

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD,
JANUARY 21, 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, Ed Long, and Nick Porter and Mayor Corey Foley. Councilmember Ted Munford was excused from the meeting.

WELCOME: Mayor Corey Foley 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 Nick Porter.

Mayor Corey Foley thanked leaders and staff involved with the Vernal Youth City Council trip to the Local Officials Day held at the Utah State Capitol. He emphasized that the program is great for youth in the community.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD JANUARY 7, 2026 *Councilmember Nick Porter noted minor spelling changes needed. With no further changes, Councilmember Ed Long moved to approve the minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting held January 7, 2026. Councilmember Robin O’Driscoll seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Mills, O’Driscoll, Long, and Porter voting in favor.*

REQUEST FOR SPONSORSHIP OF EVENT: BOOTS AND BUCKLES - BRINLEY HOLT

Brinley Holt presented an overview of her proposed event, Boots and Buckles, explaining that its purpose is to provide activities for out-of-town visitors while creating opportunities for local vendors to sell their products. She stated that local vendors would be given first priority for booth space, with additional vendors, including food trucks and out-of-town participants, allowed if space remains. Ms. Holt noted that 25 vendors are currently committed, with 127 vendor contracts distributed, and estimated attendance at approximately 2,500 people. She also acknowledged that a previous event suffered from limited advertising and emphasized the importance of improved promotion for this event.

Council members asked questions regarding timing, vendor competition, funding eligibility, and overall impact. Ms. Holt explained that the event would not conflict with rodeo or Chamber of Commerce vendor events and that vendors have been informed of their options. She clarified that booth rental fees are intended only to cover the conference center rental and that she is seeking City assistance solely for advertising costs. She stated that she has reached out to local businesses for sponsorships and confirmed that all applicable sales tax requirements would be met.

Council discussion focused on whether the request aligned with the City’s sponsorship criteria and

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available funding. City Manager Quinn Bennion gave an overview of the City’s sponsorship criteria, and explained that the request would fall under the miscellaneous category. This category gives priority to events that promote Vernal commerce, and for-profit events receive lower priority. It was noted that City contributions must remain under 25 percent of the total event budget and that funding requests over \$1,000 are uncommon. Council expressed general support, with consensus indicating that a contribution of up to \$1,000 would be appropriate.

Councilmember Ed Long motioned to approve the sponsorship of \$1,000 for the Boots and Buckles event as presented. Councilmember Randel Mills seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

Councilmember Mills..... aye;
Councilmember O’Driscoll..... aye;
Councilmember Long..... aye;
Councilmember Porter..... nay;

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION 2026-02, SUPPORTING PARTICIPATION IN THE AARP NETWORK OF AGE FRIENDLY STATES AND COMMUNITIES - QUINN BENNION

City Manager Quinn Bennion introduced Cheryl Meier, Director of Uintah Special Service District 1, explaining that she had invited Vernal City and other local municipalities to consider a proclamation supporting participation in AARP’s Age-Friendly Communities initiative. Mr. Bennion noted that Vernal City already considers accessibility, mobility, and aging-related needs in its planning, budgeting, and capital projects, including sidewalk repairs, ADA ramps, and downtown improvements. He described the proclamation as a statement of intent acknowledging that the City is working toward being age-friendly, with no required financial commitment or formal designation.

Ms. Meier provided background on the initiative, explaining that it grew out of discussions with AARP following her presentation at the Get Healthy Utah Conference. She emphasized that participation carries no financial obligation and that the proclamation is voluntary, intended to show collaboration among the County, Vernal City, and other communities in supporting healthy aging. She explained that participation could strengthen future applications for small AARP grants, potentially up to approximately \$15,000, and that the first step would be a community needs assessment addressing areas such as housing, transportation, outdoor spaces, civic participation, communication, social inclusion, and health services.

