

**MINUTES** of the public meeting of the Uintah County Commission held **May 20, 2025** in the Commission Chambers of the Uintah County Building at 147 East Main, Vernal, Utah. The meeting commenced at 3:00 pm.

**PARTICIPANTS:** Commissioners Sonja Norton, John Laursen, and Willis LeFevre.

**ATTENDANCE:** Mike Wilkins, Travis Campbell, Kenny Morris, Gala Morris, Lynn Sitterud, Alan Chew, Melanie Silcox, Wendi Long, Sonya Ray, Sydney Millett, Gennie Bird, Trinna Gardner, Scott Hardman, Paul Chacon, Jess Hermann, Joel Brown, Keith Despain, Deanna Nyberg, James Sharp, Mike Cook, Matt Cazier, and Cindy Dilsaver.  
Minutes recorded by Tai Duncan.

**WELCOME:** Commissioner Laursen welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted item 15 would be addressed and then item 14 when we come to that portion of the meeting.

**PRAYER** offered by Mike Wilkins.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** led by Wendi Long.

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** May 6, 2025, May 7, 2025, May 13, 2025, and May 14, 2025

*Commissioner Lefevre moved to approve the May 6, 2025, May 7, 2025, May 13, 2025 and May 14, 2025 minutes as presented. Motion passed unanimously.*

**2. APPROVAL OF WARRANTS – Mike Wilkins, Clerk-Auditor**

Warrants dated May 15, 2025 in the amount of \$443,847.45. These included a check to UBAOG in the amount of \$20,997.05; Chamber membership in the amount of \$6,000; and CTI for Fair entertainment in the amount of \$31,000.

Commissioner Norton made the motion to approve the warrants for May 15, 2025 as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

**3. TAX MATTERS**

Mike Wilkins, Clerk-Auditor, presented an Order of Approval from the State Tax Commission regarding appeal #24-1603 for tax year 2024.. The value will be increased and thus increase the taxes due by \$877.02 on serial number 50:011:4168 owned by RN Industries.

*Commissioner Lefevre moved to approve the value increase for State Appeal #24-1603 as presented. Motion passed unanimously.*

Mike also presented an Order of Approval from the State Tax Commission regarding appeal #24-1605 for tax year 2024. The value will be decreased and thus decrease the taxes due. Dalbo has paid taxes on serial number 50:011:4170 so the reduced amount of \$7,454.73 will need to be abated.

*Commissioner Lefevre moved to approve the tax abatement for State Appeal #24-1605 as presented. Motion passed unanimously.*

**4. RECESS FOR MUNICIPAL BUILDING AUTHORITY**

*Commissioner Lefevre moved to recess into MBA. Motion passed unanimously.*

**5. PUBLIC HEARING:** Permanent Community Impact Board applications  
As MBA Chair, Commissioner Norton opened the public hearing regarding the Uintah County MBA's

submission of a small planning grant application to the Permanent Community Impact Fund Board (CIB). The grant aims to develop two comprehensive master plans: one for the Buckskin Hills Complex and another for Western Park. The estimated cost for each master plan is \$70,000. The MBA is requesting \$35,000 for each plan from the CIB. In accordance with CIB requirements, Uintah County will provide a 50% match, contributing \$35,000 for each plan, totaling \$70,000 from the County. These projects involve no new property taxes, special assessments, or user fees. The \$35,000 in CIB funds requested for each plan are solely for planning purposes. Any future development or construction proposals stemming from these plans would undergo separate approval processes. The CIB may approve full or partial funding. If full funding is not awarded, Uintah County will adjust the project scopes accordingly, potentially narrowing the scope, shortening the plan, or completing initial phases with future expansion as additional funds become available.

**a. BUCKSKIN HILLS MASTER PLAN**

This plan aims to provide a strategic, fiscally responsible roadmap for the multi-use, regional recreation facility. The plan will assess current facilities, including the Dragway, mountain bike and OHV trails, motocross track, tubing hill, campgrounds, speedway, and shooting complex. They will evaluate underutilized areas within the complex and analyze the economic impacts of the facility. Stakeholders, user groups and the public will be engaged for input. Plan improvements may include signage, lighting, restroom facilities, bleachers, and new amenities. The consultant will develop prioritized projects, cost estimates, and a phased implementation plan.

