

MINUTES OF THE COTTONWOOD HEIGHTS CITY COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE HELD MONDAY, JANUARY 5, 2026, AT 3:00 PM IN THE COTTONWOOD HEIGHTS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS LOCATED AT 2277 EAST BENGAL BOULEVARD, COTTONWOOD HEIGHTS, UTAH

Members Present: Mayor-Elect Gay Lynn Bennion, Council Member Shawn Newell, Council Member Suzanne Hyland, Council Member Matt Holton

Staff Present: City Manager, Jared Gerber; City Attorney, Shane Topham; Police Chief, Robby Russo; Financial Services Director, Scott Jorges; Human Resources Director, Barbara Higgins; City Recorder, Tiffany Janzen; Community and Economic Development Director, Jim Spung; IT Manager, Matt Ervin; Public Works Director, Matt Shipp; Master of Ceremonies, Karen Morgan

1.0 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES (KAREN MORGAN) – City Manager, Jared Gerber.

City Manager, Jared Gerber, called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM and welcomed those present and recognized their shared commitment to public service, civic engagement, and the future of Cottonwood Heights. He expressed gratitude to the City’s elected officials, staff, family members, community residents, and others who took the time to be part of the swearing-in ceremony. He then introduced Master of Ceremonies, former State Senator, Karen Morgan.

Senator Morgan welcomed those present and stated that those involved in Cottonwood Heights’ incorporation had high hopes, but the City exceeded their greatest dreams.

2.0 POSTING OF COLORS – Cottonwood Heights Police Department.

The Color Guard from the Cottonwood Heights Police Department Posted the Colors.

3.0 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Council Member Matt Holton.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Council Member Holton.

4.0 REMARKS– Council Member Suzanne Hyland.

Council Member Hyland stated that it was wonderful to see so many people in attendance at the ceremony. Last year, unconscionable political violence happened in Utah, and it was refreshing to participate in a peaceful transition of power and be reminded of the 250th anniversary of the United States, a great nation that celebrates freedom, equality, and the pursuit of happiness.

In her two years on the City Council, Council Member Hyland has been grateful for the Council’s civil and dignified discussions. She expressed gratitude for her Council colleagues, as well as former Mayor Mike Weichers and Mayor-Elect Bennion, and their commitment to acting with civility. Every human life deserves dignity, and she asked that everyone continue to respect and give each other grace. She looks forward to serving the City together with her Council colleagues.

5.0 MUSICAL NUMBER – Brighton High School Choir.

The Brighton High School Choir performed a musical number.

6.0 ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE TO NEWLY ELECTED MAYOR AND COUNCILMEMBERS – City Recorder, Tiffany Janzen.

City Recorder, Tiffany Janzen, swore in the following newly-elected officials:

- Shawn Newell, representing Council District 3;
- Ellen Birrell, representing Council District 4; and
- Mayor-Elect, Gay Lynn Bennion.

The Oath of Office was administered.

6.1 REMARKS – Council Member Shawn E Newell - Cottonwood Heights Council District 3.

Council Member Newell expressed his appreciation for being able to serve his constituents. He has been involved in community and state work for many years, and his time on the Cottonwood Heights City Council has been a great opportunity to grow and learn. He has great pride in the City and will continue to devote himself to the community and work collaboratively with residents, the Council, City committees, and others. As Council Member Hyland mentioned, it is important to remember your humanity no matter where you are in life. It is his pleasure to serve the community, and he encouraged anyone with questions or concerns to contact him.

6.2 REMARKS - Council Member Ellen Birrell – Cottonwood Heights Council District 4.

Council Member Birrell was moved by the number of people in attendance. She recalled when Senator Morgan took office; getting older gives you a real appreciation for where you can go and the power of doing things together. She thanked Mayor Weichers for his four years of service to the City. They did not always see things the same way, but they often found common ground, and she hopes that everyone continues to find things they agree on and show compassion for those in the community who may be struggling.

In her four years on the Council, Council Member Birrell has seen a great deal of blight in Cottonwood Heights due to residents struggling with the cost of water and other essential services and goods. Together, the community can find ways to meet the extreme challenges of the 21st century. She worked in the ski industry for 20 years and understands what challenges like the warmer-than-average December mean for the industry. Humans must face the fact that air, water, and soil are necessities. Economic development and other ways to bring prosperity to the community are important, but it is equally important to not lose sight of the things that sustain all

living creatures. She is excited to work together with everyone in the community and believes that if you look for the best in each other, you will find it.

6.3 REMARKS – Mayor Gay Lynn Bennion.

Mayor Bennion thanked everyone for their support. This was her fourth election in six years, and many of those present had participated in those efforts. She thanked all constituents who had called and emailed with questions, as those interactions made her a better, more informed person. Whether residents supported her in the past or not, she will be their Mayor and her office will always be open to them. She will hold open office hours every Friday from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., and all citizens are welcome to attend and share their concerns with her.