Ms. Meier discussed a potential use of grant funding to provide no-cost personal training services for older adults at the Recreation Center, particularly for rehabilitation and long-term health maintenance. Council discussion addressed the scope of such a program, estimated costs, and the number of individuals who could be served, with staff noting that \$15,000 could fund approximately 600 hours of one-on-one training. Council members expressed support for the concept, noting that the proclamation reflects existing City practices and priorities, while

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD JANUARY 21, 2026 acknowledging ongoing needs related to sidewalk conditions and accessibility improvements that are addressed annually through the City’s budgeting and capital planning process.

Councilmember Nick Porter motioned to approve Resolution 2026-02 Supporting Participation in the AARP Network of Age Friendly States And Communities as presented. Councilmember Randel Mills seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

Councilmember Mills..... aye;
Councilmember O’Driscoll..... aye;
Councilmember Long..... aye;
Councilmember Porter..... aye;

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE SELECTION OF THE DEMO CONTRACTOR FOR THE LAMPLIGHTER MOTEL - KEITH DESPAIN

Public Works Director Keith Despain presented the next phase of the Lamplighter Block project. He recalled that in previous Council meetings, Council had recommended allowing local charities to recover usable materials from the site. This salvage process benefitted six local charitable organizations. With significant material remaining, staff proceeded with bidding for demolition of the exterior motel portion of the property. Mr. Despain reported that 14 bids were received, ranging from \$134,972 from Alta Excavation to \$548,900, with an average bid of approximately \$262,000. Four bids were under \$200,000, and staff recommended awarding the contract to Alta Excavation as the lowest responsible bidder.

Quinn Bennion noted that approval at this stage would select the contractor, with staff using the following two weeks to finalize contract documents. He emphasized that no work would begin until the contract was fully executed. Councilmember Randel Mills raised a question regarding local contractors, and Mr. Despain confirmed that local contractor Patriot Precision had submitted the third lowest bid at \$168,000, which fell out of range of the City’s five percent local contractor preference. Councilmember Ed Long asked about the anticipated contract timeline and completion date, and Mr. Bennion stated that liquidated damages and security provisions would be included, with completion dates tied to contractor-proposed timelines and enforceable through the contract.

Councilmember Randel Mills also expressed concern based on past experiences with low bids on other projects and asked whether dump fees were included in the bid, and Mr. Despain confirmed that they were. Mayor Corey Foley raised questions regarding public safety, site access, fencing, and liability during demolition, particularly related to public access and salvage activity. Mr. Despain stated that once the contract is signed, responsibility for fencing, sidewalk and shoulder closures, and site security would rest with the contractor. City Attorney Michael Harrington confirmed that contract language would assign liability to the contractor.

Councilmember Ed Long made a motion to approve awarding the demolition contract to Alta Excavation at \$134,972. Councilmember Nick Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with the following roll call vote:

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Councilmember Mills..... aye;
Councilmember O’Driscoll..... aye;
Councilmember Long..... aye;
Councilmember Porter..... aye;

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF CIB FUNDING TERMS FOR THE MAJOR ROADWAY REHABILITATION PROJECT - KEITH DESPAIN

Keith Despain presented the next item on the agenda, the consideration of approval of Community Impact Board (CIB) funding terms for the Major Roadway Rehabilitation Project. He explained that the City applied in October 2025 for \$3.4 million to rehabilitate several major roadways throughout Vernal City, primarily through chip seal treatments, with 500 South proposed for a mill and overlay. After initially receiving partial funding due to CIB financial constraints, staff requested reconsideration, and the CIB subsequently approved the full request structured as a \$1.7 million grant and a \$1.7 million loan at 0.5 percent interest over 10 years. Mr. Despain stated that staff was seeking Council approval to accept the funding terms and proceed with the project.

Council members asked questions regarding loan repayment, funding stability, and project scope. Mr. Despain explained that the loan would be repaid using annual B & C Road Funds received from the State, which currently total approximately \$500,000 per year and have remained consistent, with an increase in recent years benefiting rural cities. Councilmember Nick Porter asked about existing obligations tied to B & C Road Funds, and staff confirmed there is no current road-related debt beyond CIB loans. Mayor Corey Foley asked whether the funding amount was sufficient to cover the planned chip seal and overlay work, and Mr. Despain confirmed that the engineer’s estimates support the proposed budget. Councilmembers also discussed potential coordination with the Transportation District, construction timing, and how other infrastructure projects, including planned water and sewer work on 100 North, could affect scheduling.

