

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD AUGUST 20, 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 Ed Long.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD AUGUST 6, 2025

Councilmember Ed Long moved to approve the minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting held August 6, 2025. Councilmember Ted Munford seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Munford, Mills, O'Driscoll, Foley and Long voting in favor.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD AUGUST 15, 2025

Councilmember Corey Foley moved to approve the minutes of the Special City Council Meeting held August 15, 2025. Councilmember Ed Long seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Munford, Mills, O'Driscoll, Foley and Long voting in favor.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

DISCUSSION REGARDING UNPAID TAXES OF VERNAL REAL ESTATE PARTNERS LLC, DBA ANTLERS INN, NATIONS COMMERCIAL LENDING LLC, DBA VERNAL BEST VALUE INN AND NATIONAL PARKS INN AS REPORTED BY THE UTAH STATE TAX COMMISSION - BRAEDEN CHRISTOFFERSON

Assistant City Manager Braeden Christofferson provided background, noting this discussion is a continuation from the May council meeting. He stated it has been approximately 90 days since the City asked the property owner, Mr. Michael Naumu, to resolve licensing issues with the State of Utah. Despite repeated communications, all three properties continue to operate without valid business licenses. Mr. Christofferson confirmed with the State Tax Commission that discussions have occurred, but that tax liabilities remain outstanding.

City Manager Quinn Bennion expressed frustration, emphasizing that while the City wants local businesses to succeed, Mr. Naumu has accumulated more than \$400,000 in unpaid sales and transient room taxes (TRT) over several years. Mr. Bennion reported that the City has received complaints of guests not being charged the appropriate taxes, and noted that past payments have been minimal compared to obligations.

When questioned about the status of his first and second quarter sales and TRT taxes for 2025, Mr. Naumu stated that both sales and transient room taxes for the first and second quarters of the current year have been paid. He estimated the total of the first quarter payment at around \$40,000, with a similar amount of \$40,000 being paid for the second quarter. He explained that his legal counsel is negotiating a repayment plan with the State, estimating payments between \$8,000 and \$13,000 per month over multiple years. He further stated that franchise-related funds are earmarked for property improvements, including parking lots and signage, and that an additional \$40,000 has been set aside as a down payment toward the State repayment plan.

Councilmembers questioned the legitimacy of reported tax payments, given the lack of verification, and expressed concern that the businesses continue to operate without licenses. Councilmember Corey Foley noted that allowing businesses to operate without paying their fair share of tourism-related taxes creates an unfair advantage over compliant operators.

City Attorney Michael Harrington reported that operating a business without a license for more than three days after citation is considered a public nuisance under Vernal City Code. He explained that the matter may proceed through criminal or civil enforcement. A criminal case is already set for trial on September 18, 2025, and upon conviction the court could issue a cease-and-desist order with potential jail time for violations. The civil process, he noted, is slower and would require Council action to seek an order through district court.

After discussion, the Council directed Vernal City staff to begin work researching the claims of payments made by Mr. Naumu and to report on findings within two days. Council instructed Mr. Naumu to provide verified documentation of tax payments for the first and second quarters within two weeks. If verification is received, the Council will consider granting up to 30 days for the completion of a formal payment plan with the State Tax Commission. If verification is not received, or if no plan is finalized, the Council stated that the City would pursue abatement and enforcement actions.

POLICY AND LEGISLATION

REVIEW CONCEPT DESIGN FOR INTERSECTION SAFETY AT 1500 W / HWY 40 AS PRESENTED BY UDOT - KEITH DESPAIN

Public Works Director Keith Despain reported on a proposed UDOT safety project at the intersection of Highway 40 and 1500 West. He explained that UDOT initiated the discussion due to safety concerns and presented four potential alternatives. The most cost-effective option involves raised concrete curb dividers that would eliminate cross-traffic at 1500 West and restrict left-hand turns from the highway. Other options, including a traffic signal, were deemed more costly or inconsistent with UDOT’s requirements.

