it is important to state that such TABOR money cannot be spent without voter approval. If no initiative is brought to the voters or an initiative is not approved, any amount above the TABOR limit retained by the city will be refunded to taxpayers.

Recognizing City Employees

City employees have taken four to six unpaid furlough days this year. With revenues coming in above projections, Council voted 8-1 to give furlough-eligible employees a paid day off on November 25, without requiring them to use their own leave. Most City offices will be closed that day. The Mayor signed the ordinance.

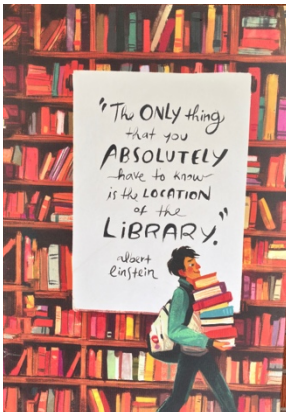
Where Things Stand

On Tuesday, November 10, Council held the first reading and vote on the 2027 Budget. Results:

- An Ordinance Repealing Ordinance No. 25-86 and Adopting the City of Colorado Springs - 2027 Salary Structure for Civilian and Sworn Municipal Employees **(Approved 9-0)**
- An Ordinance Making and Certifying the 2026 Tax Levy for Taxes Payable in 2027 at 4.279 Mills Upon Each Dollar of Assessed Valuation of All Taxable Property and a Tax Credit of 4.279 Mills Upon Each Dollar of Assessed Valuation of All Taxable Business Personal Property Within the Corporate Limits of the City of Colorado Springs **(Approved 6-3; Opposed: Casey, Crow-Iverson, Risley)** ****Property tax makes up roughly 6% to 7% of the City's General Fund. Sales tax, at about 60%, is by far the dominant source.*
- Annual Appropriation Ordinance Adopting the Annual Budget and Appropriating Funds for the Several Purposes Named in Said Budget for the Year Ending December 31, 2027 **(Approved 8-1; Opposed: Risley)**

The second reading and final vote is scheduled for **Tuesday, November 24 at 9 a.m.** in City Council Chambers at City Hall, 107 North Nevada Avenue. The meeting is open to the public. You can also watch on Springs TV (Comcast channels 18 and 880 HD, StratusIQ channel 99) or on the City Council Facebook page.

Who Serves Our Libraries: An Update on Library Board Appointments



Our libraries belong to all of us, so I want to share what happened at the November 5 meeting about who will help lead them.

That morning, I joined Councilmember Ken Casey and El Paso County Commissioners Carrie Geitner and Lauren Nelson for a meeting of the Joint Appointment Committee (JAC) for the Pikes Peak Library District. Our job is to recommend trustees for the library board, which oversees a $48 million budget and the branches so many District 5 families rely on.

Thirty-two residents applied for three open seats. That is a remarkable show of community interest, and I am grateful to every person who stepped forward.

How the Committee Works

Under Colorado law, when more than one local government creates a library district, each government appoints two elected officials to a committee that selects trustees. Here, that means two City Councilmembers and two County Commissioners. Every action needs a majority, so a 2-2 vote does not pass.

What Happened

Two candidates moved forward.

Aaron Salt, the current board president, was recommended for a second five-year term 3-1. I voted no. I was open to supporting his reappointment if the Commissioners would also consider any of the candidates Councilmember Casey and I recommended. They did not.

Cindy Schaefer was approved 3-1 for a one-year seat that completes the term of a trustee who left the board early. I voted no. Councilmember Casey and I interviewed Ms. Schaefer only after learning the Commissioners had interviewed her and planned to recommend her. Councilmember Casey supported her on the condition that she fill this shorter term.

The third seat, a full five-year term, remains open and will go through a new round of applications.

During the meeting, I nominated several other candidates. The first was Alan Goins, a retired Colorado Springs Utilities facilities and financial planning manager. His background matched what the library district asked us to prioritize: governing board experience, leadership, and familiarity with public budgets and transparency. He was the top candidate from the interviews Councilmember Casey and I conducted, and Councilmember Casey seconded the nomination. It failed on a 2-2 vote. My nomination of Mariah Osborn also failed 2-2, and my nominations of Joe Pelka and Harry Karasopoulos did not receive a second.

