

# **MINUTES of the Vernal City PLANNING COMMISSION**

Vernal City Council Chambers - 374 East Main Street, Vernal, Utah

October 14, 2025

5:30 PM

**Members Present:** Stephen Lytle, Nick Porter, Troy Allred, Ryan Balch, Samantha Chapoose

**Members Excused:**

**Alternates Present:**

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**Staff Present:** Braeden Christofferson, Assistant City Manager; Matthew Tate, Building Official; Taylor Munguia, Planning Technician.

**WELCOME AND DESIGNATION OF CHAIR AND MEMBERS:** Chair Stephen Lytle welcomed everyone present to the meeting.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM September 9, 2025:** Chair Stephen Lytle asked if there were any changes to the minutes from September 9, 2025. The minutes were approved with there being no corrections, *Ryan Balch moved to approve the minutes of September 9, 2025 as presented. Troy Allred seconded the motion. The motion passed with Stephen Lytle, Troy Allred, Nick Porter, Samantha Chapoose & Ryan Balch voting in favor.*

## **RECOMMENDATION TO CONSIDER APPROVAL TO AMEND THE VERNAL CITY GENERAL PLAN TO INCLUDE A WATER USE AND PRESERVATION ELEMENT – ORDINANCE 2025-024**

Braeden Christofferson explained that the purpose of the amendment and public hearing was to review and approve an update to the Vernal City's general plan addressing water use and preservation. The update was developed with input from several City Departments, including but not limited to Public Works and Planning, and was intended to ensure compliance with Utah Senate Bill 110. Gabby Blackburn a planning consultant from Sunrise Engineering presented the details of the plan, noting that it had been funded through a grant received over a year ago and must be implemented by December. Only three (3) other cities in Utah had completed similar plans, but Vernal City was reportedly on track and had prepared a more detailed and comprehensive document, including a zone meter study that exceeded state requirements. Ms. Blackburn reviewed the state's requested revisions, including the removal of certain graphics due to potential updates to conservation goals next year. An overview of the City's water supply was provided, referencing the 2024 CRS Engineers Water Rights Study. The City currently purchases about three-thousand five hundred (3,500) acre-feet of water per year, though it holds rights for up to five-thousand (5,000). Based on future growth projections, Vernal could experience a

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shortage of water by 2060 under moderate or high population growth. The agricultural section of the plan was also updated, though agriculture represents a small portion of total water use. The update encourages improved efficiency, the use of secondary water metering, and careful evaluation of annexations to manage irrigation conversions and reduce strain on the system. The state required additional information to be included, such as a list of private irrigation companies registered with the Department of Natural Resources. Another grant opportunity was identified that could help fund future plan updates. Mr. Christofferson asked whether any responses had been received from stakeholders and it was reported that none had been received. Most stakeholders have little concern since Vernal City manages its own water system, though all required coordination was completed.

Chair, Stephen Lytle, opened the public hearing to receive public comment. There being to public comment, Chair, Stephen Lytle closed the public hearing.

***Ryan Balch made a motion to forward a positive recommendation to the City Council for approval of the proposed amendment to the Vernal City General Plan, adding a Water Use and Preservation element. Troy Allred seconded the motion. The motion passed with Stephen Lytle, Troy Allred, Nick Porter, Samantha Chapoose & Ryan Balch voting in favor.***

**RECOMMENDATION TO CONSIDER APPROVAL TO AMEND THE VERNAL CITY MUNICIPAL PLANNING AND ZONING CODE SECTION 16.58.090 – MINOR SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS – ORDINANCE 2025-028**

Braeden Christofferson stated that the purpose of the ordinance update is to align with Utah Code and Uintah County's processes. The existing code was outdated, requiring surveys and mylars to include metes and bounds descriptions. After consultation with the County Recorder's office and the County Surveyor, it was recommended that the City transition away from this method and instead allow plats to be recorded by reference to the subdivision. Additional updates included clarifying the process for recording subdivision plats. The new language placed responsibility for recording on the zoning administrator rather than the applicant, ensuring timely and consistent recording. Minor changes were made to section references and wording, primarily for clarity and alignment with county procedures. It was noted that these updates would simplify the process, reduce administrative delays, and save applicants significant costs, as metes and bounds descriptions are time-consuming and expensive to prepare. The commission briefly discussed the proposed amendment and staff clarified the changes.

Chair, Stephen Lytle, opened the public hearing to receive public comment. There being to public comment, Chair, Stephen Lytle closed the public hearing.