Councilmembers discussed potential impacts of the proposed design. Councilmember Ted Munford supported the plan as a good safety improvement, while Councilmember Randel Mills asked about funding. Mr. Despain clarified that no City funds are allocated and that UDOT would be responsible for securing project funding. Councilmember Corey Foley raised concerns about the effectiveness of the curb and questioned what safety issue was being solved given the low number of observed left turns. Mr. Despain acknowledged that traffic counts were minimal but noted the design was UDOT’s preferred affordable option.

Councilmembers discussed accident history, traffic patterns, and possible unintended consequences, such as drivers cutting through adjacent properties. City Manager Quinn Bennion advised that safety benefits likely outweigh minor inconveniences, though public feedback should be gathered from nearby businesses and the church.

Following discussion, Councilmember Randel Mills made a motion to support the concept design for intersection safety at 1500 W and Highway 40 as presented, with Councilmember Ted Munford seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously with the following roll call vote:

Councilmember Munford..... aye;
Councilmember Mills..... aye;
Councilmember O’Driscoll..... aye;
Councilmember Long..... aye;
Councilmember Foley..... aye.

Mr. Despain was directed to provide UDOT with the City's support along with a request for continued public input as the project moves forward.

DISCUSSION AND PRESENTATION OF RECYCLOPS CURB RECYCLING - RECYCLOPS AND QUINN BENNION

City Manager Quinn Bennion introduced the item and noted Vernal City's early role in curbside recycling. He explained that seven years ago Vernal partnered with Recyclops, becoming one of the first rural cities in Utah to provide curbside recycling. Residents may currently opt to add recycling to their monthly utility bill through the City, though most contract directly with Recyclops. Quinn welcomed Ryan Smith, of Recyclops, and Todd Wallace, local franchise operator, to provide background and future options.

Ryan Smith reviewed Vernal's recycling history, noting that Vernal briefly pioneered curbside recycling in Utah as early as 1990. Recyclops entered the community in 2018, launching its rural service model here before expanding it to over 700 zip codes nationwide. Since that time, more than 500,000 pounds of materials have been recycled locally. He acknowledged past service challenges during expansion but reported a current 99.5% on-time pickup rate.

Mr. Smith outlined a proposal to transition Vernal's program from "opt-in" to "opt-out." Under this model, all residents would be automatically enrolled with the option to decline service at any time. He stated that participation rates in opt-out cities often exceed 70%, which reduces costs and increases sustainability. Current local service fees could drop from \$22/month depending on participation. Mr. Smith also described service improvements, including the use of yellow Recyclops carts instead of bags, which are cleaner and more convenient. He explained that materials are transported by Todd Wallace to Recyclops' Heber facility and then to a state-of-the-art Rocky Mountain Recycling facility in Salt Lake City. Contamination rates average 5–8%, compared with the EPA's national average of 25%.

Councilmembers raised concerns about older residents unintentionally being enrolled, refund policies, and the need for clear education. Ryan responded that Recyclops can track households not setting out materials and proactively follow up, and he expressed willingness to arrange refunds when appropriate. Council discussed potential use of flyers and public outreach prior to implementation. Councilmembers discussed cost comparisons, the low landfill fees in Uintah County, and the challenge of promoting recycling in a community where disposal costs are inexpensive. Local operator Todd Wallace noted that many residents remain unaware the program exists and supported a strong public education effort.

The Council expressed appreciation for the presentation and the local service provided. No vote was taken as the matter was presented for discussion and future consideration only.

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF THE JONES AND DEMILLE CHANGE ORDER FOR THE 600 W AND 400 N WATER LINE DESIGN - KEITH DESPAIN

Public Works Director Keith Despain reported on a proposed change order related to the City's ongoing water system upgrade. He explained that the City continues to upgrade outdated water infrastructure, with much of the funding provided through Community Impact Board (CIB) grants. He noted the original 200 South project included targeted asbestos line replacement, but subsequent analysis showed that cast iron lines were of higher concern due to significant water loss. During construction, a break occurred on 600 West, leading staff to request Jones & DeMille to prepare a redesign for that area. While the design work was underway, further testing with acoustic leak detection and chlorinated water tracing confirmed that 400 North was also a priority project area. Jones & DeMille was directed to complete designs for both sections. Mr. Despain presented a change order for \$39,200 to cover the additional design work for 600 West and 400 North. He confirmed that the cost would be funded entirely through CIB sources and noted that the cost was for design of the project only and not for the construction management portion.

