

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING HELD AUGUST 20, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. in the Vernal City Planning Conference 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. Councilmember Corey Foley moved to acknowledge and approve the Special City Council meeting, with Councilmember Randel Mills seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously with all in favor.

REVIEW AND MODIFICATION OF VERNAL CITY LEAVE POLICIES, RESOLUTION 2025-07 - QUINN BENNION

City Manager Quinn Bennion opened the discussion, noting that revisions to the City's leave policies have been in development for over a year, with extensive review by staff, department heads, and the Administrative Committee. He emphasized that City policies had not been updated in more than 20 years and highlighted the importance of aligning with both public-sector standards and local workforce needs. Mr. Bennion acknowledged that while Vernal City will not be the most generous employer, the objective is to remain competitive and effective in attracting and retaining employees. Due to the schedule of the regular City Council Meeting, Mr. Bennion emphasized that this meeting would be an introduction to the proposed changes with the potential to continue discussion and voting on parts of the policy at a later date.

Vacation Leave

The current schedule provides 80 hours for 1–10 years of service, with additional weeks added after 10 and 20 years. Mr. Bennion recommended moving the first increase forward to year 5, adding one day per year until 10 years, at which point employees would reach 15 days of vacation.

Sick Leave

No structural changes were recommended unless the City transitions to a Paid Time Off (PTO) system. Mr. Bennion highlighted Vernal's unusually generous conversion policy in that employees who accumulate over 500 hours may have the excess paid out, 25% as cash and 75% deposited into a Health Retirement Account. Councilmembers recognized this as a significant benefit. He acknowledged sick leave is increasingly broad, now encompassing mental health days and a wide range of acceptable uses. City Attorney Michael Harrington observed that some employees take advantage of the policy, while others use little or none, and suggested that removing labels may help encourage proper use.

FMLA and Military Leave

One change is proposed for Family Medical Leave Act usage, requiring employees to exhaust sick, vacation, and comp time before moving to unpaid leave. Military leave remains aligned with state guidelines, allowing 15 paid days per year.

Administrative Leave

Salaried employees receive 48 hours annually. The proposed update would remove restrictions on how the hours may be used, recognizing the additional hours salaried staff often work.

Jury and Witness Time

Officers would continue to receive compensation for attendance, and the policy would be clarified to provide "up to two hours" for preparation rather than a flat two hours.

Rest Breaks

No structural change was made, and stronger language will clarify that the 15-minute break every four hours must include all personal tasks.

Bereavement Leave

Mr. Bennion explained the current allowance of three days, or five days for out-of-state services. He recommended simplifying to three days for immediate family and one for extended family, with the option to use leave more than once per year. Councilmember Ted Munford supported the clearer definition, noting that it would prevent abuse.

Leave Without Pay

The only change would allow military personnel to take leave without pay without first exhausting accruals.

Holidays

Mr. Bennion noted Vernal provides 11 holidays, fewer than most agencies, with the State at 13 and the County at 13.5. He recommended adding a floating holiday rather than Juneteenth specifically. Councilmember Corey Foley asked if Police officers rotate holiday shifts, and Chief Mike Gledhill confirmed they do not. Councilmember Foley questioned whether a floating holiday might be abused. Mr. Bennion explained it is essentially another vacation day that must be used within the year. Councilmember Randel Mills asked about advance notice requirements. Chief Gledhill confirmed employees must obtain approval, and Councilmember Mills recommended stronger language to ensure supervisors receive sufficient notice to cover shifts.

Compensatory Time

Mr. Bennion explained the current allowance of up to 240 hours, which creates significant liability. He recommended reducing the cap to 48 hours, phased in over two years. Councilmember Mills suggested prohibiting consecutive use. Mr. Bennion responded that once the cap is reached, additional hours must be paid out at overtime rates. Councilmember Munford favored supervisor discretion over comp time requests. Councilmember Mills emphasized supervisor training to help protect against abuse.

Councilmember Long asked whether eliminating comp time entirely had been considered. He expressed concern that it incentivizes employees in the wrong way, noting that overtime might actually decrease without the option. Mr. Bennion responded that overtime costs would rise and productivity might increase. Councilmember Foley remarked that employees dislike overtime because of taxes withheld, and Public Works Director Keith Despain observed that comp time is one of the most attractive benefits for field staff. Councilmembers debated whether the system encourages unnecessary hours. Mr. Bennion concluded it is a step toward reducing liability and acknowledged further discussion is needed.

Parental Leave

Mr. Bennion introduced a new proposed policy. He explained that although few employees currently use maternity or paternity leave, public employers are increasingly adopting such policies. The proposal is to match up to three weeks of maternity leave and one week of paternity leave, contingent on the employee returning to work for at least one month. Councilmember Foley noted that both parents work in most households. Michael Harrington stated that pro-parent policies will become more important in the future. Mr. Bennion explained that matched leave could be taken before or after birth, or for bedrest, and could potentially serve as a recruitment tool for the City.

Mr. Bennion concluded that discussion had taken the entire work session and additional time would be scheduled to finish review, including further discussion regarding the PTO proposal.

ADJOURN: There being no further business, *Councilmember Corey Foley moved to adjourn. Councilmember Randel Mills seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote and the meeting was declared adjourned.*