

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD, JANUARY 7, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the Vernal City Council room, 374 East Main, Vernal, Utah 84078.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Robin O'Driscoll, Randel Mills, Ted Munford, Ed Long, and Nick Porter and Mayor Corey Foley.

WELCOME: Mayor Corey Foley welcomed everyone to the meeting.

INVOCATION OR UPLIFTING THOUGHT: The invocation was given by Councilmember Randel Mills.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The Pledge of Allegiance was led by City Attorney Michael Harrington.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD DECEMBER 17, 2025 *Councilmember Ed Long moved to approve the minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting held December 17, 2025. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Munford, Mills, O'Driscoll, Long, and Porter voting in favor.*

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE EPA BROWNFIELDS CLEANUP GRANT APPLICATION - QUINN BENNION

City Manager Quinn Bennion introduced the agenda item concerning a federal Environmental Protection Agency Brownfields Cleanup Grant application that Vernal City is preparing to submit. He stated that the City previously discussed the grant opportunity during a City Council meeting on September 3, 2025 and received formal notification of the grant availability at that time. The City intends to apply as Vernal City for an EPA cleanup grant to assist with costs associated with environmental cleanup of City-owned property that was acquired with preexisting environmental conditions not caused by the City.

Mr. Bennion explained that the primary environmental concerns include historic dry-cleaning chemicals that have migrated into the soil and groundwater over several decades, as well as asbestos and lead-based paint present in the former brick hotel structure. He noted that representatives from Terracon, the firm that has assisted the City with environmental studies to date, were present electronically, along with a representative from the State Brownfields Program. Mr. Bennion stated that the City has completed a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, Phase II Environmental Site Assessment, an Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives (ABCAs), and a limited site investigation for the affected properties. He invited Terracon to provide an overview of the grant application and cleanup plan.

Ben Bower of Terracon stated that environmental investigations of the former Basin Laundry

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property, the former Showalter property, and the Lamplighter Block have been ongoing for several years, with assistance from the EPA, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality Brownfields Program, and funding from Vernal City. He explained that the City is now positioned to submit a cleanup grant application, which is due January 28, noting that the deadline was extended due to a recent federal government shutdown.

Mr. Bower explained that a requirement of the EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant program is public notification of the City's intent to apply for funding. He stated that the project was mentioned at a City Council meeting September 3, 2025 and that a formal public notice was posted on the City's website and bulletin boards on December 17, 2025 providing notice of the grant application, the ABCA, and the public hearing to allow for public comment.

Mr. Bower reviewed the ABCA process, explaining that the EPA requires evaluation of multiple cleanup alternatives, including a no-action alternative. He stated that taking no action was not viable, as environmental impacts would impede redevelopment of the properties. A second alternative involved extensive chemical injections to break down chlorinated solvents believed to have originated from the former Basin Laundry site, as well as other historic dry cleaners and automotive repair facilities located upgradient. While effective, this option was estimated to cost more than \$5 million, exceeding available grant funding and not guaranteeing complete removal of all contamination.

A third alternative involved institutional controls and engineering controls, including environmental covenants restricting future land use and vapor mitigation systems to prevent volatile contaminants from entering future buildings. Mr. Bower explained that the recommended approach is a hybrid of these alternatives. The proposed cleanup plan includes targeted chemical injections and subsurface barriers to reduce contaminant concentrations and limit migration, installation of vapor mitigation systems beneath future buildings, and institutional controls in the form of an environmental covenant restricting use of the properties to commercial purposes. He noted that the covenant could be modified in the future if land use changes are proposed, subject to additional cleanup requirements.

Mr. Bower further stated that the cleanup plan also addresses petroleum contamination originating from a former Chevron service station located on the property, including removal of impacted soils, mitigation of benzene vapors, and abatement of asbestos, lead-based paint, and other hazardous materials prior to demolition. He explained that this balanced approach would protect future occupants while allowing redevelopment to proceed. The total estimated cost of the cleanup is approximately \$3.5 million, which would be fully covered by the EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant if awarded.

Mayor Corey Foley opened the public hearing and invited members of the public in attendance to speak.

Carol Kendall, a Vernal City resident, stated that while perfect cleanup is unlikely, she was impressed with the proposed hybrid approach and felt it provided a reasonable balance between

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cleanup and containment. Mayor Foley thanked Ms. Kendall for her comment.