Councilmember Ted Munford motioned to approve the change order for Jones and Demille's design of the 600 W and 400 N water line design. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with the following roll call vote:

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

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF CHANGE ORDER #3 FOR THE SILVER SPUR CONSTRUCTION OF THE 400 N WATER LINE - KEITH DESPAIN

Public Works Director Keith Despain reported on progress with the ongoing waterline replacement project. He reminded the Council that the project is funded through a combination of Community Impact Board (CIB) grants and a low-interest loan. Silver Spur has completed work on 200 South, including final paving after significant delays caused by asphalt plant scheduling conflicts. Crews have now shifted to the 600–800 West section, with approximately 90% of the main line installed and tie-ins underway. Pressure testing, bacteriological testing, and service installations are expected within the next two weeks.

Mr. Despain presented a proposed change order to incorporate the 400 North waterline segment designed by Jones & DeMille. This addition, at a cost of \$890,600, would allow the project to be completed this year using remaining CIB funding. He explained that efficiencies would be realized by proceeding immediately with Silver Spur, avoiding the need to rebid in the spring when costs are expected to increase by at least 4%.

Shane Sweet, Project Manager for Silver Spur, addressed questions regarding landscaping restoration, the completion date, and paving. He clarified that landscaping costs were a general clause and would not apply, and that the October 31, 2025 completion date includes paving, though crews anticipate finishing earlier.

City Manager Quinn Bennion emphasized that although citizens were frustrated with paving delays, waterline construction quality had been excellent and passed all testing. He noted that rebidding the project could jeopardize the City's ability to fully use CIB grant funds, since loans are drawn first and unused grants are lost.

Councilmember Ted Munford expressed appreciation for the contractor's responses and supported moving forward. Councilmember Edward Long stated that rebidding would not likely produce lower costs and recommended approval. Councilmember Corey Foley voiced concern about potential paving delays but acknowledged the need for timely replacement, noting past frustrations with incomplete projects. Councilmember Randel Mills supported the project but expressed reservations about ensuring the October deadline is met, citing the community's prior dissatisfaction with delays.

Councilmember Ed Long made the motion to approve change order #3 for the Silver Spur construction of the 400 N water line for \$890,600. Councilmember Ted Munford seconded the motion. Councilmember Randel Mills stated his reservation for his vote, emphasizing the need to make the deadline of October 31, 2025. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

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

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE SELECTION OF SPARANO + MOONEY TO DEVELOP THE TINY HOME VILLAGE - QUINN BENNION

City Manager Quinn Bennion provided background on the City’s recent purchase of property on 600 South near 300 East, directly across from the Self Help Homes project. He reported that Self Help Homes had pulled building permits and would begin construction of four homes on the north parcel within the coming week. On the south parcel, Vernal City issued a request for interest to explore development of an affordable housing project in the form of a small home village.

Six proposals were received, three of which came from local contractors. A committee consisting of staff members and Councilmembers Robin O’Driscoll and Edward Long interviewed all six applicants, narrowed the selection to three finalists, and conducted a second round of interviews. Following this process, the committee determined that Sparano and Mooney, a Utah-based partnership of an architect and modular home builder, offered the most suitable proposal.

The developers propose to site approximately 28–30 modular tiny homes, all of which would be for sale rather than rentals. They committed to utilizing local contractors for site preparation, utilities, and foundation work, while importing and installing the modular homes. Mr. Bennion noted that local applicants, while strongly considered, lacked the resources to deliver the project at the same scale and efficiency. He emphasized that Sparano and Mooney’s turnkey model shortens the construction timeline from years to months, and their prior experience with similar projects set them apart as the only group with proven results.

