

**IRON COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING
NOVEMBER 24, 2025**

Minutes of the Iron County Commission meeting convened at 9:00 a.m. November 24, 2025 in Commission Chambers at the Iron County Courthouse, Parowan, Utah.

Officers in attendance included:

Paul Cozzens	Commission Chair
Michael Bleak	Commissioner
Kenneth Robinson	Commissioner
Jonathan T. Whittaker	County Clerk
Sam Woodall	Deputy Attorney

Also present:

Karsten Reed	County Assessor
Lucas Little	County Auditor
Ken Carpenter	County Sheriff
Stephanie Rainey	COA
McKayla Meinhardt	Deputy Auditor
Jennifer Bradbury	HR Director
Reed Erickson	Planner
Brett Hamilton	Planner
Maria Twitchell	Tourism/Parks & Rec
Amber Hatch	Weed Supervisor

Others Present:

Robert Ballou	Pat Brower	Miken Larson
Charles Milby	Paula Milby	Boston Miles
Roger Ming	Diana Shiller	Riley Shotwell
Bruce Washburn	Bryce Williams	

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INVOCATION

An invocation was offered by G’Ne Bartholomew.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Those assembled were led in the pledge of allegiance by Karsten Reed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Kenneth Robinson made a motion to approve the minutes of the Iron County Commission meeting held on November 10, 2025. Second by Michael Bleak. Voting: Michael Bleak, Aye; Paul Cozzens, Aye; Kenneth Robinson, Aye.

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS FOR PAYMENT

Michael Bleak made a motion to approve Claims for Payment from November 10, 2025, to November 23, 2025. Second by Kenneth Robinson. Voting: Michael Bleak, Aye; Paul Cozzens, Aye; Kenneth Robinson, Aye.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Lucas Little, Iron County Auditor, explained that new legislation would take effect in 2026, SB202, regarding the Board of Equalization (BOE). Under this legislation, county personnel involved in the BOE process were required to receive a designation through the Utah State Tax Commission (USTC) before participating in BOE activities. Luke reported that this designation was known as the “County Property Tax Designation.” County personnel must attend 2 one-day classes to be held on April 21-22, 2026, at the Iron County Courthouse, taught by the USTC. He noted that the current BOE was nearly complete for 2025. Luke reported that Senator Dan McKay drafted a bill that would change the abatement program. Luke listened to the Revenue and Taxation Committee during the interim session, and they voted against this bill. Senator McKay was determined to get this bill passed and would make changes and bring it back next year. He noted that the Public Hearing for the 2026 budget was being held later today, as listed on the agenda.

Stephanie Rainey, Iron County Council on Aging (COA), Director, reported that through October 2025, the Cedar City Senior Center had delivered 5,493 Meals on Wheels, compared to 4,377 in 2024 for a 25.5% increase. The Parowan City Senior Center had delivered 3,613 MOWs, compared to 3,031 in 2024 for a 19.22% increase. The Meals on Wheels food budget was on track. In July, the COA received an additional \$11K from the Social Services Block Grant to help support transportation expenses. Stephanie noted that the COA was in need of volunteer drivers. Several Cedar City drivers may be retiring soon, and there was also a need for additional substitute drivers. She explained that they may have to split the Enoch route soon, which would require an additional truck. She reported that the Cedar City Senior Center reception area was recently re-carpeted, creating a much more welcoming space. Attendance at the Cedar Center had grown substantially, and the biggest complaint was the lack of parking. Bingo attendance had grown from roughly 20-25 participants to 50. Stephanie reported on staff changes. She noted that the Senior Prom, held in June, was a huge success. There was a “Rowdy Bingo” night held in October, which was also a success and nearly sold out. Stephanie expressed her appreciation to all the COA volunteers, Maintenance Department, Fleet Department, and HR for all they do for the COA..

