

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD AUGUST 15, 2025

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING HELD AUGUST 15, 2025 at 12:00 p.m. in the Vernal City Community Room, 374 East Main, Vernal, Utah 84078.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Edward Long, Ted Munford, Robin O'Driscoll, Randel Mills, and Corey Foley and Mayor Doug Hammond.

WELCOME: Mayor Doug Hammond welcomed everyone to the meeting. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll moved to acknowledge and approve the special City Council meeting, with Councilmember Corey Foley seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously with all in favor.

REVIEW OF LAMPLIGHTER CONCEPT PLANS – QUINN BENNION

City Manager Quinn Bennion opened the discussion of the draft concepts for the Lamplighter Block, explaining that five initial designs had been narrowed to three with input from the City Council, staff, consultants, and the Steering Committee. The concepts will be displayed at the Dinah Soar Days Balloon Festival the following week for additional public feedback. Hailey Wall of Terracon reported on community outreach, noting strong participation with 752 survey responses and over fifty open house attendees. She stated that residents expressed a desire for year-round gathering spaces, civic and entertainment areas, and amenities that are affordable, well-maintained, and reflective of Vernal's character. Key features identified included a farmers market space, bandstand, interactive water elements, a landmark tower, and improved landscaping and walkability, with the goal of refining the concepts into one preferred design.

The first concept design was presented before Council for the Lamplighter Block, described as a diagonal promenade. Hailey Wall explained that adjustments had already been made following a morning meeting, including clarifying names of features. The design includes new retail spaces with the potential for residential spaces above, an outdoor dining area overlooking a splash creek and splash pad, an iconic playground, an event lawn with tiered seating, a dedicated stage, storage, a visitor center, and stormwater features. The plan also incorporates additional parking, pedestrian access through the back alley, a proposed hotel in the southwest corner, and recreational features such as rock climbing. A slip lane along Main Street is intended to buffer traffic noise, and the plaza can be adapted with pop-up stalls and tents for large events.

Discussion centered on the future of the existing Lamplighter Hotel. Councilmembers questioned if the project would be less costly to construct a new building than to renovate the hotel and expressed support for its removal. City Manager Quinn Bennion acknowledged that some community members valued the hotel for its historic connection, and noted it would come at significant cost to preserve. After discussion, the City Council agreed to remove the Lamplighter Hotel from the concept plans.

Further discussion of the first concept plan included concerns for parking capacity, hotel size, and project phasing. Ms. Wall confirmed the proposed hotel design included 120 rooms and that parking would present a challenge if the facility were expanded. Quinn Bennion emphasized the need to present conservative timelines to the public to avoid frustration, suggesting a total

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implementation period of five to eight years. Councilmember Ed Long supported this approach, suggesting that the City be excessively conservative with their estimation of time to complete the project in order to meet expectations. Gary Merrell asked if portions of the site could be opened to the public as they are completed. City Manager Bennion stated that phasing and cost estimates would be included in the planning documents. Ms. Wall noted that the concepts could be implemented at varying levels, from budget-friendly to more elaborate designs.

The second concept plan was presented to City Council, referred to as the Basin. This design includes similar programming elements with a line of commercial properties, a flexible venue space with a large open building that can open to the outdoors, and a more robust stage. Features include a lookout tower, a basin-shaped water feature inspired by local geology, a natural-themed playground, space for kiosks and food trucks, a restaurant with restrooms, and areas for pop-up markets. The plan also provides additional parking without reducing existing spaces, improved landscaping buffers, and curbing adjustments for more comfortable parallel parking.

The City Council discussed the possibility of relocating the Hub to this site, splitting the farmers market between locations, and ensuring adequate restrooms. Gary Merrell suggested including telescopes in the lookout tower to allow visitors the ability to see different areas of Vernal while visiting this site. Councilmember Ted Munford raised concerns about height, safety, and ADA compliance of the tower, with City Manager Bennion noting that an elevator would not be feasible with the current plan and that the overall plan of the tower would need to be reconsidered. Hailey Wall confirmed that restroom facilities were incorporated into the design and explained that smaller details will continue to be addressed as the concepts are refined. Sound-mitigating landscape mounds were also proposed along the highway frontage.

The third concept plan of the Lamplighter Block was then presented, designed as a town square organized around a central feature with four corners. The plan includes a fire tower feature with second-story access overlooking a playground and splash pad, a raised landscape buffer with benches and trees, and a dedicated tot lot for small children. One corner features a large event venue with café and visitor center, a two-story band stage with lighting and sound capacity, and space for the Outlaw Trail and other large events. Another corner provides areas for food trucks, a market space, outdoor dining, and retail and restaurant buildings with a potential relocation site for the Hub. The design incorporates shallow tiered lawns, pedestrian access through the block, a small grove with passive space, hotel drop-off, and additional parking.

The City Council discussed the inclusion of an ice skating ribbon surrounding the central building of the plan, with Councilmember Corey Foley highlighting its benefit in activating the space during winter and allowing summer roller use. While Councilmember Ted Munford initially opposed the idea of the ribbon, he then agreed that something like this could be successful in the City. Councilmember Ed Long supported year-round attractions and noted similar features are well-used elsewhere. Concerns were raised about cost, maintenance, and the need for potential partnerships with the recreation district, with the Council ultimately agreeing to leave the rink in the plans as an option for public feedback. Additional discussion addressed the placement of the Hub, with some members expressing hesitation to advertise relocation due to uncertainty with the

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current facility being listed for sale. Consideration was also given to hotel placement near the conference center, restroom needs, and sound buffering along Main Street. City Manager Bennion confirmed the concept plans will be released for community review the following Thursday.

ADJOURN: There being no further business; *Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll moved to adjourn. Councilmember Corey Foley seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote and the meeting was declared adjourned.*