



# Sandy City Council Office

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## MEMORANDUM

March 12, 2024

To: City Council Members

CC: Dustin Fratto, Council Executive Director

From: Zach Robinson, Council District 3  
Marci Houseman, Council District 4

Subject: Proposal to develop Council Budget Priorities for the FY25 Budget

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### Proposal:

We propose that on April 9, 2024, in lieu of a regular city council meeting, the council conduct a City Council Budget Priorities Workshop.

### Purpose and Outcomes:

The primary purpose of this workshop is to develop a cohesive set of high-level city council budget priorities for the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) budget. The secondary purpose is to develop a tool that the council can use to help us evaluate budget requests. The priorities and tool can be used as a lens through which the council can examine the Tentative Budget and departmental budget requests leading up to the adoption of the final budget for FY25.

### Process:

1. Tonight, we request that the council answer the following questions and/or approve our recommendations:
  - a. Approve holding a council budget priorities workshop, as described herein.
  - b. Approve April 9th as the date of the workshop.
  - c. Approve conducting the workshop in the multipurpose room.
  - d. Approve selecting an outside facilitator as described herein.
  - e. Decide which “norms” or “rules” should be adopted for the workshop.
2. Council staff will work with Council Members Houseman and Robinson to select and hire (if necessary) a workshop facilitator.
3. The workshop will be held on the selected date.
  - a. Council staff and Council Members Robinson and Houseman will work with the facilitator to design a budget priorities exercise that both serves the purposes and adheres to the “norms” defined herein.

### Suggested date and time for workshop:

We believe in being purposeful throughout this process. We feel that it is important that the council set aside a meeting date specifically for this workshop. We propose that a council meeting in April be set

aside for this purpose and our recommended date is April 9th. Should that date be selected, we propose that no other agenda items be placed on that evening's agenda. We expect the workshop to last approximately four hours. We suggest that the council begin a little earlier than normal that evening if possible. Our recommendation is a start time of 4:30 PM.

Suggested location of workshop:

We feel that it is important the workshop be conducted somewhere that allows for both casual conversation around a conference table as well as moving around as necessary, our suggestion is that the council sit with a facilitator around a small conference table. For this reason, we propose that the workshop be held in the multipurpose room at City Hall. In the interest of allowing casual and open conversation and to allow flexibility for the facilitator, we recommend that the council forego the use of microphones during the workshop.

Suggested Facilitator:

We propose that an outside facilitator be brought in. We believe that someone with knowledge of local government who is unaffiliated with the city will allow for the most effective process. We've held conversations with the current city manager of a Utah City who regularly consults with municipalities around the country on strategic planning and budget prioritization. We would like the council to allow us to work with Council Staff to hire an outside facilitator.

Workshop "norms" or "rules":

We believe that prior to the workshop the council should agree upon a series of norms or rules for the workshop. These can encompass any process that we agree should be followed during the discussion. We propose the following norms:

1. The intention of this workshop is for the Council to establish Council budget priorities for FY25. While other city representatives and the public may attend and observe the workshop, only members of the council and the facilitator will be participants.
2. Discussion on priorities should be "high level." It should focus on budget priority categories, themes, and intentions, but not council members' individual priorities themselves.
3. When appropriate the facilitator should implement the "Fist to Five Protocol," as described in Exhibit "A" of this memorandum. We believe that utilizing this protocol when selecting our council priorities will result in the most accurate depiction of the priorities of the body. It will also allow council members to express their opinion on a topic using a gradient as opposed to only a yes or a no.
4. During discussion on each topic, no council member will have the opportunity to speak a second time until every other member has had the opportunity to speak once.

Exhibit "A"

(See next page)

# Fist to Five Voting and Consensus

**Fist to Five is quality voting.** It has the elements of consensus built in and can prepare groups to transition into consensus if they wish. Most people are accustomed to the simplicity of "yes" and "no" voting rather than the complex and more community-oriented consensus method of decision making. Fist to Five introduces the element of the quality of the "yes." A fist is a "no" and any number of fingers is a "yes," with an indication of how good a "yes" it is. This moves a group away from quantity voting to quality voting, which is considerably more informative. Fist to Five can also be used during consensus decision making as a way to check the "sense of the group," or to check the quality of the consensus.

**Fist to Five is accomplished by raising hands as in voting, with the number of fingers raised that indicates level of agreement.**

- **A fist** means, "I vote NO." or in consensus it means, "I object and will block consensus (usually on moral grounds)."

- **1 finger** means, "I'll just barely go along." or, "I don't like this but it's not quite a no." or, "I think there is lots more work to do on this proposal." In consensus this indicates standing aside, or not being in agreement but not blocking the consensus.

- **2 fingers** means "I don't much like this but I'll go along."

- **3 fingers** means, "I'm in the middle somewhere. Like some of it, but not all."

- **4 fingers** means, "This is fine."

- **5 fingers** means, "I like this a lot, I think it's the best possible decision."

## **Fist to Five Process:**

1. When a proposal has been brought before a group, it has been well discussed and refined as needed, a vote for passage is taken.

2. People raise their hands with the number of fingers that indicate their degree of agreement with the proposal. Hands are held VERY high and the room is scanned by all. That way everyone is checking the sense of the room and not individual opinions.

3. The vote can stand as taken, with all fists and fingers counted, the majority winning. Or, people with fists and one finger can be asked to speak to their objections and offer possible solutions to overcome their objections. This is attempted, and then a second and final vote is taken, which is the final vote.

4. It is often wise to check early in the proposal dialogue, as sometimes a group is actually ready for consensus or a vote earlier than expected and a lot of time can be saved. An early check might find all 4 and 5 fingers except for two 1's, meaning the proposal would be voted in, or in the case of consensus, no one would block consensus and only two people have needs to be met. Only those people then speak and their objections addressed which saves a lot of time.

5. A low quality vote (lots of 1s, 2s and 3s) tells you the decision is probably a stop gap measure and will need to be watched closely or revisited soon. It is generally wise to attach a date for review to a decision that is low in quality. Some groups find it saves time in the end to not accept a vote that is affirmative but primarily 1s and 2s as the proposal is generally troublesome and comes up again anyway.

6. If it is obvious that the vote is wildly split, with no real majority, despite a winning "yes," the group knows it has more work to do, and that the decision may not endure. They can expect more controversy and know a plan must be made to address the polarized views.

7. When Fist to Five has been used for a while, a transition to consensus, if desired, is quite easy.