Maria Twitchell, Iron County Executive Director of Parks & Recreation, and Cedar City/Brian Head Tourism, reported on Tourism. As of the last Tourism report in September, the Tourism budget was 66% used, and the Tourism, Recreation, Culture & Convention (TRCC) budget was 61% used. The Transient Room Tax (TRT) collections were down 6% to date, and Occupancy and the Average Daily rate were the same as this time last year at 65.8%. However, the Restaurant Tax saw a 17% increase over 2024. She noted that Tourism was awarded \$95K from the Utah Office of Tourism (UOT) Grant for marketing purposes. Maria reported that the Iron County Restaurant Tax Advisory Board had met earlier in November to review the applications for the 2026 budget. She presented the grant funding recommendations to the commissioners for a total of \$523K allocated to projects. Maria reported on results from the Destination Development Program, which showed that Iron County had 2.6M visitors.

Maria Twitchell reported on Parks and Recreation. Maria expressed her appreciation to Mike Worthen, Iron County Natural Resources, for all of his assistance over the years. Mike had been a great asset to the Parks & Recreation Department, especially working with Bryce Williams and helping them obtain grants. She wished him well on his retirement. Maria noted that the budget was on track at 71% spent. Iron County hosted the State High School Mountain Bike Championships on October 17th and 18th, with an average of 13,900 in attendance. The Mountain Bike Championships had a huge economic impact in Iron County, and sadly, they reported that they would not be coming back in 2026. They want to begin to move the race around the state. She noted that she was going to convince them that they should still hold the race in Iron County, and they would still be having 2 regional Mountain Bike races here. Maria reported that to date, revenue generated in the parks from special events, camping fees, and pavilion fees was \$14,148. She reported on work that had been done at Wood Ranch, 5-Mile, Three Peaks, and the Shooting Range. Commissioner Bleak expressed his appreciation to the staff at the Visitors Center for their great work in supporting Iron County.

Ken Carpenter, Iron County Sheriff, reported on Current Law Enforcement (LE) issues: Metro SWAT-Search/Arrest Warrants, other high risk calls had 20 call outs to date this year; the Drug Task Force was very active, and have 2 new commanders, Sergeant Bryan Moore from the Cedar City Police Department (CCPD), new agent Officer Clint Anderson from the CCPD; and the ICSO/Washington County Task Force Bomb Squad continued to work with the Explosive Detection for K9's. Sheriff Carpenter reported on the Total Incident Reports since January 1, 2025. There were large increases in Simple Assaults from 59 in 2024 to 94 this year, Child Abuse/Neglect from 38 to 64 cases, Felony Offenses from 194 to 227, and Sex crimes against a child from 8 to 25. He noted that the Rocky Mountain Information Network (RMIN) and the Regional Information Sharing System (RISS-part of the eight-state region) were federally funded programs nationwide, which provided LE a tremendous amount of support in a number of different ways. Sheriff Carpenter explained and gave examples of how RISS worked. He noted that the Tren De Aragua (TdA) was a violent transnational criminal organization that began in Venezuela, and were involved in drug trafficking for "Pink Ketamine (Tusi). The major hubs were Denver and Salt Lake City, and it had not been seen in Iron County yet. Credit Unions need to be aware that TdA does something called "jackpotting," where they take their laptop computers and plant a virus into the ATMs that overrides the system. Sheriff Carpenter reported that there were fraudulent phone calls nationwide telling the person that they have a warrant out for their arrest and identifying themselves as a police officer. He emphasized that the ICSO would never call people on the phone and tell them they have a warrant for their arrest. If anyone received a call regarding warrants, hang up and call the police. Sheriff Carpenter reported on Youth Homes, and that they continue to increase in crimes from 347 in 2024 to 618 in 2025. Serious Assaults went from 33 in July to 59 to date, and 8 out of the 59 were aggravated assaults resulting in broken jaws, being kicked in the face, hair torn from their scalp, among many others. The State Legislatures need to be aware of this problem. They need to seriously look at the juveniles and hold them accountable for their serious offences. He noted that, as of now, unless there was a felony, there was nothing that LE could do. There was a male employee who endured a very serious aggravated assault at one of the group homes. He stepped back to defend himself and hit the boy with a closed fist and knocking the juvenile down. Even though it stopped the

assault, the employee was fired for defending himself. The officers had put in 618 hours dealing with group homes compared to 347 in 2024 at a cost of \$46,350. There was a discussion on what could possibly be done to stop these assaults and allow the staff to defend themselves without the fear of being fired or sued. Commissioner Bleak reported that the group homes could provide their own security, but they would not be allowed to do anything. They could not touch the child or restrain them. The Division of Child & Family Services (DCFS) was in control of what they could or could not do. Discussion continued on this issue. Sheriff Carpenter reported on the current strength of Patrol and future ops and concerns.