Councilmember Long highlighted the importance of prioritizing local involvement, but acknowledged that none of the local proposals could fully meet the scope. Councilmember O’Driscoll confirmed that Sparano and Mooney’s quality and experience made them the preferred choice. Mr. Bennion noted that the next step will be negotiation of a developer agreement, likely requiring a rezone under a Planned Residential Unit Development (PRUD). He added that the process was valuable in itself, as it provided insight and ideas from multiple perspectives, even beyond the selected proposal.

Councilmember Randel Mills made a motion to approve the selection of Sparano + Mooney to develop the tiny home village. Councilmember Ed Long seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with the following roll call vote:

- Councilmember Munford..... aye;*
- Councilmember Mills..... aye;*
- Councilmember O’Driscoll..... aye;*
- Councilmember Long..... aye;*
- Councilmember Foley..... Aye.*

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE NO 2025-22 OFF PREMISE SIGNS - BRAEDEN CHRISTOFFERSON

Assistant City Manager Braeden Christofferson explained that in June 2024, the Planning Commission worked with Summit Designs on a conditional use permit for a billboard along 500 South, with a second approved along 500 East near the airport. Both projects met the criteria for approval under existing ordinance. Following significant community feedback about the irregular location of such signs, the Planning Commission reviewed options and ultimately passed a full prohibition of all off-premise signs. Existing signs would be designated legal non-conforming, allowing repair but prohibiting relocation, enlargement, or alteration.

Councilmember Corey Foley asked whether this would apply only to large billboards. Mr. Christofferson clarified that it applies to all off-premise signage, including smaller directional or business signs placed away from the business property. Councilmember Edward Long asked about political signs; Mr. Christofferson confirmed that political signs and community event notices are protected speech and would not be restricted.

Councilmember Foley expressed concern that the ordinance may be too broad, potentially hindering legitimate small business advertising. Councilmembers agreed that billboards are undesirable, but suggested the ordinance could be refined. Mr. Christofferson noted the current proposal was a reactive measure to prevent immediate proliferation.

Councilmember Ted Munford suggested approving the ordinance to address current concerns, then directing staff to revise it to allow smaller signs. Mr. Bennion stated the Council could remand the ordinance back to the Planning Commission for further review and impose a temporary moratorium to prevent additional applications during the interim.

Councilmember Munford made a motion to remand ordinance 2025-22 back to the Planning Commission with direction to review allowances for small signage, and to impose a 90-day moratorium on new off-premise sign applications. Councilmember Randel Mills seconded. Motion passed unanimously with the following roll call vote:

<i>Councilmember Munford.....</i>	<i>aye;</i>
<i>Councilmember Mills.....</i>	<i>aye;</i>
<i>Councilmember O'Driscoll.....</i>	<i>aye;</i>
<i>Councilmember Long.....</i>	<i>aye;</i>
<i>Councilmember Foley.....</i>	<i>aye.</i>

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE NO 2025-23 USE TABLES - BRAEDEN CHRISTOFFERSON

Assistant City Manager Braeden Christofferson explained that the proposed ordinance is a simple clarification. Fences currently appear in the City's use table, but since fences are not a land use and are instead regulated as structures, they are being removed from the table. Vernal City already has fence regulations in the code.

The second portion of the amendment updates the use table regarding medical cannabis pharmacies. Current code allows a processing facility but does not provide for a pharmacy. Because various entities have expressed interest in establishing a pharmacy locally, the Planning Commission recommended creating a process to allow it. The update adds medical cannabis pharmacies as a permitted use in the industrial zone, giving the City the ability to regulate and control their location. Councilmember Ted Munford stated that the changes made sense and presented no concerns.

Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll motioned to approve Ordinance No 2025-23 Use Tables, with Councilmember Randel Mills seconding. The motion passed unanimously with the following roll call vote:

<i>Councilmember Munford.....</i>	<i>aye;</i>
<i>Councilmember Mills.....</i>	<i>aye;</i>
<i>Councilmember O'Driscoll.....</i>	<i>aye;</i>
<i>Councilmember Long.....</i>	<i>aye;</i>
<i>Councilmember Foley.....</i>	<i>Aye.</i>

**DISCUSSION REGARDING THE NUMBER OF PARKING SPACES AT UINTAH REC CENTER -
BRAEDEN CHRISTOFFERSON**

Assistant City Manager Braeden Christofferson reported that Uintah Special Service District 1 announced the start of construction for the addition to their facility. With this expansion, the District has proposed adding 245 new parking stalls. Mr. Christofferson noted that with full staffing and use, the addition could generate up to 736 persons on the Recreation District property. Based on calculations by Sunrise Engineering, it is estimated that at least 237 stalls are required to accommodate the anticipated demand. Including the new stalls, the site would have a total of 445 stalls, in addition to available on-street parking.

Public Works Director Keith Despain stated that the District previously indicated they would have sufficient parking to cover the new addition. Mr. Christofferson also explained that fire lanes and fire access would be incorporated, and Quinn Bennion added that the City has not received complaints about street parking in that area, which is expected to be sufficient for current and future use. Mr. Despain also noted that additional entrances are being added to the building, including a mid and west entrance. Councilmember Edward Long asked whether a formal analysis of parking needs had been conducted. Christofferson confirmed that Sunrise Engineering performed calculations based on court space, players, and general use.

Councilmember Corey Foley made a motion to approve the addition of 245 stalls for the Uintah Recreation Center Expansion. Councilmember Ed Long seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with the following rollcall vote:

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

**CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF THE ROAD MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT WITH UINTAH
COUNTY - KEITH DESPAIN**

Public Works Director Keith Despain explained that the road maintenance agreement had already been reviewed and approved by Uintah County. The purpose of the agreement is to designate responsibilities for maintaining a road extension proposed by a developer. The extension would continue 300 South west through the existing townhome development and connect to the south entrance of Terra Academy. The proposed development to the west is expected to include a 55+ subdivision with approximately 50 units.

Because the road would cross the Steinaker Service Canal, the Bureau of Reclamation requires a formal agreement ensuring the road and bridge will be maintained. Despain noted that the version before the Council included one adjustment from the county’s version clarifying that the city–county boundary, rather than the canal right-of-way, would serve as the division line for maintenance responsibilities.

Day-to-day maintenance, such as snow plowing and sweeping, would be provided by Vernal City, while general maintenance including asphalt repairs, chip sealing, and major upkeep, would be split at the city–county boundary. The agreement also covers emergency repairs.

Councilmembers discussed traffic impacts near Terra Academy, with concerns about congestion and parking in the nearby townhome complex. It was noted that while the new connection could add traffic, it may also relieve pressure by creating an additional access point.

Councilmember Ted Munford made a motion to approve the road maintenance agreement with Uintah County as presented. Councilmember Corey Foley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with the following rollcall vote:

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

STAFF REPORTS

Councilmember Corey Foley reported on the Sewer Management Board meeting held two weeks prior. The board is moving forward with the bid from Stubbs and Stubbs. The project timeline allows for 300 days to completion, though the goal is to complete significant work through the fall. Councilmember Foley noted that while the project will likely be messy, it is an important upgrade and represents a significant investment from Vernal City. He will provide further updates as progress continues.

Councilmember Randel Mills added that considerable time has been spent developing a workable bypass system. The plan includes a backup system and round-the-clock observation, with the intention of completing work before November 1st.

City Manager Quinn Bennion asked whether this project involved the controversial pump station. Councilmember Foley confirmed that it did, and explained that measures have been taken to remedy previous issues. The upgrades will address the deterioration caused by sewage gases and, once completed, will provide a significant long-term improvement.

City Manager Quinn Bennion reminded the Council that the Balloon Fest is scheduled for the upcoming weekend. He also reported on a successful event organized by the City at the Uintah County Fair the previous weekend. The City coordinated the competition, which included 34 teams, while the County Fair provided funding. Bennion expressed appreciation for the partnership and noted the positive outcome.

CLOSED SESSION

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

- 1. Strategy sessions to discuss pending or reasonably imminent litigation;*
- 2. 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.*
- 3. Strategy sessions to discuss the sale of real property, including any form of a water right or water shares.*

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.*

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

ADJOURN