In all, City Councilmembers interviewed nine applicants, and County Commissioners interviewed two. I believe our strongest candidates deserved full consideration by the whole committee before we voted. In my view, the current approach to choosing which applicants to interview is inefficient and confusing, and it can make appointments feel more political than a careful vetting of qualified candidates otherwise might.

A Different View on Community Advocates

Several applicants have advocated for library service in northwest Colorado Springs since the Rockrimmon branch closed in 2024. The commissioners labeled this advocacy as “activism” and stated that they would never appoint them to the board. I see it differently. Residents who show up, ask hard questions, and volunteer their time are exactly the people I want at the table, alongside strong budget and governance experience. *(Please read an email at the end of this article that was sent to all County Commissioners and*

the JAC members by a member of the public who was present at the meeting. I requested their permission to publish this accounting of the meeting. They agreed, if their name would be redacted.)

What Comes Next

Mr. Salt and Ms. Schaefer must still be approved by both City Council and the Board of County Commissioners. Council is expected to consider their appointments on November 24, and public comment is welcome. Email AllCouncil@coloradosprings.gov to sign up for comment.

To hear when applications open for the remaining seat, sign up for [Boards, Commissions, and Committees vacancy notifications].

To residents who attended a JAC meeting for the first time: thank you for coming. I heard that it was hard to see and hear in the room. You deserve a meeting where you can follow along.

You can read the Gazette's coverage here.

Letter from a resident:

Dear El Paso County Commissioners and members of the JAC:

I am writing to express my serious concerns regarding the JAC meeting I attended on Thurs, Nov 5, 2026. This was my first experience attending a county government meeting, and quite honestly, I left shocked, appalled and extremely disappointed by what I witnessed.

I would like to share several observations and concerns in the hope that someone from the County Commissioners' office (or a JAC member) will respond and help explain what occurred, as well as whether this is considered an acceptable way for a county committee to conduct its business. These are my concerns:

1. Lack of an appropriate meeting environment and public acknowledgement.
The physical setup of the room we met in was very disappointing. The JAC board members (and others) were seated around an oblong table in the middle of a very small room, with very limited seating available for members of the public. The board members were seated in oversized chairs that made it difficult to see their faces and it was often difficult to hear what they were saying. There were approximately 12-14 members of the public in attendance. Not once did anyone acknowledge the audience, welcome those who had taken the time to attend, or thank them for their interest in the proceedings. We are your constituents, and a simple acknowledgement of our presence would have demonstrated a basic level of courtesy and respect for the community.
Additionally, there were no visible nameplates identifying the individuals seated at the table, nor did anyone take the time to introduce themselves. As a result, it was difficult for those of us in attendance to understand who was participating in the discussion and what roles the various individuals held.

2. Lack of adequate accommodations for the board members to be heard.
Nancy Henjum appeared to have lost her voice and attempted to participate in the meeting by whispering throughout. Not only was it hard to hear her, but the audience had difficulty hearing other board members as well, making it challenging to follow their comments, contributions, and participation in the discussion. However, no microphone or other accommodation was provided to ensure Ms. Henjum (or the other board members) could be heard.
For a meeting involving important decisions about library district board trustee appointments, I would expect accommodations to be made so that every board member has an equal opportunity to be heard by each other and the audience.

3. Unprofessional conduct and lack of respect among board members.
Perhaps my greatest concern was the manner in which Carrie Geitner conducted herself throughout the meeting. She appeared to be directing much of the discussion and, in my observation, came across as aggressive, confrontational, and at times bullying, particularly aimed at Nancy Henjum.

I was genuinely shocked by the tone and manner in which Ms. Geitner addressed Ms. Henjum. It was difficult to watch, and I found the interaction to be entirely inappropriate for a professional board setting. What was equally concerning was that no one at the table appeared to address or intervene in this behavior.
I also observed what appeared to be an alliance between Ms. Geitner and Ms. Nelson on several occasions, particularly when Ms. Henjum made a request or expressed an opinion that differed from Ms. Geitner's. Ms. Nelson and Ms. Geitner often seemed to oppose or dismiss Ms Henjum's suggestions rather than engage in collaborative discussion aimed at reaching a group consensus or majority decision. As a result, the meeting frequently felt more like two opposing sides working against one another than a group of individuals working together toward a common goal. My expectation would be that members of a county-appointed committee could engage in respectful discussion, consider differing viewpoints, and work together in the best interest of the community. That was not what I observed.