Michael Bleak, Iron County Commissioner, reported that he met with the Southern Utah Executive Committee for Economic Development, which encourages and recruits Economic Development throughout the region. He met with the Sheriff Complex, the Airport Board, and with Terry Palmer, Iron County Building and Zoning, discussing new projects and new subdivisions; with Parowan City Administration regarding fire issues; with Maria Twitchell and Sam Woodall regarding ongoing contract negotiations with SUU for their athletic department. Mike reported that he had several meetings regarding EMS and Air Ambulance coverage. He expressed his appreciation to Josh Merideth, IT, for collecting data from the database to help with the issues. He attended the Wildlife Urban Interface and the public meeting regarding HB48. They were told that the requirements of HB48 would need to be implemented by January 1, 2026, but there were still no clear rules, a map, or definitive answers. Mike stated that he would not approve the implementation until everything was made clear. He reported that he met with the Tourism Board regarding the grant presentations, met with Danon Hulet, Southwest Area Fire Manager, regarding employee coverage during the winter, and met with rPlus Energies, LLC, the new energy company responsible for the Appaloosa 1 and 1 Solar projects. Commissioner Bleak reported that he met with Luke Little, Nicole Rosenberg, and a company that was interested in locating in Iron County. The company sought to use the Military Installation Development Authority (MIDA), which was the same as the Inland Port. It was a state agency that provided funding, as the Inland Port does, except for military projects. Mike noted that the Commission needed to write a resolution to open talks with MIDA.

Kenneth Robinson, Iron County Commissioner, reported that he was able to listen to the Wildlife Urban Interface meeting, and he had the same frustrations expressed by Commissioner Bleak. Ken noted that he was out of town and couldn't attend any other meetings.

Paul Cozzens, Iron County Commissioner, reported that Cedar City was combining with the Central Iron County Water Conservancy District (CICWCD) for municipal water service, turning over the exploration and development of water resources to the CICWCD. Paul explained the water pressure issues that Cedar City was having with pumping water from the Quichapa Water Basin. Cedar City was considering tying into the new water tank put in by the CICWCD. This would be a positive move forward. He noted that he drove up Parowan Canyon and saw that their pipe had been laid for their state-funded recharge project. Paul reported that he met with the Southwest Behavioral Health Board and Steering Committee last week. Paul expressed his appreciation to Darin Bushman, 5-County AOG Executive Director, for doing such an amazing job. Paul continued to monitor the progress of the new Sheriff Complex.

PUBLIC HEARING, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL OF A PROPOSED AGRICULTURE PROTECTION AREA (APA), ACCORDING TO PROVISIONS OF UTAH CODE §17-41, FOR APPROXIMATELY 105.51 ACRES LOCATED ON FIVE PARCELS GENERALLY LOCATED ON 4100 W. BETWEEN 3200 N AND 4000 N

Applicant: Clark & Ruth Webster

Brett Hamilton, Iron County Planner, explained that the application included 2 separate parcels owned by the Clark & Ruth Wester Family Trust of 105.51 acres (5 parcels). The property was currently zoned RA-20 and A-20. Brett reported that the State Code Provisions changed this month and renumbered some of the code. What was Utah Code §17.14 was now Utah Code §17.81 Agriculture, Industrial, or Critical Infrastructure Materials Protection Areas (effective 11/6/2025). The areas Brett would focus on were Part 1- Proposal and Approval of a Protection Area, and Part 3- Protection of Land in a Protection Area. Brett explained the