Additional discussion addressed roadway conditions and maintenance limitations. Councilmember Porter asked whether surface irregularities, such as washboarding on Vernal Avenue, would be corrected. Mr. Despain explained that chip seal treatments preserve existing road profiles rather than correcting underlying surface issues. Council expressed appreciation for staff’s efforts, noting Councilmember Ed Long’s participation in the CIB presentation.

Councilmember Ed Long made a motion to approve the CIB funding terms for the Major Roadway Rehabilitation Project, seconded by Councilmember Nick Porter. The motion passed unanimously with the following roll call vote:

Councilmember Mills..... aye;
Councilmember O’Driscoll..... aye;
Councilmember Long..... aye;
Councilmember Porter..... aye;

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Mayor Corey Foley thanked Keith Despain and Councilmember Ed Long for their work on the CIB application and noted that the project represents a significant benefit to the community. Mr. Despain added that one advantage of the chip seal process is that roadways remain drivable during construction, minimizing disruptions to the public.

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THE SEWER MASTER PLAN UPDATE - KEITH DESPAIN

Keith Despain presented the next item for consideration of approval to move forward with an update to the Sewer Master Plan. He provided background, explaining that the original master plan was completed in 2009 through a joint effort of the Sewer Management Board and three sewer districts in the Ashley Valley, with the Sewer Management Board serving as the lead entity. The plan included comprehensive surveying and mapping of manholes and connecting pipes, as well as development of a hydraulic model to analyze system flows, capacity, and infrastructure condition. Mr. Despain noted that the original plan cost approximately \$330,000 and remains essential to daily sewer system management, but an update is now necessary due to growth and system expansion.

Mr. Despain explained that entities are proposing a two-part update approach coordinated by Dean Baker of the Ashley Valley Sewer Management Board. First, each entity would fund the surveying of new manholes added since 2009, with Vernal City responsible for the approximately 130 new manholes within city limits. Second, the Sewer Management Board would compile updated data and complete revised hydraulic modeling and planning, a portion anticipated to cost approximately \$130,000. Staff intends to apply to the Community Impact Board (CIB) for a planning grant of up to \$50,000, with the remaining balance funded through the Sewer Management Board. Mr. Despain stated that Vernal City’s direct cost is estimated at approximately \$40,000, based on a per-manhole surveying fee.

Councilmember Randel Mills stated that the update is overdue and necessary to prepare for current and future growth. Mayor Corey Foley, who serves on the Sewer Management Board along with Councilmember Mills, explained that the master plan has been continuously maintained and migrated into updated software by Bowen, Collins & Associates, placing the community in a strong position compared to starting a new plan from scratch. Council discussion clarified that the Sewer Management Board would manage contracting, including survey services, and that costs are shared indirectly through the wastewater treatment budget funded by participating entities. Additional benefits discussed included proposed metering to identify inflow and infiltration locations, improving system performance and long-term planning.

Councilmember Robin O’Driscoll motioned to approve moving forward with the Sewer Master Plan Update. Councilmember Randel Mills seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

Councilmember Mills..... aye;

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Councilmember O’Driscoll..... aye;
Councilmember Long..... aye;
Councilmember Porter..... aye;

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF DECLARATION OF SURPLUS FOR ITEMS FROM UINTAH FIRE DISTRICT ONCE OWNED BY VERNAL CITY - KEITH DESPAIN

Keith Despain presented an item regarding the surplus of aging equipment from the Uintah Fire District. Equipment to be surplus included a breathing apparatus previously, purchased by Vernal City that was used by the fire district. He explained that the fire district has since replaced the equipment, which includes tanks and other related gear, and that Vernal City now owns the apparatus and may put it out for bid.

