



## **UNIFIED FIRE AUTHORITY BOARD FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

April 9, 2026, 9:00 a.m.

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1. Call to Order

Chair Henderson called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. Public Comment

No public comments were received.

Public comment was available live and with a posted email address.

3. Minutes Approval

Mayor Buroker made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 1, 2025, Finance Committee as submitted. Mayor Fotheringham seconded the motion, and all voted in favor; none opposed.

4. FY26/27 Budget Message

Chief Burchett stated that this meeting represented the first formal presentation and initial review of the FY26-27 budget. The intent was to provide a high-level overview, with more detailed analysis, division presentations and committee recommendations to occur at the May 14, 2026, Finance Committee meeting. Chief Burchett emphasized that this was a “first look”, encouraging members to review materials in depth over the next month and prepare questions for the upcoming May Finance Committee meeting.

Chief Burchett stated that the budget was developed with a focus on maintaining service levels, prioritizing employee compensation and benefits, advancing the fire training center project, and minimizing the overall member fee increase.

Overall average member fee increase is 5.34%, and the average increase for direct members (excluding UFSA adjustments) is 3.46%. Chief Burchett explained that the higher overall average was driven by UFSA impacts, specifically the addition of a Kearns engine company for only part of the previous year, resulting in a full-year funding adjustment in this budget.

Individual Member Increases:

Cottonwood Heights 4.28%

Holladay 2.11%

Herriman 3.62%

Riverton 3.84%

UFSA 5.95%

Chief Burchett noted that his stated goal during development was to remain under a 5% increase, and the final proposed budget achieved that target.

Chief Burchett reviewed the compensation and benefits, stating that the COLA will be 3.6% (based on the seven-year CPI average methodology) and will be applied to all employees effective July 1, 2026. The cost of the COLA will be \$2.5 million.

Chief Burchett stated that there were minimal market adjustments for sworn personnel this year. Primary adjustments focused on the Senior Paramedic rank as well as adjusting the Battalion Chief and Division Chief ranks by 2%. The purpose of the adjustment was to ensure a pay differential of 16% to 18% above the Captain rank. The total increase for sworn personnel market adjustments will be \$153,255.

Chief Burchett stated that staff looked at over 80 civilian positions, and 23 of them fell below market. The adjustments for the 23 positions will range from 3-6%, and the cost to the overall budget will be \$29,644.

Chief Burchett highlighted the insurance benefits. The health insurance renewal rate will be a 3.7% increase, the dental insurance renewal rate will be a 9.9% increase, resulting in an increase of \$271,000 to the budget. The plan included increased deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums, and an expansion of the HRA benefits (doubling the contribution) to help offset employee costs. Additionally, the organization will transition away from the contingent funding model beginning in FY26-27.

Chief Burchett highlighted the proposed increase to the ambulance revenue of 2.7%, which will bring in an estimated \$380,000 in revenue. The savings from the Utah Retirement Savings will be \$560,639. Chief Burchett reviewed the General Fund with the board, stating that member fee revenue will total around \$82 million, bringing the total projected revenue to \$105 million.

The general fund expenditures for personnel are budgeted at \$83.4 million (79% of the budget), and the non-personnel expenditures total \$12.7 million (12.1%) of the budget. Non-personnel costs reflect an approximate 2% reduction due to internal "stress test" reductions.

Chief Burchett reviewed the fund balance with the committee. The beginning fund balance was \$14.2 million, and the ending fund balance was \$9.5 million. A \$2.5 million member fee credit is proposed to reduce costs to member entities. The higher ending fund balance target (compared to historical levels) is intended to provide flexibility for the last anticipated payment of the contingent funding.

Moving on to the one-time funds and special projects section of the budget, Chief Burchett stated that \$1.43 million will be used for one-time special projects. These expenditures support initiatives that do not fall within standard operating or capital replacement budgets, allowing the organization to address specific needs without increasing the ongoing member fee. Planned projects include the payoff of the remaining warehouse loan (\$989,366), continuation of the "low acuity" unit pilot program (198,862), and enhancements to the turnout clean/dirty program (241,908).

Chief Burchett highlighted the capital fund and transfers section of the budget, with a proposed transfer of \$7.94 million (7.5% of the total budget). These funds support existing lease obligations, future capital replacement needs, and the initial funding strategy for the Fire Training Center debt.

In addition, financing for the Fire Training campus project is estimated at \$25.5 million and is anticipated to be funded through a 20-year tax-exempt conduit financing through UFSA. The annual debt service for this project is projected at \$1.84 million. Combined with existing debt obligations, this brings the total Capital Fund transfer to \$7.94 million.

Chief Burchett highlighted key budget impacts, including projected ambulance revenue growth of \$380,000, URS rate reduction savings of \$560,639, warehouse loan payoff savings of \$184,763 annually, and \$394,972 savings in non-personnel cost reductions that resulted from the stress test cuts. Chief Burchett reviewed several significant cost drivers impacting the FY26-27 budget and noted that staff worked extensively throughout the budget process to offset these pressures while maintaining service levels and limiting the member fee increase.

