

Bluff Town Council Public Hearing Final Minutes

Thursday, September 25, 2025, at 6:00 pm

IN PERSON: Bluff Community Center Auditorium

190 North 3rd East, Bluff, Utah 84512

Virtual Participation is also available via Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/95524493228>

6:03 Meeting Called to Order & Roll Call: Mayor Ann K. Leppanen, Luanne Hook, Jennifer Davila, Linda Sosa, Britt Hornsby, Erin Nelson Town Manager

1. Reminder of Rules of Procedure and Summary of Public Hearing Topic

(Nelson)(6:03pm): Nelson announced 'Rules of Procedure, 'Those Wishing to Make a Public Comment' and a 'Summary of Events & Petition to Disconnect' reviewing the history of the disconnect request and scheduled mediation (October 15, 2025) and trial (Jan 12, 13 & 14, 2026). The public hearing today is for the disconnection request specifically for the land owned by the Actons.

2. Public Comments - in person attendees - 3 minutes each (6:14pm):

Josh Ewing – Black Locust Ave - Expressed appreciation to Mayor & Council for their time. 'Bluff is being targeted and bullied'. This is because Bluff wants to have a say in its future and landscape. Never before has the State of Utah attacked one of its Town's in this way. Using money that could be going to school kids and attempting to cut our town in half, conspiring with a land owner. Private land owner said nothing when Town of Bluff approved boundaries or received certification for creation of the Town, can't imagine them doing this to Blanding nor Monticello for trying to protect their aquifer. Many requests for mining and gravel pits on the bench without remediation efforts. Not paranoid to be worried, prudent to defend ourselves, worth the long-term investment to protect our community. We cannot be reasonable when those coming to the table cannot be reasonable. Don't tie the hands of incoming Mayor and Council, removing options from the table. Official time was called, Ewings personal timer read 2 minutes, 47 seconds and last sentence was read requesting that 'we not give these folks what they want, when we don't know what they want'.

Amer Tumeh – Desert Rose – Disappointed by the tone & tenor of Josh Ewing's letter, which reads as a political ad with emotionally charged words (threatened, bullied, conspiring). As if this is not of our choosing, this is what we wanted. When Bluff incorporated, the question was asked if we should start large or small and annex as we grow. Residents agreed to start big, as more land in the monument will result in more federal dollars. Creating a dangerous precedent that 'Wealthy People' can do what they want because they will sue when they want something. Ill-advised decisions sometimes result in lawsuits. The Actons were Sysco salespeople, "I would hardly call either one of them 'rich people'" and I wish more people in Bluff were like them. Bluff's boundaries were made without any logical or

reasonable basis, we just wanted to be the biggest small town in Utah. Any information that you hear about the aquifer and water shed is not true, we have a contained aquifer and our water is charged from Blue Mountains, it takes 55 years for water to travel to the aquifer. The decision is clear in my mind, we can continue this lawsuit, As a Business Owner, I am tired of financing. Half of the towns income comes from Bluff Dwellings and Desert Rose. Use the money for something that is worthwhile.

Mike Yearous – Coral Sands RV Park – Echo some things already spoken, to a point. Bluff did a land grab to control and we way over extended. For a town this small, we have no business with 30ish miles, there is no way to manage the land, it is just all about control. The water aquifer is safe, if anything, we should do something with the river water and figure out a way to use it before we lose it. Everything done in this town is to keep it from growing, population-wise and nobody wants young people whatsoever. There are many older and retired people with money in the bank, others are still working and have a life to live.

Reverend Jack Chase – St Christophers Mission – Third time interim at St Christophers, first time 2016 while on sabbatical from TX, returned in 2020. Worked closely with Reagan W to create community garden at the Mission, came to fruition with successor. Mission's goal is to be part of Bluff, having been incorporated within boundaries. During COVID many partnerships in area, commend Bluff for making them feel like part of the community. Mission does not wish to be separated from Town of Bluff. Encourage working through things during mediation. Bishop Barry Beisner is also on call and has submitted written comment. The mission and church do not exist for themselves but for the community in which they serve. Stressing that they were not invited to the mediation, but are included in the potential disconnection.

