

# SPORTS

Q&A » SALT LAKE CITY MAYOR ERIN MENDENHALL

## SLC's mayor was worried about losing the Utah Jazz

She discusses the proposed stadium district, a potential raise and future of Smith's Ballpark.

By ANDY LARSEN

The Salt Lake Tribune

Salt Lake City Mayor Erin Mendenhall took office at the beginning of 2020, and her four years in office have seen innumerable changes to Utah's capital city and the world around it. Mendenhall, though, has maintained relatively strong support, winning the 2023 mayoral race against Rocky Anderson by a 58% to 34% margin.

Two newer proposed expenditures, though, have brought more scrutiny to the mayor's office in recent weeks. The first is straightforward: Mendenhall is proposing a raise for her own position from \$168,000 to \$212,000, a 26% increase.

More significant is the proposed half-a-percentage-point sales tax increase — a proposal that would send \$54 million per year of taxpayer money to the Smith Entertainment Group's

development of a sports, entertainment, culture, and convention district to the east of the Delta Center. The Tribune's Robert Gehrke estimated the burden to be about \$221 per year per Salt Lake City household.

The development's participation agreement, though, is still being negotiated, with major questions remaining on what the deal will include. Mendenhall, along with SEG, the City Council,

Photo by MENDENHALL, B2



Salt Lake City Mayor Erin Mendenhall is shown during a meeting about the Smith Entertainment Group's proposed downtown sports and entertainment district on May 7.

TRENT NELSON The Salt Lake Tribune



RICK EGAN The Salt Lake Tribune

Utah Prep junior JJ Mandaquit has received offers to play college basketball from nearly two dozen schools, including Utah and BYU.

## Assisting a legend

Utah Prep's JJ Mandaquit helped basketball icon Kareem Abdul-Jabbar select this season's NBA Social Justice Champion Award winner.

By ALEX VEJAR

The Salt Lake Tribune

**Murray** — It's not every day a teenager gets to work closely with an NBA legend. But that's exactly the opportunity JJ Mandaquit got earlier this month.

Mandaquit helped Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and others choose the NBA's Social Justice Champion Award, which is named after the Los Angeles Lakers legend who won six titles and six MVP awards in his career. Minnesota Timberwolves center Karl-Anthony Towns received the accolade.

Mandaquit said the lesson he took from the experience was growing comfortable stepping out of his comfort zone and learning new things.

"I think everyone kind of just lives on the surface level and doesn't really dig deeper into stuff," Mandaquit said.

Mandaquit is a junior at Utah Prep, a high-level basketball academy formerly known as RSL Academy. This school year, he participated in the Jr. NBA Court of Leaders, a program for highly recruited boys' and girls' basketball players who are also working to positively impact their communities.

Mandaquit, who moved to Utah from Hawaii nearly three years ago, organized a free youth basketball camp in his home state to inspire the next generation of players. It was through his involvement with the Court of Leaders that he got the chance to vote for the social justice award.

"They know that, being from Hawaii, I'm really passionate about social justice," Mandaquit said. "So this opportunity came about and they asked if I wanted to be a part of it. To me, it was a no-brainer."

The cause Mandaquit cares about centers on opportunities for young people in Hawaii, he said.

"I think that's something that I'm very passionate about," Mandaquit said. "Just making sure that the kids have the opportunity to do what they want to do."

Mandaquit, Abdul-Jabbar and a few others were tasked with bestowing the honor to one of five NBA players: Towns, Miami Heat center-forward Bam Adebayo, New Orleans Pelicans guard CJ McCollum, Oklahoma City Thunder forward Lindy Waters III and Los Angeles Clippers guard Russell Westbrook. The group then met on Zoom to deliberate.

Mandaquit said he was the lone young person on the selection committee. That came with nervousness, he said. But one moment will always stay with him, and it involved

Abdul-Jabbar.

"I had to introduce myself at the beginning just because everyone else has been on the board before," Mandaquit said. "I was the only new person. He actually shouted me out and made me feel really welcomed. ... It was really comforting."

Mandaquit said Abdul-Jabbar "called me out by name" and thanked him for being on the committee.

"It was just crazy," Mandaquit said of the shoutout. "It was just really surreal, to be honest, just because he's Kareem. Everyone knows Kareem. He's a legend of the sport. Obviously, he's had a huge impact outside of the game and off the court as well. So it was special."

Mandaquit is a four-star recruit, per ESPN and 24/7 Sports. He has offers to play in college by nearly two dozen schools, including Utah and BYU.

## How to get NHL tickets in Utah — and what it will cost you

New team's season tickets will go on sale on Friday.

By ANDY LARSEN

The Salt Lake Tribune

With fewer seats available for hockey games inside the Delta Center and a waitlist of more than 34,000 depositors, season tickets for the NHL's first year in Salt Lake City will cost more than Utah Jazz tickets, the Smith Entertainment Group revealed Tuesday.

NHL tickets will start at \$44 per game for the slate of 42 preseason and regular season games when they go on sale Friday, meaning season tickets for the new Utah hockey club will cost \$1,848 for the cheapest seats. Jazz season tickets, meanwhile, start at \$20 per game, or a total of \$860.

That's, in part, thanks to limited supply. At most, the team will allow about 16,000 fans through its doors for hockey games, fewer than the 18,206 attending NBA sellouts. But even that 16,000 number will include significant caveats: First, an estimated 6,000 of those seats have partially obstructed views of the ice. Secondly, only "select games" will use the team's full allotment of seats — most games will have some of the obstructed-view seats roped off.

"We're trying to be very smart with partial-ice-view seats," SEG Chief Commercial Officer Chris Barney said. "The goal is to ensure the best possible experience, while also maintaining some fan-friendly pricing and some accessibility options. That's kind of why we're thinking that it won't be a full 42-game slate right now."

SEG is taking this approach in part because of advice from the NHL and the New York Islanders, who played at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn for five years. It, too, is an NBA arena converted awkwardly to NHL games.

The Delta Center's obstructed-view seats will start at \$19. The team will decide for which games those will be sold once the NHL releases its schedule this summer. More seats are

Photo by NHL TICKETS, B4



FRANCISCO KULETH The Salt Lake Tribune  
Mason Davis shows off his sign as he joins other fans in welcoming Utah's new NHL team to Salt Lake City on April 24.