The Committee discussed that the primary cost pressures included employee compensation increases, including the 3.6% COLA and targeted market adjustments. The rising health insurance and dental insurance costs, future capital obligations, fuel costs, long-term operations impact associated with the Fire Training Center, and the anticipated phased reduction and eventual elimination of the Recreation Area Funding.

The Committee discussed the proposed annual debt obligation associated with the Fire Training Center, estimated at approximately \$1.84 million annually over a proposed 20-year financing term. Chief Burchett stated that this projected payment was incorporated into the proposed member-free increase while remaining below the informal 5% increase ceiling that had been discussed throughout the budget development process.

Some Committee members expressed concern regarding the long-term sustainability of these financial strategies and requested additional details regarding how the organization plans to absorb these costs over the full duration of the debt obligation. Members specifically questioned whether the identified \$400,000 in operational reductions represented permanent efficiencies or temporary reductions that may reappear in future budgets.

Further discussion occurred regarding proposed revenue generation opportunities associated with the Fire Training Center. Chief Burchett explained that UFA intends to establish a formal fee schedule for outside agencies utilizing the facility and noted that the organization is also exploring partnerships with Salt Lake Community College and other agencies for future training opportunities. However, he emphasized that the primary purpose of the facility is to support UFA firefighter training and operational readiness, and that any outside revenue should be viewed as supplemental rather than foundational to the project's financial viability.

Some Committee members emphasized the importance of developing a comprehensive long-term financial plan prior to moving forward with a 20-year debt obligation for the Fire Training Center. Discussion included concerns regarding long-term member fee impacts, future capital replacement obligations, additional station growth needs in rapidly growing communities, potential future lease obligations, the projected elimination of approximately \$3 million in Recreation Area Funding by 2029, and the cumulative effect of these obligations on taxpayers over time.

Chair Henderson summarized the discussion regarding the Fire Training Center and the overall budget review process. He stated that the Committee had provided valuable initial feedback and emphasized that the purpose of the current meeting was to review the budget at a very high level and identify areas where additional detail and clarification would be needed moving forward. Chair Henderson described the current proposal as a "skeleton plan" or broad outline of the budget framework rather than the final, detailed review.

Chair Henderson stated that the Committee had identified several key areas where members wanted additional information prior to making long-term financial commitments, particularly regarding the Fire Training Center financing plan, long-term sustainability, future member fee impacts, and revenue assumptions. He explained that Committee members would now have approximately one month to review the budget books in detail, meet with city managers and finance personnel, discuss concerns with council members and other local officials, and prepare additional questions and feedback for administration.

5. FY26-27 Budget Document Overview and Schedule

CFO Tony Hill reviewed the budget calendar and reminded the Committee that the key budget dates were included both on the meeting agenda and within Chief Burchett's written budget message. He explained that the timeline was intended to provide members with sufficient opportunity to review the proposed budget thoroughly before tentative and final adoption.

CFO Hill reviewed the following schedule:

- May 14, 2026 – Second Finance Committee meeting and detailed division presentations
- May 19, 2026 – Tentative budget adoption by the full Board
- June 16, 2026 – Final budget adoption and public hearing

Tony explained that the May 14, 2026 Finance Committee meeting would include detailed presentations from division leaders and additional discussion regarding the issues raised during the current meeting, including the Fire Training Center funding strategy and long-term financial planning assumptions.

CFO Hill then provided the Committee with a detailed overview of the budget books distributed to members and explained how the materials were organized. He explained that the budget books begin with:

- The Chief's Budget Message;
- An Executive Summary section containing high-level financial charts and summaries;
- Fund balance information;
- Revenue and expenditure trend charts.

CFO Hill stated that the Executive Summary was intended to provide members with a broad overview of the organization's financial position and budget structure before reviewing the detailed division-level information. He further explained that the budget books also include the organization's Strategic Plan so that Board members could clearly see how the proposed budget aligns with previously adopted strategic goals and organizational priorities.

CFO Hill noted that the Executive Summary section also contains:

- Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) charts;
- Fee schedules;
- Newly proposed Fire Training Center fee schedules.

He specifically directed members to review the proposed Fire Training Center fee schedules located later in the document, noting that the proposed training fees were new for FY 2026–2027 and would ultimately require Board approval as part of the budget adoption process.

6. Adjournment

Mayor Jackson made a motion to adjourn the April 9, 2026, UFA Finance Committee Meeting. Mayor Fotheringham seconded the motion, and all voted in favor; none opposed.

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mayor Overson

Mayor Jackson

Councilmember Butterfield

Mayor Gray

Mayor Bourke

Deputy Mayor Kanter

Mayor Buroker

Mayor Fotheringham

Councilmember Henderson

Councilmember Harris

Councilmember Bailey

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Chief Dominic Burchett

Clerk Micayla Dinkel

CFO Tony Hill

CLO Brian Roberts

ATTENDEES

AC Dern

Courtney Samuel

DC Greensides

Captain Kiyoshi Young

BC Wilde

AC Russell

HRD Kiley Day

Specialist Bird

Captain Conn

DC Widdison

Bill Brass

Engineer Brett Call

DC Ayres