***Nick Porter made a motion to forward a positive recommendation to the City Council for approval of the proposed amendment to the Vernal City Minor Subdivision Regulations. Samantha Chapoose seconded the motion. The motion passed with Stephen Lytle, Troy Allred, Nick Porter, Samantha Chapoose & Ryan Balch voting in favor.***

**DISCUSSION TO CONSIDER APPROVAL TO AMEND THE VERNAL CITY PLANNING AND ZONING CODE SECTION 16.28.050 – OFF-PREMISE SIGNS – ORDINANCE NUMBER 2025-022**

Braeden Christofferson explained that the purpose of the discussion was to refine the proposed ordinance, which had been remanded by the City Council for further review of provisions related to smaller signs and temporary event signage. Mr. Christofferson explained that the intent of the amendment was to create a balanced approach to off-premise advertising by allowing limited temporary signage for events while maintaining city aesthetics and safety standards. The proposed solution would introduce a temporary event sign permit for off-premise signs. This permit would be free of charge, it could be placed twenty one (21) days before the event, and would allow signs to remain up to three (3) days after the event. Code enforcement would monitor for compliance. The proposal outlined size limits for signs: a freestanding sign up to six (6') feet by six (6') feet or a banner sign up to ten (10') feet by three (3') feet. Signs could also be mounted on small trailers or other mobile frameworks with a permit, provided they were not placed on semi-trailers, freight trailers, or oversized box trucks. These restrictions were included to prevent large, unsightly displays that could detract from the City's appearance or reduce visibility for motorists. Commission members agreed the proposal provided a reasonable balance between flexibility and visual control. Minor typographical corrections were noted in the draft text. Discussion also addressed the potential for businesses without street frontage to advertise off-premise. While some examples were mentioned, it was agreed that this issue is not currently widespread within city limits. The commission discussed possible options, including monument signs or conditional use permits. It was concluded that off-premise business advertising was not an immediate concern and could be revisited in the future if needed. The commission requested that staff continue refining the ordinance language to present a final version for consideration at the next planning session in November.

**DISCUSSION PERTAINING TO ADDITIONAL DWELLING UNITS (ADUS)**

Braeden Christofferson began the discussion by explaining that the purpose was to introduce ADUs into Vernal City Code, align local regulations with state ADU standards, and explore ways to increase flexibility while maintaining neighborhood compatibility. Commission Members examined potential lot size, design, and utility standards for ADUs, noting the growing need for additional housing options in Vernal and throughout the Wasatch Front. The discussion emphasized that ADUs could help support multigenerational living and provide property owners with additional income opportunities. Zoning considerations were discussed at length, including whether ADUs should be allowed in manufactured home (MH) zones. It was noted that infrastructure such as roads, water, and sewer systems should meet city standards before additional density is permitted. The group clarified the difference between mobile home parks and individual MH-zoned lots and agreed that individual lots would be eligible for an ADU but a mobile home park would not be. The Commission also discussed owner occupancy requirements, noting that state law mandates one of the structures on the property must be owner-occupied. Regarding utilities, there was general agreement that separate utility connections should not be required unless a property is subdivided or sold separately. Parking

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requirements were considered important but should remain reasonable to avoid creating unnecessary cost barriers for property owners. The issue of short-term rentals was also discussed, with some members suggesting that establishing a minimum lease term, such as ninety (90) days, could discourage Airbnb-type uses. Enforcement challenges were acknowledged. Questions were raised about existing setback standards, particularly rear setbacks, with interest in reviewing whether current requirements could be adjusted to allow for more flexibility. Mr. Christofferson also discussed the concept of “subordinate dwelling units,” a new housing model being explored in other Utah cities, which could help inform Vernal City’s future housing policies. Staff concluded that they would develop draft language for a new ADU ordinance, consult with the building official regarding setback and spacing standards, and present the proposed draft for further discussion at the November meeting. The overall goal is to create clear, practical, and affordable ADU regulations that address local housing needs while maintaining neighborhood integrity.

**DISCUSSION IN REGARDS TO VETERANS DAY**

The Commission discussed scheduling the November meeting in consideration of Veterans Day. Members considered meeting the week before or after the holiday. After discussion, consensus was reached to hold the meeting on November 4, 2025 instead of the regularly scheduled date of November 11, 2025.

***ADJOURN: There being no further business, Samantha Chapoose moved to adjourn. Nick Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote, and the meeting was adjourned.***

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Stephen Lytle , Planning Commission Chair