

**M**INUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD  
AUGUST 6 , 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Vernal City Council room, 374 East Main,  
Vernal, Utah 84078.

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

**WELCOME:** Mayor Doug Hammond welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**INVOCATION OR UPLIFTING THOUGHT:** The invocation was given by Councilmember Ted Munford.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilmember Corey Foley.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD  
JULY 16, 2025**

*Councilmember Ed Long moved to approve the minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting held July 16, 2025. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Munford, Mills, O'Driscoll, Foley and Long voting in favor.*

**PUBLIC HEARING FOR REVIEW OF THE STEINAKER SERVICE CANAL TRAIL  
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL - SUNRISE ENGINEERING**

Jerry Slaugh, Project Manager for Sunrise Engineering, provided an update on the proposed two-mile multipurpose trail running from Highway 40 to 500 North. The draft environmental study was distributed to the Council and outlines potential impacts, project maps, and responses to public questions. An open house was held over the summer, and concerns from nearby residents have been addressed. The project cost is estimated at approximately \$2.5 million, including bridge work, retaining walls, signage, and other structural features, with funding provided entirely by UDOT through the Utah Trails Network. Vernal City was selected as one of 18 statewide projects.

Jerry confirmed the study shows no major environmental impacts, noting that any effects on wildlife or insects would be short-term. Some earlier concerns about relocating a structure along Aggie Boulevard have been resolved through an easement agreement, avoiding the need for relocation. Power poles and water infrastructure in the project area will not be affected. The trail will connect schools, residential areas, and future development sites, and will provide a safe option for walking, biking, and other recreation. Safety features such as fencing will be included where needed, with the trail set back approximately 40 feet from the highway.

Mayor Doug Hammond opened the hearing for public comment. Gabby Blackburn from Sunrise Engineering requested a review of the alignment for those not present at prior meetings. Jerry described the route in detail, beginning at Highway 40 and Aggie Boulevard, following along 500 South, paralleling existing sidewalks, then joining the canal corridor past Terra Academy, the new preschool, and USU property before connecting to the 500 North bridge project. A member of the public asked

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about trail use, and Jerry confirmed it will be multipurpose. There being no further public comment, Mayor Hammond then closed the comment portion of the hearing.

City Manager Quinn Bennion noted the “Steinaker Service Canal Trail” name is only a working title and will be changed prior to construction. The Council thanked Jerry Slaugh for his work and expressed appreciation to Andy Spencer of UDOT for his support.

### **UPDATE ON GAZEBO AT ASHLEY VALLEY COMMUNITY PARK - CHERYL MEIER**

Cheryl Meier, Executive Director of Uintah Special Service District 1, updated the Council on the status and future of the historic gazebo in the City Park, originally constructed from the spire of the Vernal Tabernacle. Over time the structure has deteriorated, presenting safety concerns including rotting floorboards, ADA accessibility issues, and frequent graffiti and vandalism. The Utah Local Governments Trust flagged the gazebo in its 2023 inspection, prompting consideration of relocation or closure.

Community feedback was gathered via social media, and multiple relocation options were explored. The Daughters of the Utah Pioneers (DUP) Museum expressed strong interest in housing the structure on their property, across from the tabernacle’s original site. A preliminary bid estimated relocation at \$43,790, including dismantling, bracing, slab removal, and site preparation. Given the gazebo’s age, over 130 years, there is concern it could be damaged during the move. Cheryl secured a restoration grant through the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation for up to \$20,000 in matching funds and anticipates reducing costs through in-house work by the Parks Department. DUP has committed to fundraising for their share, though additional contributions from the City, USSD1, or other entities may be needed.

Former City Manager Ken Bassett shared historical context on the gazebo’s placement in the park and echoed concerns about long-term maintenance responsibilities if moved to the DUP site. Councilmember Ted Munford expressed support for the relocation, provided ownership transfers fully to DUP after installation, and suggested inviting Uintah County to participate financially. Councilmember Corey Foley supported contributing up to \$5,000 from Vernal City but cautioned against raising community expectations for City or SSD1 fundraising. He emphasized the importance of a “final resting place” for the structure that honors its history and increases public visibility. Cheryl confirmed that if costs exceed \$43,000, the project would be reevaluated and the gazebo possibly retained in place as a boarded-up historic feature. She emphasized the importance of finding someone who recognized the significance of bracing the structure before it is moved, noting that there is a possibility that the gazebo could fall apart once efforts began.

