

**ELK RIDGE
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
August 12, 2025**

TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING

This regularly scheduled meeting of the Elk Ridge City Council was scheduled for **Tuesday, August 12, 2025, at 7:00 PM.** The meeting was held at the Elk Ridge City Hall, 80 East Park Drive, Elk Ridge, Utah. Notice of the time, place, and Agenda of this Meeting was provided to the Payson Chronicle, 145 E. Utah Ave, Payson, Utah, and to the members of the Governing Body on August 11, 2025.

ROLL CALL

Mayor: Robert Haddock

Council Members: Jared Peterson, Charles Wixom, Melanie Paxton, Cory Thompson, Tanya Willis

Others: Royce Swensen, *City Recorder*, Laura Oliver, *Deputy Recorder*

Public: Maureen Bushman, Dani Schultz, Larry Lee, Teri Shellley, Lisa Graham, Marianne Bingham

OPENING – Dianne Schultz

PLEDGE - Larry Lee

COUNCILMEMBER WILLIS MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AND TIME
FRAME COUNCILMEMBER PETERSON SECONDED

VOTE AYE (5) NAY (0) Approved

PLANNING COMMISSION UPDATE

Maureen Bushman, Chairperson, stated the Planning Commission has had 2 meetings. They approved the plat for the Amblevue Storage units contingent upon the agreements. There were residents that came that were opposed to storage units or commercial at that location due to esthetics, traffic, and noise. Ryan Bybee of Cadence Homes came and went through what the storage units would be like and that and answered every question the residents had and that it had been clear to all residents that the property was commercial. At the August meeting the Planning Commission reviewed the Parks, Trail and Open Space Master Plan. Shawn Eliot presented the new look of the document and went through the document and presented some safety measures and hopefully they are making the final revisions. They are having a joint meeting with the Parks and Trail Committee next meeting and the following Tuesday presenting it to Council.

PUBLIC FORUM

There were no public comments

1. Certificate of Remediation Policy Renewal

Mayor Haddock introduced Rod Nielsen, DWR Urban Deer Biologist. Councilmember Peterson stated Councilmember Thompson had requested an update on the Deer Remediation Program. Three years ago, the city decided to enter the urban deer mitigation program which is regulated

by the state and the DWR. There was hype when it started which has settled down at the moment. Over the last two years the city has removed 12 animals, released 29 fawns, 20 tripped traps, In 2023 the city had 22 requests made from citizens, in 2024 there were 18 requests, this year there have been 15 requests. If property damage is the primary reason they move down the list. He has not gone to locations where property damage (eating landscape) is the primary complaint. The main focus is the animals that are a safety issue: shoving kids around, aggressiveness, killing pets. The city spent 3-4 years trying to come up with a solution. There are some months when Elk Ridge has more roadkill than Springville and Elk Ridge is 1/10 the size. They have witnessed aggressive deer with some injuries to residents and pets. There have been several pet fatalities, chronic wasting disease has been found in Payson and there is evidence of predators in town. Councilmember Paxton asked if the animals killed were tested. Rod Nielsen, DWR stated they only test roadkill that look suspect. Councilmember Peterson stated all deer the city has trapped are tested. Councilmember Peterson stated this is not his plan, it was created by the state experts and are bound by DWR regulations. Most of the cities in the county are participating in similar mitigation programs. Elk Ridge has several times more deer in town than predevelopment. Everyone that lives in Elk Ridge is the problem, himself included, having nice yards etc. helps to foster the problem. The deer have learned to eat the wrong things, travel in the wrong places, have lost fear of man and predators. This is now generational in the deer. He like many have modified his yard to deer resistant landscape. The deer's healthy diet does not include anything that is found in our yards. Most of the deer in the city herd are 20% lighter than wild deer. It was stated online that the city had 25 complaints, which is incorrect. In 2023 he stated there were 25 that are on the list for remediation. The correct information is that the city received hundreds and hundreds of complaints. In counting this year, he has received 45 calls about problem deer. Over the last 6 years there have been 30 animals that were hit and still alive in people's yards which DWR or the sheriff's office had to take care of. Rod Nielsen, DWR stated animals that are still mobile are to be left alone. He does not want people running through people's yards to shoot a mobile injured deer. There are plenty of 3-legged deer running around. The city cannot relocate deer, there is too much risk of spreading disease. There is no proven spread from deer to humans, but it can be spread from deer to pets. The deer that migrate to higher elevations rid themselves of ticks; the city herd do not. Some of the deer the city has taken are covered with ticks. 50-100 ticks. Councilmember Peterson is convinced that the deer that are greasy looking or losing the fur are covered in ticks. Councilmember Willis asked why the deer looked so unhealthy? Rod Nielsen, DWR stated when they come into town the deer are not eating a natural diet. It's not unlike when humans eat the wrong things, bodies show it and we suffer for it; deer are the same way. That makes the deer more prone to ticks and other diseases. Councilmember Peterson stated ticks spread disease. When a deer is taken down the ticks release and it's pretty gross. The deer mating cycles are off. There are fawns born in December and January that have been found up frozen against people's back doors in the middle of town. Deer have their fawns in the spring, that is natural, having fawns in the fall and winter is not. The city has taken some very aggressive animals, they are very selective. More people are putting up barriers and fences and have been putting in measures to protect their gardens. All the efforts have been made through volunteer help. The cost to the city was less than \$200. Some cities spend that on 1 animal. Councilmember Thompson asked about the funds the city allocated to the program. Councilmember Peterson stated \$5000 was allocated. The DWR donated bait. He has repaired