protections and benefits to the landowner in an Agriculture Protection Area (APA) regarding Limitations on local regulations (Section 302), Nuisances (Section 304), and Eminent domain restrictions (Section 305). He explained the Criteria to be applied in evaluating a proposal for APA: 1. Whether or not land is currently being used for agricultural use (yes), 2. Whether or not the land is currently zoned for agricultural use (yes), 3. Whether or not the land is viable for agricultural use (yes), 4. The extent and nature of existing or proposed agricultural improvement (yes), and 5. Anticipated trends in agricultural use and technological conditions. Brett reported that the Agriculture Advisory Board and the ICPC felt that Webster's had met all the criteria for the APA. He explained that when notices were sent to property owners within one thousand feet of the proposed APA, it allowed those property owners to request to be included in the APA. There was one request from an adjacent property owner, the Paul Sheratt Family Trust, just south of the proposed APA, which wished to be included. The ICPC had met with Paul Sheratt, and they agreed to consider a separate APA application for the Paul Sherratt Family Trust.

Paul Cozzens, Iron County Commission Chair, declared a Public Hearing open regarding the proposed APA.

Robert Ballou, a citizen of Cedar City, noted that he became aware of Webster's petition to become an APA in October and thanked the Iron County Clerk for posting it. Robert reported that he had done his own research, and he was encouraged to support this APA.

Paul Cozzens, Iron County Commission Chair, declared the Public Hearing closed.

Kenneth Robinson made a motion to approve the proposed APA, according to provisions of Utah Code §17-81, for approximately 105.51 acres as presented by Brett Hamilton. Second by Michael Bleak. Voting: Michael Bleak, Aye; Paul Cozzens, Aye; Kenneth Robinson, Aye.

PUBLIC HEARING, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL FOR DISPOSAL OF A PARCEL(S) OF REAL PROPERTY (APN: D-1024-5-1, AND APN: D-1024-5-2)

Jon Whittaker, Iron County Clerk, explained that the parcels were located in Cedar Highlands and were acquired by the town of Cedar Highlands for the intent to improve or modify Cedar Highlands Road. Jon reported that the town of Cedar Highlands had dissolved, and the project was scrapped. The property was now owned by Iron County, and Jon listed the property for sale approximately 18 months ago. There was an offer submitted, and Iron County countered at \$160K for both properties. He noted that the proceeds of the sale would be deposited in the Corridor Preservation Fund, as the properties were purchased from that fund.

Paul Cozzens, Iron County Commission Chair, declared a Public Hearing open regarding the disposal of parcels.

No public comments were offered.

Paul Cozzens, Iron County Commission Chair, declared the Public Hearing closed.

Michael Bleak made a motion to approve the disposal of real property (APN'S D-1024-5-1 and D-1024-5-2) as presented by Jon Whittaker for a total of \$160K to be deposited in the Corridor Preservation Fund. Second by Kenneth Robinson. Voting: Michael Bleak, Aye; Paul Cozzens, Aye; Kenneth Robinson, Aye.

PUBLIC HEARING, REGARDING THE PROPOSED IRON COUNTY 2026 FINAL BUDGET

Lucas Little, Iron County Auditor, reported on the Iron County 2026 Final budget. He noted that this was a Public Hearing and the final approval of the 2026 Iron County Budget would take place at the December 8, 2025, Commission meeting. Luke highlighted some main points from the proposed budget. He explained the Sales Tax Revenue history compared to FY2023 and FY2024, and reported on the 2026 General Fund budgeted \$4,939,362; Municipal Services Fund budgeted \$2,734,284; Average Home values in Iron County by the Assessor's Office was \$431K; Recording Fees budgeted \$550K; and Building Permits budgeted \$850K. He noted that there was no new additional Outstanding Debt for 2025, and explained the outstanding debt from 2024. Luke reported on Capital Expenses for the Sheriff's Complex, Sheriff SWAT vehicles, Road Department, Landfill, Council on Aging (COA), and Building and Grounds, the history of Salary & Wages, the proposed 2026 proposed Salary & Wages, and on job position

changes for 2026 and other significant impacts for Iron County. Some of the 2025 Takeaways were: Inflation rate dropped a little bit in 2025; Utah unemployment rate remained low, below the national average, which made it difficult to keep departments filled and hire new employees; Interest rates started to drop; the General Fund tax increase took effect in 2025; the General Fund balance increased in EY2024-Iron County remains strong and was financial stable; and the Municipal Services Fund balance increased at EY2024.