*Councilmember Ted Munford motioned to approve the funding of up to \$5,000 for the moving of the gazebo at Ashley Valley Community Park. Council Member Corey Foley seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following rollcall vote:*

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*Councilmember Munford.....aye;*  
*Councilmember Mills.....aye;*  
*Councilmember O'Driscoll.....aye;*  
*Councilmember Long.....aye;*  
*Councilmember Foley.....aye.*

**CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE SELECTION OF JONES & DEMILLE FOR THE 100 N WATER AND SEWER LINE PROJECT - ERIC DILWORTH**

Eric Dilworth, Project Manager for Vernal City, came before the Council requesting approval to move forward with a contract for engineering services with Jones & DeMille Engineering. He reported that three proposals had been received and evaluated, with the selection team determining that all three firms were capable of completing the project. Jones & DeMille received the highest overall score, offering the strongest proposal.

Councilmember Ed Long asked what set Jones & DeMille apart from the other firms. Mr. Dilworth noted the scoring was close, with some proposals stronger in certain areas of water design, but Jones & DeMille presented the most comprehensive approach. City Manager Quinn Bennion, who served on the selection panel, stated that Vernal City is fortunate to have highly qualified civil engineering firms locally and has had positive experiences working with all three.

*Councilmember Ed Long motioned to approve the selection of Jones & DeMille for the 100 N water and sewer line project. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following rollcall vote:*

*Councilmember Munford.....aye;*  
*Councilmember Mills.....aye;*  
*Councilmember O'Driscoll.....aye;*  
*Councilmember Long.....aye;*  
*Councilmember Foley.....aye.*

Quinn Bennion stated the goal is to have construction underway next summer. He explained that the project is much needed, as the sewer line's capacity is long overdue for improvement and the water line is undersized. The system serves a large portion of Vernal City, and even a small increase in demand could cause significant issues. Funding for the project was approved at the recent Community Impact Board meeting, with a 70% grant and 30% loan from mineral lease revenues.

Former City Manager Ken Bassett commended the City, Council, and CIB for addressing critical utility needs. He emphasized the importance of maintaining safe road conditions during the project, ensuring that traffic is accommodated, and that utility trenches are properly filled until paving is complete on what is a very busy road.

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**APPROVAL OF FINAL CHANGE ORDER FOR THE DOWNTOWN WATER IMPROVEMENT PROJECT - ERIC DILWORTH**

Eric Dilworth presented a change order for a recently completed infrastructure project, explaining it was a quantity adjustment to reconcile the actual materials installed with the original bid. The project was completed successfully, though issues with valves during construction underscored the age of the system and the importance of ongoing upgrades. The revised contract total is \$1,077,537.12, which is just over \$400 more than the original contract amount of \$1,077,065.86, and less than the previous total of \$1,109,343.84.

Councilmember Ted Munford commended staff for narrowing the final amount to within a few hundred dollars of the original contract. Councilmember Corey Foley noted that such a small difference reflects the contractor's honesty and diligence, stating it was rare to see a project finish so close to the original bid. Councilmember Ed Long pointed out a small discrepancy between the change order included in the packet and the figures presented. Mr. Dilworth explained that the numbers he shared came from the final application for payment, and that the change order includes a credit back to the City of \$35,696.93. He will confirm the figures with the engineers.