some of the traps himself, it has been all volunteers. Councilmember Thompson asked about having open archery hunting in the city? Councilmember Peterson stated he believes if you have enough land then maybe that would be ideal but the only open land the city has is in the south end of the city which is where the deer should be. Councilmember Peterson continued, the city was able to give the DWR much needed information on the animals. He has a long list of people who have signed up to receive the meat. The meat isn't butchered until someone on the list is on the way. Looking back, all the misinformation that was spread may have helped the city's problem. There seemed to be less deer around, but he thinks that is due to humans changing the deer behavior. We witnessed people actually pushing deer out of town. We want the deer to move in and out of town, migration is healthy. Councilmember Willis asked if they had heard previously that other cities had seen this too and that deer had started to figure it out? Rod Nielsen, DWR stated deer do not learn like Elk. You would have to scare them away many days before they learn. Elk respond pretty well but deer will just keep coming back and coming back. It can be done but you would have to do it for weeks on end before you break the habit. The deer have learned generational bad habits. Councilmember Peterson stated there are things the city can do better. Education is one thing which is difficult because any information put out gets twisted and results in comments and threats. He is not tech savvy so he doesn't post on social media but when he gets calls from people he tries to educate them. This is the city's third year, and it is time for renewal and application. If the city is to move forward, it needs to do more education on changing habits of the deer, deer resistant landscaping, legal means to chase them from the property versus harassment, types of fencing, more volunteering and using only law enforcement to put animals down and to keep releasing the fawns. Councilmember Paxton stated she didn't go through any of this due to how long she has been on city council, her question is trapping and how long animals are in the traps and the trauma to the deer. Councilmember Peterson stated he is at a trap within an hour. These are soft walled traps which are also used by the DWR if they want to select animals for tagging. Animals can be released without any trouble. Councilmember Willis stated she had the same concerns: what is a kid got in the trap or a dog, and she went to Councilmember Peterson's home after they were set up and she let the bar fall on her head and it was fine. It was very humane, She didn't feel that they could make a more humane trap. Rod Nielsen, DWR stated whenever you have to mitigate or tag any kind of animal it's not pretty, but they try to give the animal the most respect possible. Animals deserve respect. Earlier in this program, about 10 years ago when they could trap and relocate, the DWR would set traps up at night generally that is when the deer would come in. When they came back for the traps early the next morning to get them the deer would be bedded down and chilling. Councilmember Thompson stated one of the reasons he asked to have this on the agenda is, when they originally voted on this, he voted no he thought it was a bad idea. Everyone is aware of the nightmare and fun with the PETA people and other various Elk Ridge residents which hate this. He respects everything that Councilmember Peterson has to say, and his question is, is this effective? He had read an email from a gentleman that did all the math, and about how many deer are born and the total of the deer population and he came away from that thinking they needed to take way more deer. Is it worth the energy that is being put into it; all the weird flyers, people running around screaming on Facebook saying nasty things. Is all that effort worth 14 deer? Does the city need to make it 150? Councilmember Peterson stated it started out about the numbers but to him it's more about safety. When you get the phone call that there is a lady that is scared to death because