There were no public comments.

**b. WESTERN PARK MASTER PLAN**

This plan will involve assessing existing facilities and infrastructure and identifying opportunities for modernization. The community will be engaged to set priorities for the park's future. A third-party consultant will evaluate key areas such as the arenas, amphitheater, Convention Center, ice rink, race track, parking, and overall infrastructure.

There were no public comments and Commissioner Norton closed the public hearing.

**6. APPROVAL TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THE PERMANENT COMMUNITY IMPACT BOARD APPLICATIONS**

*Commissioner Laursen moved to move forward with the CIB applications as presented. Motion passed unanimously.*

**7. ADJOURN MBA AND RECONVENE COMMISSION MEETING**

*Commissioner Norton adjourned the MBA and reconvened the Commission meeting.*

**8. AWARDING REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: Trinna Gardner, Purchasing & Grants**

**a. UC25-7: Purchase Native Asphalt (Oil Sands)**

The Road Department is seeking to purchase up to 8,000 tons of Native Asphalt (oil sands), for upcoming road maintenance and construction projects. A Request for Proposal was issued as a sealed bid solicitation. One fully responsive proposal was received from Valkor. In adherence to standard procurement procedures, an evaluation committee was convened to thoroughly review this submission. The committee's evaluation confirmed that the single proposal meets all mandatory and minimum requirements as outlined in the RFP. The price per ton is \$29.95. The scoring committee recommends awarding the proposal to Valkor. Trinna asked the Commission's approval for two actions: to award the proposal to Valkor and to approve entering into a contract that reflects this scope. Trinna will then work with the civil attorney office to complete the contract with Valkor.

*Commissioner Lefevre moved to award the RFP to Valkor as presented. Motion passed unanimously.*

**9. ALLRED LANDSCAPING SERVICE AGREEMENT - Trinna Gardner, Purchasing & Grants**

In March, the Purchasing Department issued a Request for Proposals for the Rock Point Cemetery Expansion Project. The selection committee reviewed the proposal and recommended that Allred's Landscaping receive the award, which was approved by the Commission on April 1st. Since that time, they have been coordinating with Allred's and the Civil Attorney's office to finalize a contract that fully captures the scope of work that was outlined in the RFP. Trinna requested a form approval for the contract so the project can move forward.

*Commissioner Norton moved to approve the Allred Landscaping service agreement as presented, not to exceed \$99,716.00. Motion passed unanimously.*

**10. UTAH COUNTY CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES CONTRACT RENEWAL FOR 2026 - Loren W. Anderson, Civil Attorney**

This grant, awarded from the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (UCCJJ) will provide Uintah County with \$450,000 for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, and concluding June 30, 2026. The County is currently operating under a similar grant from the UCCJJ, which is set to expire in June. This new award serves as a renewal of that funding, ensuring the continuation of critical programs within the county's justice system. The grant funds are specifically allocated to support various services, including pretrial services, drug court operations, drug testing, and court probation. A 2022 study on individuals who commit crimes in Uintah County revealed a recidivism rate of approximately 50%, meaning about half of those who commit crimes re-offend. Furthermore, the study found that slightly more than half of these individuals commit new crimes while awaiting adjudication for their previous charges. The grant aims to address this issue by providing resources to help reduce recidivism and prevent further criminal activity during the pretrial and probationary phases. The \$450,000 grant will cover essential costs for personnel, employee benefits, necessary equipment, supplies, operational requirements, and training for county employees involved in these services. In response to a question, Loren clarified this is a renewal of the previous year's funding. Commissioner Laursen recalled the previous year's funding being \$600,000, indicating a potential decrease in the renewed amount.

*Commissioner Norton moved to approve the UCCJJ contract renewal as presented. Motion passed unanimously.*

**11. ORDINANCE #05-06-2025 O2: T3S R21E SEC 22: Portion of a Class D County Road, Steinaker Draw Road, on private land owned by Matthew & Kaydee Massey, and James & Sheri Allen**

Deanna Nyberg, Community Development asked that items 11 and 12 be tabled. They have not heard back from the County Surveyor yet.