Councilmember Edward Long asked whether the \$3.5 million grant request would cover 100 percent of the cleanup costs, with Mr. Bower confirming that it would. Councilmember Long inquired about the funding timeline, and Mr. Bower explained that successful grant applicants are typically notified in May or June, with funding becoming available in October. He stated that the grant period is four years, which is common for projects involving remediation and monitoring.

Councilmember Long asked whether the City could proceed with cleanup work prior to grant award and seek reimbursement if the grant is later awarded. Mr. Bower stated that EPA protocols require approved quality assurance and work plans prior to beginning any work and that any work completed before grant approval would not be eligible for reimbursement.

Councilmember Long also asked about the longevity and risk of existing contaminants. Mr. Bower explained that contaminants remain above federal and state screening levels and that some substances, including per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), are highly persistent and may remain for decades if untreated. He stated that the proposed remediation includes active treatment, soil removal, and vapor mitigation to reduce risk and support redevelopment.

Councilmember Randel Mills asked about the likelihood of meeting cleanup standards by the end of the project. Mr. Bower acknowledged that some risk exists but stated that the proposed hybrid and aggressive remediation approach provides the best opportunity for success. He expressed confidence in the project and stated that the City has a strong application supported by prior investment, planning, and redevelopment goals consistent with EPA priorities.

With no further public comment, Mayor Foley closed the public hearing.

City Manager Bennion thanked Terracon and the State Brownfields Program for their work on the project and for funding and conducting studies to date. He stated that the process has been extensive but has provided valuable understanding of site conditions and a clear path toward making the properties productive and usable.

CONSIDER AMENDMENT TO VERNAL CITY FEE SCHEDULE FOR SEWER FEES, RESOLUTION 2026-01 - KEITH DESPAIN

Public Works Director Keith Despain presented Resolution No. 2026-01, which adopts a rate increase to the City's sewer fee schedule. He explained that Vernal City, along with other Uintah Basin entities, utilizes a single wastewater treatment facility operated by the Ashley Valley Water Treatment Facility. The treatment facility periodically adjusts its service rates, which are passed through to the City for wastewater treatment.

For 2026, the treatment facility approved a 2.35% rate increase applicable to three customer categories including residential, multi-family units, and commercial connections. In addition, a 17.68% increase applies to commercial overage usage, which affects commercial accounts exceeding 8,000 gallons per month, billed per additional 1,000 gallons. Mr. Despain stated that

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the City is not marking up these charges, and that the resolution reflects a direct pass-through of costs to customers.

Council discussion clarified that sewer usage is calculated based on water meter readings, which serve as the basis for measuring wastewater input to the treatment facility. The increased overage rate is intended to encourage commercial users to reduce wastewater production, similar to conservation efforts on the clean water side.

Mayor Corey Foley provided additional context regarding the Basin's long-term financial planning for the treatment facility. He noted that while the facility was originally funded through Community Impact Board (CIB) grants and loans, which are now paid off, the replacement and rehabilitation costs for aging infrastructure continue to rise. The facility, which came online in 2001, is approximately 25 years into its lifespan. The facility has significant maintenance needs, which include a full rehabilitation of the lift station due to corrosion caused by hydrogen sulfide gas.

Mr. Despain added that the rate increases are part of a multi-year rate schedule adopted in 2023, designed to establish a replacement reserve fund now that construction debt has been retired. He noted that the commercial overage increase primarily impacts water-intensive businesses, such as car washes, while most commercial users remain below the 8,000-gallon threshold.

Council confirmed that the rate increase is a required pass-through to maintain wastewater treatment services and will take effect January 1, 2026, impacting utility bills issued at the end of January.

Councilmember Ted Munford motioned to approve Resolution 2026-01 as presented. Councilmember Randel Mills seconded the motion. The motion passed 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 Porter.....</i>	<i>aye;</i>

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS FOR 2026 - MAYOR COREY FOLEY
Mayor Corey Foley noted that the list of board and committee appointments is posted on the City's website. He explained that the City Council serves on a variety of boards and in several capacities, with some boards being more active than others. He asked if there were any questions or concerns from the Council.