a deer is pushing kids around, to remove that deer is a huge thing. Councilmember Thompson said that deer needs to go. Rod Nielsen, DWR stated one of the problems Elk Ridge has is the city is only permitted to remove deer for the month of August because where Elk Ridge is located near the foothills. What the DWR has found through the tagging program is deer start coming down from the mountains in September into Elk Ridge. The DWR limits the amount of time to one month to protect the migratory herd. Removing 10 deer in 30 days is pretty good. Unless the city gets more traps and a lot more volunteers, removing more will be hard. Councilmember Thompson asked what if there is a deer pushing a kid around in May. Rod Nielsen, DWR stated the city would call the DWR. Councilmember Thompson asked if aggressive deer can be removed at any time is it worth the trouble to do the mitigation? Is removing 14 deer worth the trouble and going to make any difference? Rod Nielsen, DWR stated if there are 14 problem deer, absolutely. If you have a problem deer in May, yes, they can come and address it but there are 5 people for the whole central region, manpower is at a premium. That is why the program was developed so that cities are able to do it themselves. Councilmember Willis asked Ron Nielsen, DWR if he recommends the city continue. Rod Nielsen, DWR stated yes, it's easy for him to say yes because he is not the one taking the wrath that council is taking, but yes, he recommends continuing. Councilmember Peterson stated he is taking all the wrath, there is a website that totally slanders him and that is fine. Councilmember Willis stated they have gone after Councilmember Peterson's business. Rod Nielsen, DWR stated it is hard but educating residents is still key. He had a phone call last week from an irate resident of Elk Ridge who went on for 5 minutes nonstop about all the things that he heard and that was going on and Rod Nielsen, DWR asked the resident to give him a moment to tell him what was really going on. He told him that everything the resident said was totally inaccurate and the farthest from the truth. He remembers when all this started and people were convinced that they were never ever going to see another deer in Elk Ridge, they were convinced that all the big bucks around here would be gone. Time has proven that didn't happen. You are not going to convince everybody, but a good percentage of the population, once they understand it, you may win some more people over. It is a good program, you are providing meat for families, but it isn't easy, it takes a lot of work. Councilmember Peterson can tell you there are quite a few things that are required. Councilmember Peterson stated he started this due to complaints and witnessing issues. He didn't want to get a phone call when it was someone's kid, and he sat here and did nothing. Councilmember Wixom stated continuing the mitigation is a safety issue for the city in order to reduce predators and educating residents is important in order to do this. Councilmember Peterson stated he lives right in the middle of town, and he has cougar prints in his yard. There was a deer kill that was eaten by a cougar 2 doors from his home. Councilmember Paxton asked if the city is taking care of the problem deer throughout the year should we be trapping and killing healthy deer? Councilmember Peterson stated the ones being removed in August are the problem deer, he isn't just setting up traps randomly, he is focusing on problem deer. Councilmember Paxton asked how do you know it's the problem deer. Councilmember Peterson stated there are usually pictures taken of the deer. He's not saying that he hasn't taken a deer that isn't the problem, but people recognize the deer that are always in their yard. Councilmember Willis stated the city was told originally to take everything that was trapped and the council said no. Rod Nielsen, DWR stated that was the city's decision. There are 2 types of deer; there are urban deer and wild deer. Any deer that is inside a residential area in August is considered an urban deer.

The habit of deer, as an adult, is they will have their fawn underneath the same bush or tree every year. Those fawns recognize Elk Ridge as their home and they have their fawns here. When people say take them back up the mountain where they belong or came from; they have never been out of town, this is their home and that is what we are trying to work on. During the winter the wild deer come down from the mountain to their winter range which is here. When spring comes, they go back up on the mountain. Councilmember Peterson stated he focuses on the complaints that deal with safety issues not eating landscaping. Councilmember Wixom stated getting rid of unhealthy deer due to the ticks and the diseases they spread are just as important. Councilmember Willis asked Councilmember Peterson what he needed from them tonight. Councilmember Peterson stated he needs more help with volunteers. He would like a motion to proceed if they are going to so that he can get the application in and have the time to get more educational materials. The city needs to educate people to change human behavior so that they can change deer behavior. To get the renewal it has to go through the city council. He could use help with educational information; everyone has a part in all of this. This is a tool for residents to call in with legitimate problems. The reality is the city can't relocate them, it's causing a problem, and I don't want to get that phone call where some kid has been badly hurt. He is going to vote to remove a deer instead of a phone call. Councilmember Willis stated Councilmember Peterson is not just voting, he is giving up sleep, time, he is taking people aggressively attacking him online, showing up at his door, he is not just voting he is doing it. Councilmember Thompson restated again that is my question is it worth doing because of this. Councilmember Peterson stated yes, it is; my home has been stalked, my family members, he has had so far 6 death threats, most of this happened the first year. There are blasts on social media against his business even. Councilmember Willis stated she had cars following her children.