Commissioner Bleak expressed his appreciation to all Department Heads. This was a lengthy process, and requests were very conservative in their use of our taxes. Commissioner Cozzens agreed with the comments made by Commissioner Bleak. Paul noted that it was important for the public to know that Iron County received only 10% of its funding from taxes. Commissioner Robinson also expressed his appreciation.

Paul Cozzens, Iron County Commission Chair, declared a Public Hearing open regarding the proposed 2026 Iron County Budget.

No public comments were offered.

Paul Cozzens, Iron County Commission Chair, declared the Public Hearing closed.

PUBLIC HEARING, REGARDING A COMPENSATION INCREASE FOR EXECUTIVE COUNTY OFFICERS

Lucas Little, Iron County Auditor, explained that under UCA §17-66-401, a new requirement from the 2024 legislative session was that a public hearing be held whenever the salary of an Executive County Officer was increased. Luke reported that “the annual salaries of the officers of all counties in the state shall be fixed by the respective county legislature.” He explained the meaning of Executive County Officer, what was required for the increase, and presented a list of all Iron County Executive Officers and the percentage of increase to each for the 2026 budget.

Paul Cozzens, Iron County Commission Chair, declared a Public Hearing open regarding a compensation increase for Executive County Officers.

Jon Whittaker, Iron County Clerk, explained that there was a wide range of salaries for commissioners and council members throughout the state. Compared to similar County Commissioners, the Iron County Commissioners were getting much less than their counterparts.

Commissioner Bleak expressed his appreciation for Jon’s remarks. Mike explained that the commission job was only part-time, and they all held outside employment. He noted that the only pay increase he had received while a Commissioner was cost-of-living-adjustments (COLA), and he was very appreciative of that. Mike viewed his responsibility as more of a public service. Commissioner Cozzens agreed with Commissioner Bleak’s comments. He noted that when he ran for the Commission position, he did not know that it was a paid position. Commissioner Robinson echoed the thoughts and sentiments of the other 2 commissioners. He noted that when he was elected as a Commissioner, he intentionally did not look at what the salary was, so it was never an issue for him.

Miken Larson, a citizen of Iron County, expressed her appreciation to the commissioners, and their comments of being public servants to the citizens they represent.

Paul Cozzens, Iron County Commission Chair, declared the public hearing closed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were offered.

DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL OF A RESPONSE TO A LETTER FROM ADVOCACY FOR COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT REGARDING OPPOSITION TO THE PINE VALLEY WATER SUPPLY PROJECT (PVWSP)

Paul Cozzens, Iron County Commissioner, explained that the CICWCD was formed many years ago. The state determines the safe yield of water that comes out of the mountains from snowfall and rain. The Cedar Valley safe yield was 21K acre-feet, and 28K acre-feet was being mined each year. Paul gave a short history of the Groundwater Management Plan Study done on the Cedar Valley Basin, and the Parowan Basin Groundwater Management Plan Study was currently being done. The CICWCD became aware, many years ago, that no water rights had been dedicated in the Wah Wah Valley, Pine Valley, and Hamlin Valley Basins, so they filed for water rights in each of the basins. It was determined that Pine Valley was the best basin for water rights, and the CICWCD purchased a section of property to install solar panels, generating the electricity needed to pump water from the Pine Valley Basin to the Cedar Valley, serving the water users of that valley. Paul explained that in 2019, an agreement was signed with the CICWCD, the State of Utah and the 5th District Court Judge, along with Beaver County. Jon Whittaker, Iron County Clerk, read the letter from the Advocacy for Community Environment into the minutes. Paul Monroe, CICWCD Manager, via phone, explained the process of obtaining the water rights, and confirming the legal process and getting the rights through the court process. Paul Cozzens read the letter from the commissioners to the advocacy group.