Mayor Bennion thanked her family. She and her husband have been together for almost 40 years, including 26 years in the Air Force. She is also grateful for her children and grandchildren, as well as her parents, Donald and Joy Chisholm, and siblings. Her parents taught them to work hard, play hard, forgive each other, and embrace life fully. Alain de Botton said that evidence of good parenting is that your child has no desire to be famous. She has no desire to be famous but she does have a desire to serve and make the community better for everyone, and she has been able to succeed due to the support of the people around her.

When her family moved back to Utah 14 years ago, a neighbor, Suzanne Mulet, introduced Mayor Bennion to the Women’s State Legislative Council of Utah, where she served for seven years and learned about the state legislature. When Representative Marie Poulson announced that she was retiring, people encouraged Mayor Bennion to run for office. Groups like the Women’s State Legislative Council are desperately needed, as they allow citizens to learn more about the process and become involved. Members of the group include Cottonwood Heights residents Bette Voorhees, Donna Murphy, and Lorraine Turner.

Mayor Bennion thanked the City’s past mayors. Kelvyn Cullimore worked with minimal staff to carry the City through very important times and had the vision to create the City Hall building. Mike Peterson led Cottonwood Heights through the pandemic and was instrumental in completing Big Cottonwood Canyon Trail. Mike Weichers led the effort to begin work on the Town Center, which has been part of the General Plan for 20 years. She also thanked the City Council, who will guide and help her as she learns more about running the City. She knows they will collaborate and have great unity and strength together.

As Council Member Birrell mentioned, Mayor Bennion sees the area’s changing climate as one of the City’s greatest challenges. She believes the City can rise to the challenge of addressing water conservation to preserve the Great Salt Lake and can make its buildings and homes more fire-resistant. Another challenge is that of misinformation and artificial intelligence. It is important to double-check information against trusted sources to ensure that we make good choices for our families and community and are not being led astray by misinformation.

Cottonwood Heights is an amazing community, and some of the brightest individuals in the state live here. She is honored to serve as Mayor. However, the City faces a financial challenge. For the past seven years, reserves have been accessed to balance the budget. The City is at a point

where it must raise revenues. It is important that the staff and resources are available to prepare the City for the Town Center, as well as development of the Gravel Pit and Old Mill areas. The City Council and Staff are a team, and the Council must support City Staff at this critical time. The Police and Fire Departments are ready to help the City at any time, and it is a basic function of society to provide safety for citizens.

Mayor Bennion was excited to work with City citizens. She has worked with residents as a State Representative, and now she is happy to focus on Cottonwood Heights and what can be achieved together. She will lead a book group in March, August, and November of each year. The first book is *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When the Stakes are High*. Cottonwood Heights was built on a foundation of citizen leadership and engagement, and she wants to help that flourish.

The individuals who laid the foundation for the City include Karen Morgan, who was the area's State Representative in 1999. At that time, the Salt Lake County Commission was working to incorporate all unincorporated areas, and surrounding cities were considering annexing parts of what would become Cottonwood Heights. In 1999, Gordon Nicholl, then-president of the Cottonwood Heights Community Council, and attorney Kit Lindsey spearheaded the effort to conduct a feasibility study to incorporate the City. In partnership with Senator Morgan, they worked against opposition to gather signatures and convince the County Council to conduct the feasibility study. Senator Morgan said, "I will never forget how excited the three of us were as we finally delivered all the necessary information to the Salt Lake County offices by the deadline. We were relieved when our request for a feasibility study was granted. We were thrilled in May 2002 when the County's final report indicated that it was feasible for our area to incorporate. An incorporation committee was established to move the potential city's creation forward. In May 2004, nearly 85% of the citizens in this area voted overwhelmingly in favor of incorporation, and Cottonwood Heights was incorporated on January 14, 2005 with Kelvyn Cullimore as the first mayor." Mayor Bennion hopes to continue fostering that type of citizen involvement, as citizens' expertise and engagement will help the City Council.

Plaques were presented honoring Mr. Nicholl and Mr. Lindsey's contributions to the City.

Mayor Bennion thanked Senator Morgan for being an example to women in leadership. Society has been led by men for centuries, and only in the last 50 years have women moved into leadership positions. Senator Morgan opened the door for Mayor Bennion and other women to serve.

Mayor Bennion thanked Mr. Nicholl for his contributions to the City. He was one of the first paramedics in Utah and served as president of the Cottonwood Heights Community Council. His daughter, Kris Nicholl, was sworn in earlier that day as a Sandy City Council member.

Mr. Nicholl stated that he and Mayor Cullimore worked closely with other members of the incorporation committee and spent many hours working to form the City of Cottonwood Heights. They love the community and want it to thrive and grow.

Senator Morgan remarked that she believes Cottonwood Heights is the greatest city in Utah, and that is due to the efforts of the City's leaders and staff. She thanked Mayor Bennion and the City Council for their willingness to serve, dedication, and commitment to the community.

7.0 ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 3:40 PM.