COUNCILMEMBER WIXOM MOTIONED TO RENEW THE CERTIFICATE OF
REMEDATION COUNCILMEMBER WILLIS SECONDED

VOTE	AYE (3)	NAY (2)	Approved
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Councilmember Thompson and Paxton voted nay

Mayor Haddock asked if Councilmember Peterson could give him an update on the Elk. Councilmember Peterson stated this has nothing to do with mitigation. He has been part of a group that has been discussing the Elk herds. There are 2 elk herds, one that winter on the BYU farm that is turning into houses and one herd that winters here. Through tagging and data analysis they can see the herds don't cross over Payson Canyon Road. This group consists of city staff and council members from various cities, golf course people, developers, landowners, farmers, dream mine property people, etc. to develop a strategy of what to do with the elk. Through development the traditional elk grounds are disappearing. They are working on education, and the city will need to come up with a strategy. We don't need to have the elk herds roaming through residential neighborhoods and downtown areas like in Colorado. Conservation measures need to be put in place. Ron Alexander is the contact regarding conservation. The Dream Mine has put all their property into an agricultural protected zone. The city may have to put in code towards human behavior to protect the elk and the residents. You do not want an Elk in your back yard. It is a

fine line between property rights and conservation. 3 Bridges development is actively changing some of the design to help in the elk migration.

2. APPOINT PLANNING COMMISSIONER MEMBERS: DIANNE SCHULTZ AND MARIANNE BINGHAM

COUNCILMEMBER PAXTON MOTIONED TO APPOINT DIANNE SCHULTZ AND MARIANNE BINGHAM (ALTERNATE) TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION
COUNCILMEMBER WILLIS SECONDED

VOTE	AYE (5)	NAY (0)	Approved
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3. BUDGET AMENDMENT MOTION FOR STORM WATER ENGINEERING ANALYSIS FOR LIGHTHOUSE SUBDIVISION

Mayor Haddock stated there was a poll vote taken on this so that it could get started.

COUNCILMEMBER WILLIS MOTIONED TO MOVE THIS TO PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE BUDGET AMENDMENT FOR \$25,000 THE STORM WATER ENGINEERING ANALYSIS FOR LIGHTHOUSE COUNCILMEMBER THOMPSON SECONDED

Ratifying the poll vote

VOTE	AYE(5)	NAY (0)	Approved
Councilmember Wixom	AYE		
Councilmember Thompson	AYE		
Councilmember Peterson	AYE		
Councilmember Willis	AYE		
Councilmember Paxton	AYE		

4. AMBLEVIEW STORAGE UNITS PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT AND COUNTY AGREEMENT

Mayor Haddock stated this is the performance agreement for the commercial area. The county has not sent their agreement with the city yet. The cost estimates are verified through Jerry Clark, Public Works Director, and the developer. The 2 items the council needs to look at are the reimbursement to the city for infrastructure installed during the Loafer Mountain Parkway project and the water shares. There is \$80,000 to be reimbursed which is the water line. The rest needs to come through during the development of the corner parcel. The water line is something that the developer would have had to put in. The city needs to record something on the property stating that funds need to be reimbursed to the city just in case Ryan Bybee, Cadence Homes, decides to sell the property. Royce Swensen stated the county had the developer give the trail property to the county for right of way, but Elk Ridge will have to maintain it. Without that right of way to the county they would not let the developer proceed. Elk Ridge wants an agreement that if the county decides to widen that road that Elk Ridge be in the discussion. Council will review this again in 2 weeks.

COUNCILMEMBER THOMPSON MOTIONED TO ADJOURN COUNCILMEMBER WILLIS SECONDED

VOTE	AYE (5)	NAY (0)	Approved
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Laura Oliver