



MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
FROM: Sean Rabé, City Manager
DATE: September 22, 2025
SUBJECT: City Manager Report for the September 22nd City Council Meeting

Mayor and Council Members,

The following report provides an update on some of the major activities City Staff has been working on recently:

City Manager's Department:

City Hall Reorganization Complete

As Council remembers, I proposed (and Council approved) a reorganization of several City Hall departments back in June, to enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of City service delivery. This reorganization included the following changes:

- Splitting the Community Development Department into two separate departments: Economic Development and Planning. This change necessitated several personnel changes:
 - Reclassifying Jonathan Wright to Economic Development Director, and reclassifying Tia Klumpp to Planning Director
 - The addition of a new Associate Planner position
 - Shifting the Community Development Department's Administrative Specialist to the City Manager's Department and eliminating one Administrative Assistant position in the City Manager's Department
- Reclassifying the City Clerk to a new position of City Clerk/Management Analyst
- The reclassification of a Finance Technician position to a new Administrative Services Technician classification
- The reclassification of an Engineering Technician II to a new Project Manager classification
- The reclassification of an Equipment Operator position to a revised Public Works Supervisor classification

All of these changes have been implemented and all positions have been filled. We have also modified the City Manager office to accommodate the Economic Development Director, bringing that position closer to my office for increased

communication. I believe the changes have increased our efficiency as an organization and have fostered better service delivery to our residents, businesses and visitors.

Planning Department:

Ember-Resistant Zone (Zone 0)

Back in February, Governor Newsom issued an Executive Order directing the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to speed up adoption of new ember-resistant regulations. These rules are now close to being finalized and will soon apply across California.

Here in Auburn, we got a head start. In July 2024, the City adopted the Ember-Resistant Zone, which is part of our Fuel Modification Standards. This means that any new home or structure built after July 10, 2024, must have a five-foot “clear zone” around the building—free of plants, mulch, or other combustible materials. This important safety step will be checked before final occupancy is approved.

Over the past year, we've been working with the community to share information about these requirements. Thanks to our new permitting software, we'll now be able to get the word out even more easily. Every new single-family home or ADU permit will automatically come with a handout that explains the Ember-Resistant Zone requirements, along with helpful tips for creating a safe, ember-resistant space around your home. This handout will be provided along with the smoke detector and carbon monoxide (CO₂) requirements you're already familiar with.

Inspection Schedule

The daily Inspection schedule is now available online! The Inspection route is posted after 8:00 am each day. You can view it on the City's website here: [Daily Inspection Schedule](#)

Economic Development:

Cannabis Workshop Reminder

Don't forget to join us this Wednesday for the City's virtual cannabis workshop. We'll be discussing potential benefits, concerns, and impacts of allowing retail cannabis in Auburn, and want to hear your input. More information is available on the City's website as well as the link to attend.

Wayfinding Signage Update

The large gateway signs for Auburn's historic districts were delayed due to manufacturing challenges and costly engineering requirements for wind load. After several months of adjustments, the signs were redesigned at a more practical size that can be produced more easily and supported by standard posts. Installation of at least some of the signs is expected in the coming weeks.

Finance Department:

Preliminary General Fund Surplus

As the Finance Department finishes the accounting and financial reporting that are required before closing out the prior fiscal year that ended June 30, 2025, the status of the General Fund surplus has emerged with preliminary results. For the past several months, the surplus was estimated to be in the range of \$450k - \$550k for the foreseeable future. This information was used to comfortably approve labor agreements and a staff re-organization that was effective July 1, 2025, which consumed about \$357k of the surplus. The latest surplus for the General Fund is now closer to \$625k (minus \$357k) leaving a little more on the table for ongoing considerations. There is also a one-time surplus of \$1.1 million that will immediately help fund existing capital projects, repairs, and unavoidable costs while leaving additional funds for prioritization later this Spring. One-time surplus amounts cannot be used for ongoing needs but are a valuable resource for capital improvement and strategic plans.