Michael Bleak made a motion to approve the response to the letter from the Advocacy for Community and Environment regarding opposition to the Pine Valley Water Project as presented. Second by Kenneth Robinson. Voting: Michael Bleak, Aye; Paul Cozzens, Aye; Kenneth Robinson, Aye.

DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL OF PROPOSED FEE CHANGES FOR IRON COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION

Maria Twitchell, Iron County Executive Director of Park & Recreation, explained the recent changes in the parks and shooting range, and the reason for the fee changes. Maria turned the time over to Bryce Williams, Parks & Recreation Maintenance Supervisor, to report on the fee changes. Bryce reported on the fee changes to the Group Shooting Range, Three Peaks Recreation Park, Wood Ranch, 5 Mile, Campgrounds, and Pavilions.

Kenneth Robinson made a motion to approve the proposed fee changes for Iron County Parks & Recreation as presented by Maria Twitchell and Bryce Williams. Second by Michael Bleak. Voting: Michael Bleak, Aye; Paul Cozzens, Aye; Kenneth Robinson, Aye.

After the vote was taken, Pat Brower and Riley Shotwell, Southern Utah Practical Shooting Association, approached the commission with opposition to the fees and schedule at the Shooting Range. There was a discussion with the commissioners, and no change was made. Commissioner Cozzens suggested that Pat and Riley meet with Frank Nichols, since he was willing to donate land west of the Shooting Range for their use.

CONVENE AS THE IRON COUNTY BOARD OF EQUALIZATION (BOE)

Paul Cozzens, Iron County Commission Chair, declared the convening as the Iron County Board of Equalization (BOE).

REVIEW AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL OF VETERAN, CIRCUIT BREAKER, LOW INCOME, AND BLIND TAX ABATEMENTS FOR THE 2025 TAX YEAR SUBMITTED AFTER SEPTEMBER 3, 2025

McKayla Meinhardt, Iron County Deputy Auditor, reported on Veteran, Circuit Breaker, Low Income, and Blind Tax Abatements that had been submitted after September 3rd. The reimbursement from the state for 2025 was \$247,726.32 for tax relief for the Circuit Breakers only. She noted that there was no reimbursement for Veterans, Indigent, or hardship. The abatement went from \$1,705.00 in 2024, and \$1,771.00 in 2025. McKayla noted that SB197 was proposed to phase out the Circuit Breaker Tax Relief program. It was vetoed by Governor Cox in March, but Senator McCay was making amendments to it, still trying to push it through. She

plead for solidarity in opposition to legislation that would harm abatement programs that would in turn harm citizens.

Michael Bleak made a motion to approve the BOE Hearing Officer recommendations for Valuation Appeals for the 2025 tax year. Second by Kenneth Robinson. Voting: Michael Bleak, Aye; Paul Cozzens, Aye; Kenneth Robinson, Aye.

RECONVENE AS THE IRON COUNTY COMMISSION

Paul Cozzens, Iron County Commissioner, declared the reconvening of the Iron County Commission.

NON-DELEGATED ITEMS

County Boards:

A. Mountain View Special Service District (MVSSD)

Paula Milby, Special Service District, presented the names of the Board Members and their term to the commissioners for approval:

Charles R. Milby (January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2028) 4 year term; Elizabeth Cockrill (January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2028) 4 year term; and Kim Hunter (January 1, 2023 to January 1, 2027) 4 year term.

Paul Cozzens made a motion to approve the ratifications of the MVSSD members as presented. Second by Michael Bleak. Voting: Michael Bleak, Aye; Paul Cozzens, Aye; Kenneth Robinson, Aye.

ADJOURNMENT

Paul Cozzens, Iron County Commission Chair, declared adjournment.



Signed: Paul Cozzens, Commission Chair



Attest: Jonathan T. Whittaker, County Clerk