Councilmember Ted Munford made a motion to approve the 2026 City Council Committee Appointments as presented. Councilmember Nick Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

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<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 Porter</i>	<i>aye</i> ;

Following the vote, Mayor Foley addressed the Council, noting that members of the public have raised questions regarding certain boards, particularly those involving higher visibility or financial oversight. He requested that Councilmembers who serve on boards provide brief updates in staff reports, preferably at least once per month, to help keep both the public and fellow Councilmembers informed. He acknowledged that some boards meet infrequently, such as the Cemetery Board, while others meet more regularly, and encouraged reporting accordingly.

Mayor Foley expressed appreciation for the Council's flexibility and willingness to serve. He emphasized that board appointments are not permanent and can be adjusted if circumstances change. He thanked Councilmembers for their understanding and service.

APPOINTMENT OF PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS - BRAEDEN CHRISTOFFERSON

Assistant City Manager Braeden Christofferson reviewed the proposed Planning Commission appointments. He noted that the Planning Commission serves as the City's advisory board on land use and development matters, including zoning, subdivision applications, and long-range planning efforts. Maintaining a fully staffed commission is important to ensure timely review of applications and continuity as the City works through ongoing development initiatives.

The Council was advised that the current Planning Commission members, Steven Lytle, Ryan Balk, Troy Allred, and Brittany Young, are recommended for reappointment to a 2026–2030 term. Reappointing these members will help retain institutional knowledge and continuity.

Mr. Christofferson then presented two new proposed appointments. Aaron Bancroft was recommended to fill the position previously held by Nick Porter, who is now serving on the City Council. Hailey Todd was recommended to fill the position vacated by Brooke Hamilton, who has relocated. These new members would serve two-year terms, structured to support staggered appointments and long-term continuity on the Planning Commission.

Staff noted that the proposed Planning Commission would consist of seven members, and that two additional recommendations for alternate members would be brought forward at a future date.

Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll made a motion to approve the appointment of Planning Commission Members as presented. Councilmember Nick Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

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<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 Porter</i>	<i>aye</i> ;

STAFF REPORTS

City Recorder Sara Bell introduced Katie Flaniken, the City's new Communications Coordinator. She noted that it was Ms. Flaniken's first week with the City, and commended her for quickly integrating into the role. Ms. Bell stated staff holds a regular communications strategy meeting focused on improving public communication and proactively addressing city issues, and expressed appreciation for Ms. Flaniken's efforts and leadership.

Quinn Bennion reported that earlier in the day, City staff participated in a kickoff video meeting with community partners for the Utah Main Street Program Recreation Atlas project. Vernal City is one of three cities statewide selected to participate, along with Cedar City and Parowan. The study will evaluate Vernal's outdoor recreation assets and how they connect with downtown and Main Street efforts, including public outreach, visitor information, and redevelopment opportunities such as the Lamplighter Block. The project will include on-site tours in April, community engagement in June, and final reporting approximately one year from now. Mr. Bennion stated the timing aligns well with downtown planning efforts and may strengthen future applications for outdoor recreation grant funding.

Mr. Bennion also reported that Keith Despain, Clint Morton, and Councilmember Ed Long would attend a Community Impact Board (CIB) funding meeting the following morning. The City requested a review of a prior funding decision related to the street maintenance project, which includes chip seal and mill-and-overlay work on heavily traveled city streets. He expressed appreciation for their representation of the City.

Additionally, Mr. Bennion announced the City has accepted the terms of a \$200,000 Rural Opportunity Grant for the Sage Block. He noted the City previously received a similar grant for the Cobble Rock Block and stated the funding will assist with redevelopment efforts.

Braeden Christofferson provided an update on the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) mapping effort. In response to Council feedback and coordination with the Division of Natural Resources, staff will host a public open house on January 27, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., at City Hall. The open house will provide information and answer public questions, and no decisions will be made at that meeting.

Mr. Christofferson reported revisions to the draft WUI map reduced the number of affected areas from fourteen to six, with boundaries now limited to parcel-specific areas. Adjacent parcels will not be impacted. He stated that Ashley Creek Apartments and Escalante Drive have been removed from consideration, with remaining concerns primarily located in the northeastern portion of the City.

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In response to a question from Council, Mr. Christofferson indicated the item is anticipated to return to Council in early February following public feedback.

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