Funding Unfunded Liabilities

During staff's analysis of how best to utilize the \$1 million earmarked in the FY 2025-26 budget toward unfunded pension liabilities, CalPERS announced an 11.6% return on their investments. CalPERS will also meet later this calendar year on an experience study which will incorporate life expectancies and other liability-adjusting factors such as the discount rate currently at 6.8%. It is anticipated the investment returns will greatly improve the unfunded liability totals for local governments; however, other competing factors could offset those improvements in the opposite direction. Due to the upcoming CalPERS activity, staff have been advised to hold off on recommending use of the \$1 million until the Spring of 2026. Staff are planning to incorporate this topic into the Mid-Year Financial Update and include a brief presentation from NHA Advisors, the City's municipal advisor, on what's changed since the issuance of the City's pension obligation bond in 2021.

Fire Department:

Auburn Fire Department - Staffing Update

The Auburn Fire Department is currently facing a critical staffing deficit, with six available personnel covering nine must-fill seats. A new firefighter, hired to backfill a position vacant since July 16th, is tentatively expected to begin during the first pay period in October. The hiring process took approximately 10 weeks to complete, including background, medical, and psychological evaluations and is still ongoing. The other two personnel have been off duty since late August and early September due to musculoskeletal injuries and are expected to remain off for an extended period. In the meantime, line personnel have been working diligently to maintain staffing levels. Chief Officers continue to monitor their crews for signs of fatigue and are taking steps

to prevent further injuries that could worsen staffing challenges. To provide additional support, JOA staffing has been utilized to help cover shifts as needed and for the month of September. Approximately 20% of September's vacant shifts have been filled by outside agency personnel.

Auburn Fire Department – Collaboration on Firefighter Testing

Chief D'Ambrogi, Justin Orton, and Kim Wilson recently met with representatives from the Placer Hills Fire Protection District to develop a joint firefighter testing process. Currently, both agencies conduct separate testing, which requires significant staff time and is duplicative. Many candidates apply to both agencies, seeking to improve their chances of obtaining a career in the fire service.

By collaborating, the two agencies can pool resources and improve efficiency. This is a common practice in the fire service, with agencies such as Grass Valley Fire Department, Nevada City Fire Department, and Nevada County Fire Protection District successfully using joint processes across multiple ranks. Auburn Fire looks forward to implementing this practice to maximize resources and streamline operations.

Public Works Department:

Annual Unmet Transit Needs Assessment

Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA) is currently conducting its annual unmet transit needs assessment process, which launched with a survey that is available now through October 31st. Each year, PCTPA asks members of the public throughout Placer County to submit comments regarding their potential transit needs that are not being met by existing public transit services provided in the region. These comments are evaluated with transit operators and local transportation stakeholders based on specific criteria established by PCTPA's Board of Directors. Even if comments do not fully meet the criteria established by PCTPA's Board, they help inform our transit operators about potential service and operational improvement opportunities, which are considered in the region's short- and long-range transit planning efforts. The available survey can be found online at PCTPA's website: www.pctpa.net/unmet-transit-needs, or you can submit your transit questions and comments to Mike Costa at mcosta@pctpa.net through October 31st.

Human Resources:

September Work Anniversaries!

We proudly acknowledge the team members who help make the City of Auburn a great place to live and work. Your dedication, passion, and hard work strengthen our community and inspire those around you.

This August, we recognize these outstanding employees for reaching their milestones:

- ◆ **Alex Lawton** – 6 years of service
- ◆ **Tameko Silva** – 4 years of service
- ◆ **Timothy Monelo** – 2 years of service

Thank you for your continued contributions! You make City of Auburn better place every day. Here's to many more years of success and celebration!

QUESTIONS? Please contact me at the phone number below or by email at srabe@auburn.ca.gov.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sean Rabé".

Sean Rabé, City Manager