As a member of the public attending this meeting, I found the process confusing and would have appreciated greater transparency regarding how decisions were reached, particularly concerning Mr. Goins' and Mr. Karasopoulos' **a**ppointment to the Library Trustee board position. It appeared that the vote on whether to advance Mr. Goins' and Mr. Karasopoulos' to an appointment as a trustee were divided two to two, with only four individuals participating in the vote. Given the split vote, I would appreciate clarification as to how Ms. Geitner and Ms. Nelson's objections to advancing these gentlemen resulted in the decision not to move them forward, despite Ms. Henjum's and Mr. Casey voting in favor of doing so. Could you please explain the process used to reach this decision and the basis for determining the outcome of a tied vote? As a member of the public, I believe transparency in these proceedings is important, particularly when decisions affect individuals seeking to serve the community.

I realize that individuals serving on boards and committees will not always agree. Differences of opinion are expected, and healthy discussion is an important part of the decision-making process. However, there is a significant difference between respectful disagreement and conduct that appears dismissive, confrontational, and unprofessional.
I left this meeting feeling very confused and disappointed. I witnessed a lack of courtesy toward the public, disrespectful communication among board members, and lack of transparency in the decision-making process. These individuals are participating in a process that affects our community and are entrusted with making decisions on behalf of the citizens of El Paso County. I would expect a much higher standard of professionalism and accountability.

I am requesting a response from the County Commissioners' office (or JAC member) addressing the following:

-Is this an accurate representation of how JAC meetings are normally conducted?
-What expectations or standards of professional conduct are established for JAC board members?
-What procedures govern voting and the advancement of library trustee board candidates, particularly when there is a two-to-two disagreement?
-Who is responsible for ensuring that meetings are conducted in a respectful, transparent, and professional manner?

I attended this meeting as an interested member of the community, expecting to observe a professional process involving individuals working together to serve the best interests of El Paso County. Unfortunately, that was not my experience.
I sincerely hope these concerns will be taken seriously, and I would appreciate a response and an explanation of what I witnessed.

Respectfully,
Name withheld at writer's request.

UPAC Distributed Energy Strategies Assignment Approved

In October, the Utilities Board approved a new assignment for the Utilities Policy Advisory Committee (UPAC) to study distributed energy programs and strategies. UPAC is an advisory committee of the Utilities Board that reviews, analyzes, and provides recommendations on specific issues or policies based on requests by the Board. It is made up of volunteers from around the community who are experts in their fields.



As part of the assignment, UPAC will review how customer-sited energy resources, emerging technologies, and utility programs can support reliability, affordability, and customer choice, while considering lessons learned from peer utilities and community priorities. The committee's recommendations will help inform future policy discussions and are expected to be presented to the Utilities Board in March 2027.

If you'd like to attend an upcoming UPAC meeting, they take place on the first Wednesday of each month at 8 a.m. in the Blue River Board Room on the 5th floor of the Plaza of the Rockies. More information and meeting agendas can be found here.

Get to Know City Forestry (and Our 150,000 City Trees)

Did you know the City of Colorado Springs cares for roughly 150,000 trees along our streets, in our parks, and on public land? That work falls to a small but mighty City Forestry team, and I want to make sure more of you know about them.

Our City Forester, Matt Puckett, and his team are balancing a lot right now. They are managing the threat of the emerald ash borer, keeping up with ongoing tree maintenance, and still finding ways to grow our urban canopy. In fact, in 2026 the city has planted two trees for every tree it has removed.

If you live in a neighborhood with fewer trees, you may qualify for a **free tree** through the Urban Forest Improvement Grant. Learn more at ColoradoSprings.gov/GrowShadeTogether.

City Forestry also hosts community tree-planting events with local nonprofit partners like Roots for Justice and Saluting Branches. These are a great way to meet neighbors and leave something lasting behind.



Saluting Branches September 2026

Stay in the loop: City Forestry now publishes a quarterly newsletter with updates on their work and volunteer opportunities. Sign up at https://mailchi.mp/coloradosprings.gov/cityforestry.

Our semi-arid climate makes young trees hard to establish, which is exactly why this work deserves our support. Thank you, City Forestry!