Kirsten Ewing – Black Locust – Thanks to Council for the time they have put in. Concerns: lack of transparency and cooperation between Acton parties and SITLA, Bluff cannot make an educated decision based on the information received, she is placing trust in Council that they have more information. This is a group that in 2023 called us 'screaming activists' for protecting ourselves and what is ours. I live here, I want control of the water, to ensure its safety, there is always a chance of contamination when drilling. Agree that this does set a precedent.

Gary Haws – Calf Canyon Rd – Appreciation for Mayor and Council. Was not privy to this in 2023, has been studying up. There is talk of the Town's Watershed – defined as a channel of rainfall and snowmelt to creeks, streams & rivers. Went up to the bench and observed that the water on the bench will flow North to the river. Town gets water from the artesian well, which brings groundwater to the surface, watershed will not affect our aquifer. This is in

regard to 640 acres of private land, surrounded by BLM and State Land, brings town revenue of less than \$24/year. It will take us 3,750 years to recoup the loss of the lawsuit so far, Town of Bluff cannot provide services to the area in question. Wikipedia shows Bluff with 34 square miles, the 640 acres is one square mile. Bluff would not lose 'half of the town', it is 1 square mile, plus state land, less than 15 square miles. We are not being threatened or bullied, we just need to start working with them. I have heard Town took money from EMS and sent it toward legal fees, I feel strongly it is time to stop spending money frivolously, like this lawsuit and move forward on things like secondary water and affordable housing. There is a time you fall on your sword during a fight, this is not the time. Work with them and let it go.

Marx Powell – Has a history on this and the water. In Josh's words, Bluff is being 'threatened and bullied'. Neither Actons nor SITLA chose to be placed in our town, it was forced on them, they did not have a vote. Who is bullying and threatening who? Everything so far has been done with good intentions by good people acting, however its been done with emotion not fact. Facts: 1. Decision to fight disconnect was determined by the majority of people that showed up to a Public Hearing, not vote. It was Bluff's decision to start this, nothing was forced upon us. We could have simply allowed the disconnect and be done. 2. Bluff cannot afford to provide services to this property, even if it wanted to. 3. Bluff receives little/no income from property. 4. All State land in this disconnect is out of control of Bluff. As far as not telling Bluff what they are doing, why don't we ask Blanding and White Mesa to tell us what they are doing, as they effect our watershed than the property in question. We are a contained aquifer and the watershed has zero affect on our drinking water. Over 90% of our incorporated area is State, BLM and SITLA that we cannot inhabit nor control. Bottom line: Its time to end this and start spending money on thigs that will help bluff: roads, secondary water, affordable housing, issues that matter to people, instead of trying to control what people do.

3. Public Comments - virtual attendees - 3 minutes each

Marcia Hadefeldt – One thing that happens when you speak later, is most of what you were thinking has been said. Agrees so much today with new people coming to town and providing space for them to work and live. Agrees that our aquifer is safe and run off water is always in question as floods are known. Does not mind if a neighbor owns undeveloped land with an idea to use the land, what she does have a problem with is a neighbor who won't come to Town Management with their idea and propose a way to make it happen. Questioned why the landowner didn't request to work with Town to adjust the zone to meet their needs/wants, as Town has made these adjustments. Instead, we were approached by a man who said we were 'stupid to fight because they would sue us off of the map'. While

this is one section, the one section cannot be disconnected without the SITLA and BLM parcel. St Christophers needs to step up in its own legal way if they would like to step out of this, if they'd like to. Please don't count out the land and neighbors, if mediation will bring us the discussion that should have happened in the first place, (what do you want to do with the land and how might we adjust to make it possible) then ask the judge to show the neighbor and agencies involved that they cannot take over the town's authority to plan for its future. Mediation is a wonderful suggestion and hopeful we can all talk about ways to make their 'secret plan' a reality without fighting in courts.

4. Adjourn (6:40pm): Hornsby motions to adjourn, Davila seconded. Leppanen, Sosa, Hook, Davila and Hornsby voted in favor.

Notice of Special Accommodations: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals requiring accommodations during this meeting should notify Linda Sosa, Town Recorder, at linda@townofbluffutah.gov or call 435-672-9990.