City Manager Quinn Bennion recommended the Council approve the amount shown on the change order. Councilmember Ed Long made a motion to approve the change order for the amount shown, seconded by Councilmember Corey Foley. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

*Councilmember Ed Long made a motion to approve the final change order for the Downtown Water Improvement Project up to the total amount of \$1,080,804.92. Councilmember Corey Foley seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following rollcall vote:*

*Councilmember Munford.....aye;*  
*Councilmember Mills.....aye;*  
*Councilmember O'Driscoll.....aye;*  
*Councilmember Long.....aye;*  
*Councilmember Foley.....aye.*

**UPDATE REGARDING THE LAMPLIGHTER CONCEPT PLANS PROCESS AND UPCOMING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT - QUINN BENNION.**

City Manager Quinn Bennion provided an update on the Lamplighter Project and the progress of the concept plans being developed by the planning firm. Staff has reviewed several iterations, and the plans are nearly ready to be presented to the City Council. Quinn outlined the proposed public participation process, aiming to gather feedback throughout August.

He suggested the Council first review the concepts during a work session next week, proposing a Friday lunch meeting. Following the Council's review, the Downtown Alliance would be invited

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to evaluate the concepts, and a booth would be set up at the Dinah Soar Days Balloon Festival to allow the public to view the plans and complete an online survey. The goal is to replicate the strong participation seen in previous downtown and Lamplighter engagement efforts, which each drew a strong number of participants

Councilmember Ed Long asked whether the concept planning was delaying any pre-construction work. Quinn explained that three design options will be presented and that other project elements are proceeding concurrently. Eric Dilworth reported that on August 12 a mandatory meeting regarding the Request for Proposal (RFP) would take place. Quinn added that the City issued an RFP for asbestos removal and remediation, is on schedule with its EPA grant application for additional funding, and anticipates hotel remediation requiring more extensive grant support due to higher asbestos levels.

Quinn emphasized that the Lamplighter redevelopment is a long-term project, projected over five years, with progress dependent on grants and funding sources. The booth at Dinosaur Days will focus on gathering input for the concept plans. The final designs, which will aim to incorporate as much feedback as possible, will be presented to the Council in late September. Councilmembers agreed to proceed with scheduling a special work session for concept review next week, with details to be finalized.

### **STAFF REPORTS**

City Manager Quinn Bennion introduced Nick Rousseau as Vernal City's new Finance Director, who began work the previous Tuesday. Mr. Rousseau, a local resident, brings experience from American Gilsonite and prior service with Uintah County. He expressed appreciation for the welcome and asked for patience as he becomes familiar with City operations.

Quinn reported on the recent paddle pond event, which was held independently of Riverfest this year. Attendance reached several hundred participants, with Thursday evening fully booked. Setup required approximately one hour, takedown three hours, and staffing demands were manageable. Volunteers from the Chamber of Commerce and Liberty Energy were instrumental in the event's success, and favorable weather contributed to the positive outcome.

Regarding infrastructure, Quinn noted that paving for 200 South has been delayed due to the contractor's work schedule on Highway 191. The intersection is scheduled for paving on August 11, with Ivan Merrell reporting that paving for 5th West will occur on August 18.

Councilmember Randel Mills requested attention to the deteriorating condition of the intersection, with Councilmember Corey Foley echoing concerns. Councilmember Foley voiced frustration over the contractor's performance and emphasized the need for staff intervention to address public complaints. Quinn acknowledged the feedback and stated the contractor has been urged to

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maintain the intersection until paving occurs. Eric Dilworth confirmed he had asked the contractor to sweep the intersection in the meantime.

**CLOSED SESSION**

*Mayor Doug Hammond announced that the Closed Session portion of the meeting would be held in the Jury Room. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll moved to go into closed session for the following items:*

- 1. Strategy sessions to discuss the purchase, exchange, or lease of real property, including any form of a water right or water shares, or to discuss a proposed development agreement, project proposal, or financing proposal related to the development of land owned by the state or a political subdivision*
- 2. Strategy sessions to discuss the sale of real property, including any form of a water right or water shares*

*Councilmember Randel Mills seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following rollcall vote:*

*Councilmember Munford.....aye;*  
*Councilmember Mills.....aye;*  
*Councilmember O'Driscoll.....aye;*  
*Councilmember Long.....aye;*  
*Councilmember Foley.....aye.*

**RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION AND ADJOURN:** *There being no further business, Councilmember Ed Long moved to adjourn. Councilmember Randel Mills seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote and the meeting was declared adjourned.*