

LUDLOW COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES

June 29, 2026

Mayor Sarah Thompson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Laurie Sparks called the roll, which showed the following council members present: Steve Chapman, Meagan Guthrie, Julie Terry Navarre, and Paula Graszus. David Ziegler was absent.

ALSO ATTENDING: City Attorney Michelle Eviston, City Attorney Zach Smith, City Clerk Laurie Sparks, Budget Consultant Steve Bodde

Mayor Thompson addressed council from the podium speaking as a resident of Ludlow rather than as the mayor. Mayor Thompson expressed concerns about council passing a budget that would eliminate free events, the Hollingsworth Field lights, upgrades to the community center, and improvements to the business district, along with cuts to the administration, police, and public works departments. Mayor Thompson discussed the City's reserves and advised that her proposed budget would maintain \$1.5 million in savings, which is four months of operating expenses. Mayor Thompson stated that she believes that saving for tomorrow is important, but you can't save so much that you aren't investing in today. Mayor Thompson asked council to make a decision on the budget that best serves the people of Ludlow and encouraged residents to speak up and contact their elected officials.

CITIZENS WISHING TO ADDRESS MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Aleta Bergsman, 23 Butler Street, expressed the need for the City to have a five-to-ten-year master plan. Ms. Bergsman advised that she understands that council doesn't want to take too much out of the reserves, but as owner of the Ludlow Tavern, she would like to see taxpayers' money reinvested in the business district.

Van Collins, 212 Stokesay Street, has been a member of the Ludlow Fire Department for over forty years and stated that he believes the fire department needs to evolve like the departments in other local cities. Mr. Collins discussed the lack of available volunteers and requested that the City hire additional paid staff to offer the level of protection the residents deserve.

Samantha Matthews Frank, 2 Euclid Street, advised that she requested a new dump truck for the public works department when she was on council three years ago. Ms. Frank asked council to spend the money and purchase a new dump truck.

Nathan Wells, 444 Oak Street, stated that if Ludlow is a body he doesn't want it to be anemic. Mr. asked council to fund the Emergency Medical Services and rejuvenation around the city.

Nikki Shibaba (sp?), 251 Deverill Street, discussed concerns about the cuts council is proposing to the budget and inquired about the plan for sticking to the budget. Ms. Shibaba stated that she is strongly opposed to cuts to community events, programming, and parks maintenance. Ms. Shibaba advised that she would like to see investment in providing more communal spaces for the city's youth and possibly invest in a full-time youth coordinator for the community center.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Discussion on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027

Mr. Chapman advised that he was in favor of the mayor's budget. Mr. Chapman advised that while the budget's expenditures exceed revenues, he believes there is enough money in the reserves to cover the difference and maintain a healthy balance. Ms. Guthrie advised that she has concerns about the fund balance and the overspending that has occurred in the City over the past several years. Ms. Guthrie discussed the changes in her proposed budget compared to the mayor's proposed budget and advised that she did not recommend any changes to salaries, with the exception of adding three full-time paramedics at the Fire Department beginning July 1, 2026. Mayor Thompson reminded council that council sets the budget, but the mayor decides how the funds are spent. Discussion on the budget process, the determination on how the cuts would be implemented, and the impact on each department. Ms. Guthrie recommended that council adopt the budget she presented and in January, sit down and discuss developing a five-year plan. Discussion on the impact of cuts to the administration budget in Ms. Guthrie's budget, including the immediate loss of an administrative employee. Ms. Eviston advised that council has the option of a second reading on either or both budgets presented by Mayor Thompson and Ms. Guthrie. If a budget is not passed by June 30, 2026, the City will continue to operate under the current budget. Ms. Terry Navarre recommended that council not pass a budget that evening and suggested they start the process over and try to compromise. Ms. Guthrie recommended passing her budget that evening and amending it later. Mayor Thompson recommended moving forward with the budget she presented and amending it next month to include the addition of three full-time paramedics and Stryker equipment. Ms. Graszus expressed concern that everyone was too far apart to vote on a budget that evening and would need to come back and compromise. Ms. Eviston advised that council could make a decision to read the ordinances as presented or table them.

Following discussion, Mayor Thompson asked for a motion for a vote on the budget she presented. **Motion by Mr. Chapman to call up the Mayor's version of the budget outlined in Ordinance 2026-9 (calling for revenues of \$6,046,730 and expenses of \$6,400,610) for a second reading. Motion died for lack of a second.**

Motion by Ms. Guthrie to call up her version of the budget outlined in Ordinance 2026-9 (calling for revenues of \$6,046,730 and expenses of \$6,038,730) for a second reading. Motion died for lack of a second.

Motion by Ms. Terry Navarre, seconded by Mr. Chapman, to table the discussion on the budget for fiscal year 2026-2027 for a future council meeting. Following a voice vote, motion carried: all ayes.

Motion by Ms. Terry Navarre, seconded by Ms. Graszus, to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Sparks, City Clerk

Attest: _____
Sarah Thompson, Mayor