**12. ORDINANCE #05-06-2025 O3: T3S R21E SEC 22 & T3S R21E SEC 23: Portion of a Class D County Road, Drippen Chicken Ranch Road, on private land owned by Matthew & Kaydee Massey, Cassie J. Hays, Dixie Allen**

*Commissioner Norton moved to table Ordinances #05-06-2025 O2 and O3 as requested. Motion passed unanimously.*

**13. PUBLIC HEARING: ROAD VACATION REQUESTS-Deanna Nyberg, Community Development**

- a. T3S R20E SEC 14-15 & 22-23: Class B Road 6500 W, on private land owned by Kenny and Gala Morris, Nathan and Katrine Myers, and Jeffery and Kaylene Ellis, located at 6519 N, 6518 N, 6578 N, and 6603 N, all on 6500 W, and 6407 N Dryfork Canyon Rd. Vernal, Utah; 03:054:0005, 03:065:0059, 03:038:0004, 03:054:0002, and 03:064:0010

The application for vacation was submitted by Kenny and Gala Morris. The road in question, 6500 West, provides direct frontage to six properties. Four of these properties are owned by the Morrisses. A small corner parcel is owned by Jeff and Kayleen Ellis, and the road terminates on property owned by

Nathan and Katrine Myers. The application for the road vacation was officially made and properly noticed. Additionally, individual letters were sent to all property owners whose land abuts the road. Jeff and Kaylene Ellis have also signed the application. At the time of the application, the Morrisses stated they were unable to reach the Myers, believing them to be out of the country. They also indicated their belief that the Myers would not object to the vacation.

Deanna recently received an email from Katrine Myers stating her opposition. It read: "To Whom It May Concern: In November of last year, Mrs. Morris approached me, Katrine Myers, requesting that I sign the county form to vacate 6500 W. Because of a history of tense relationships concerning the road, I politely made it clear that I would not sign the form. There are only the two Morris families and us who share this lane. I hoped that keeping the road a county designation would keep the peace between us as neighbors. Unfortunately, I believe that it was in retaliation that the next morning Kenny Morris moved a historical fence line and prompted a boundary dispute between us. Kenny and Gala Morris have represented that we would not be opposed to the vacation and that they were unable to reach us. They have been made aware of our position regarding the road vacation multiple times now (first in November and then afterwards during the boundary dispute). Additionally, the Morrisses have known how to reach us as we have received texts from them regarding the neighborhood pipeline. I believe the claim that we would not be opposed and that they could not get in touch with us is disingenuous, at best. The road, and its designation as a county road, is of critical relevance to the boundary dispute and would constitute interference with the status quo if that were to change. Additionally and most importantly, we would be irreparably harmed if Uintah County were to vacate 6500 W. We are currently in the process of permitting an ADU on our property and this vacation would prevent the guest house from ever becoming legal on our lot. We would become a legal nonconforming lot and only one single family dwelling would be allowed. That would cause a damage to our property value of well over \$150,000! We began construction of our ADU with the understanding that it would be permissible. The vacation of the road would change that, as I understand it. This is unacceptable. I can only hope that the Morrisses did not understand the implications of road vacation to our property value. We certainly did not up until last week. As it is, I hope they can understand our position. The concerns that the Morrisses have about the lane being designated county are many. The merits (or lack thereof) of their complaint are not time sensitive whereas the designation of 6500 W as a private road and what that would do to our property value absolutely is. I do not believe they would be harmed by delaying this disagreement for another time until our guest house is permitted. I am not asking for a decision to be made about the road (unless that decision is to not vacate it--considering the circumstances under which the request was brought forth). I am only asking that Uintah County understand the sensitive nature of the vacation request and its impact on these two fronts (the boundary dispute and our ADU permitting process) and postpone deliberation for a later date. Sincerely, Katrine"

Commissioner Laursen noted that this is a public hearing only and a decision will not be made today. He then opened the meeting for public comments.

Gala Morris addressed the meeting. The only way she can contact Katrine Myers is through her role as secretary of Dry Fork Irrigation, via Katrine's husband, Nathan, for water assessments. Gala denied retaliatory actions regarding the fence line, asserting that the Myers family had moved out of their home in the middle of the night on the last weekend of February and had since rented out their house. She claimed that Katrine Myers' Airbnb operation did not have a proper building permit and was "not legal." The renters are respectful and drive slowly, but she had personally clocked Katrine driving at 30 miles per hour along the private driveway. The road's designation as a County road was "crookedly" done years ago by Dale Peterson and Ray Merkley in 1997-1998, as there were no signatures from her aunt and uncle, who owned the property at the time. She expressed her opinion that the road should have never been a County road. The Myers have a deeded right-of-way to their property. However, she emphasized that given the Myers' residence in Puerto Rico, there was no way to contact them to sign papers for the vacation. She concluded by stating her belief that since the Myers have a right-of-way and the County has never maintained the road, there should be no problem with vacating. Deanna

confirmed there is an easement to the Myers property and 6500 W does not access public lands.

- b. T4S R25E SEC 16 & 17: Portions of Class D County Roads, 030501, 030502 and Chew Ranch Road, on private land owned by Chew Ranch LLC, located at 1250 Harpers Corner Mtn. Road, Jensen Utah; 05:158:0003**

The property owned by Chew Ranch LLC is surrounded by public lands, including BLM, SITLA, and the National Monument to the north. The roads to be vacated are on the eastern portion of the Ranch. Access to the public lands will still be available via roads on the western portion of the Ranch. The Chew's are also reviewing another possible access to the public lands. It is unclear if it can be claimed as a County right-of-way. The application has been fully processed, with notices posted as required. A request for review was sent to the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT). UDOT's response indicated that a decision on this vacation could not be made immediately due to a new law that became effective on May 7th. UDOT's interpretation is that even if the application was submitted before May 7th, the decision-making process is now subject to the new law's requirements, which differ from the previous understanding that applications submitted prior to the effective date would be exempt. The applicant is actively engaged with the state legislature to seek clarification on the exact implications and effective date interpretation of the new law. Despite the uncertainty regarding the new law, the public hearing was being held as scheduled because it had already been noticed. This ensures that the notice process will not need to be repeated, should the legal interpretation become clearer in the future.

Commissioner Laursen noted that this is a public hearing only and a decision will not be made today. He then opened the meeting for public comments. There have been no other responses to the notices sent to neighboring properties. Alan Chew noted the roads do not access SITLA property, there are other roads that reach the Monument though they may be further to the south. That's why the roads on the west of his property are not part of the road vacation.

#### **15. COOPERATIVE FUNDING AGREEMENT WITH ACCESS UTAH FOR THE VIA FERRATA -**

Travis Campbell, Economic Development

This agreement was submitted to Uintah County by the Utah Education and Outdoor Access Foundation, more commonly known as Access Utah. Travis explained that Access Utah is a non-profit organization that received a state appropriation to develop and install Via Ferrata routes throughout Utah. He noted that their funding had been instrumental in two key areas for Uintah County: it was used for the installation of the Via Ferrata route in Ashley Gorge, and it also provided a crucial portion of the matching funds required for the Utah Outdoor Recreation Grant that the County had previously secured for this project. The purpose of this funding agreement is to ensure Access Utah remains a responsible steward of the public funds it received. Much like other agreements the County holds for outdoor recreation grants, this document aims to guarantee that the public funds are utilized appropriately, that the features acquired with this funding are well-maintained, and that they remain accessible to the general public. Travis outlined the terms of the agreement, stating that once signed and executed, it would be effective for a period of 10 years. This 10-year term is designed to ensure the Via Ferrata project remains open to the public, is reasonably maintained through regular inspections and necessary repairs, and is operated in alignment with its intended uses and purposes. A significant clause in the agreement details a repayment obligation: if, at any point within these 10 years, Uintah County were to decide to permanently close, repurpose, or otherwise restrict the general public's access to the Via Ferrata features, the County would be required to repay all funds provided by Access Utah within 90 days. The County Attorney's office has reviewed and approved the agreement. The Via Ferrata route is nearly completely using this funding.

*Commissioner Norton moved to approve the funding agreement with Access Utah as presented. Motion passed unanimously.*

#### **14. ASHLEY GORGE EASEMENT AGREEMENT** between Uintah County, Vernal City, and Ashley Valley Water & Sewer Improvement District – Matt Cazier, Community Development

This has also been discussed in a prior work session. He highlighted two key changes made: the

easement was explicitly designated as "non-exclusive," a point that had been agreed upon in the meeting but was not initially in the written document; and a clause was added requiring Vernal City and Ashley Valley to allow the County to use the pedestrian bridge on the property for administrative purposes, with the County agreeing to indemnify them for such use. This specific pedestrian bridge crosses the creek between the desander and the spring house. Matt had spoken with Mike Harrington of Vernal City, who indicated that 90 days would be sufficient time for the City to review in their meeting. Ryan Goodrich of Ashley Valley had requested 180 days for his board's approval. Matt emphasized the importance of including a timeline in the agreement to prevent it from remaining open indefinitely. Commissioner Laursen asked if both entities had been in possession of the draft agreement for several months and Matt confirmed they have; it was originally drafted by Vernal City.

*Commissioner Norton moved to approve the Ashley Gorge Easement agreement with the changes as presented included a 90 day request for approval from the other parties. Motion passed unanimously.*

**16. VIA FERRATA RULES - Matt Cazier, Community Development**

These rules were presented in last week's work session and now include the suggested changes from that meeting. Rule D was added prohibiting the use of the Via Ferrata by anyone under the influence of drugs or alcohol or impaired in some way. Closed toe shoes were added to the list of required equipment. Additionally minor grammatical corrections were made as requested by the Civil Attorney's office; these changes made rules L and R more concise and easier to read. The effective date reflects the date of approval. Commissioner Lefevre had some concern approving the rules before the route was complete and open to the public. Matt understands the concern but explained they need time to order the signage and have it prepared. They expect to have construction completed in July and the signs will be last to complete but it may take that long to get them here.

*Commissioner Norton moved to approve the Via Ferrata rules as presented. Motion passed unanimously.*

**17. VIA FERRATA GUIDE RULES - Matt Cazier, Community Development**

These were also discussed last week in the work session. The only change since that presentation was the grammatical clean up recommended by the Civil Attorney office ensuring rule E was clear and concise that all guides and their clients must follow all rules. Matt also requested these be approved now so they can begin developing the application process for guides. Guides will want to be prepared for opening.

Commissioner Lefevre moved to approve the Via Ferrata Guide Rules as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

**18. BOARD APPOINTMENTS**

Commissioner Norton explained that an advisory board to the Commission was required by GOEO (Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity) regarding the Rural County Grant program. This board will advise on economic development efforts in Uintah County. This is an 11 member board. Current members with a term expiring December 31, 2026, are: Sydney Millett, Municipality Representative (small business); Heather Lowry, Workforce Development Representative (Education); Mike Davis, Municipality Representative (Naples); Todd Massey, Member of Public (Large Business, Education); and Nate Zilles, Municipality Representative (Ballard). Members to reappoint with a term ending December 31, 2028, are: Randi Bell, Workforce Development (DWS); Quinn Bennion, Municipality Representative (Vernal); Kalene Gamble, Private Sector Representative (Real Estate); Joel Brown, Member of Public (Non-Profit); and David Brinkerhoff, Private Sector Representative (Mining). New appointments expiring December 31, 2028 are: Alan Olive, Private Sector Representative (Health Care) and Travis Campbell, County Representative (Economic Development).

*Commissioner Lefevre moved to approve the board appointments as presented. Motion passed unanimously.*

## 19. PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Laursen reminded attendees that the public comment period is a time for comments not debate. The Commission will listen to comments and take them into consideration but will not respond or answer questions. They may not have the power to act on any comments. The meeting is recorded, please be patient, wait for your turn at the microphone and state your name for the record. Be respectful and do not interrupt. A total of fifteen minutes will be allotted for public comment and each speaker will have up to three minutes to make their comments.

Keith Despain, Public Works Director for Vernal City, offered comments regarding the Ashley Gorge easement agreement, which had been an earlier agenda item. The initial draft of the agreement was submitted by Vernal City. However, the County later added the portion specifically addressing bridge access. His comments focused on this added language. He stated that the bridge had always been used for the maintenance of Vernal City's water facilities. Therefore, it was concerning for them as water providers to consider other entities accessing it. He noted that the language used in the agreement referred to "administrative access" and expressed curiosity about its exact meaning and the scope of access it would entail. More discussion will be necessary. The Vernal City Council will be reviewing the easement well within the 90-day timeframe.

**ADJOURN:** The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:55 pm.

  
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JOHN LAURSEN, CHAIR

  
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MICHAEL W. WILKINS, CLERK – AUDITOR