Councilmember Randel Mills inquired whether any local entities could benefit from the equipment. Mr. Despain noted that the City’s Water Department has expressed interest in a few tanks and masks for confined entry purposes, and that the Finance Director will determine the best course of action for surplus equipment. He further stated that public entities are typically prioritized to receive such equipment, though the age of the apparatus may limit usability. Councilmember Mills suggested that rural communities might also benefit, even if the equipment is gifted, and Mr. Despain confirmed that fire districts are usually the primary recipients in such cases.

Councilmember Randel Mills motioned to approve the declaration of surplus items from Uintah Fire District as presented, with Councilmember Robin O’Driscoll seconding the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

Councilmember Mills..... aye;
Councilmember O’Driscoll..... aye;
Councilmember Long..... aye;
Councilmember Porter..... aye;

CONSIDER THE ACCEPTANCE OF A PROPOSAL AND CONTRACT FOR CONSTRUCTION OF OFFICES AT THE AIRPORT MAINTENANCE BUILDING - KEN CAMPBELL

Vernal Regional Airport Director Ken Campbell presented a proposal to construct an upstairs addition at the airport operations building to provide additional office space and a conference area. Mr. Campbell reviewed the history of the project, noting that previous attempts to secure engineering and contractor services had been challenging. He highlighted that the airport currently has five personnel and only two offices, and the upstairs addition would allow for future growth and support aviation education programs in the existing downstairs space.

The proposed addition includes three offices, a conference room, and improved windows to enhance visibility of the runway. Mr. Campbell emphasized the recent success of the airport’s local

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flight training program, now serving 17 students, and the need for dedicated education space. He requested council approval to proceed with a single contractor who provided a proposal, acknowledging that only one bid was received despite diligent outreach. Quinn Bennion stated that the City has established procurement processes which staff strives to follow in all circumstances. He explained that Mr. Campbell worked diligently to obtain contractor interest, but had difficulty securing multiple proposals. Mr. Bennion advised that, under the circumstances, it would be appropriate for the Council to formally acknowledge that reasonable efforts were made to comply with procurement requirements and to approve a waiver of the procurement process due to the receipt of only one proposal.

Councilmember Ed Long motioned to approve the acceptance of the proposal and contract for \$269,990 for the construction of offices at the Airport Maintenance building, including acknowledgement of the procurement waiver and potential liquidated damages. Councilmember Randel Mills seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with the following roll call vote:

- Councilmember Mills..... aye;*
- Councilmember O’Driscoll..... aye;*
- Councilmember Long..... aye;*
- Councilmember Porter..... aye;*

UPDATE REGARDING THE SELECTION PROCESS FOR ENGINEERING AND PLANNING SERVICES AT THE AIRPORT - KEN CAMPBELL

Ken Campbell provided a brief verbal update regarding the airport’s terminal improvement plans. He explained that during recent discussions with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Denver Airport District Office (ADO), staff identified a contractual issue related to the airport’s engineering agreement. The original contract contemplated relocation of the terminal, whereas the current intent is to refurbish and expand the existing facility. As a result, the FAA indicated that the engineering contract would need to be reopened and rebid before the project could proceed.

Mr. Campbell stated that staff will rebid the engineering contract in a transparent and auditable manner, consistent with procurement requirements, in order to remove the identified barrier and advance the terminal project. He noted that this process will likely shift the anticipated timeline, with a projected planning year of 2027 and an execution year of 2028, assuming the process proceeds as expected. He emphasized that no Council action was requested at this time and that the update was informational only.

Mr. Campbell further explained that a selection committee will be formed, similar to past practice, consisting of representatives from City administration, City Council, the County Commission, and legal counsel. He indicated that once the request for proposals is advertised, he will request a City Council member to participate in the selection process. A councilmember expressed support for the update and appreciation for the ongoing efforts at the airport.

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD JANUARY 21, 2026 STAFF REPORTS

Quinn Bennion reported that work is currently underway on the newly installed string lights above Vernal Avenue. As part of the purchase agreement, the vendor's representative is working with Keith Despain and Eric Dilworth to ensure the lights are properly calibrated and functioning as intended. He noted that temporary color changes may be visible during the evening while adjustments are being made. Once calibration is complete, the system will be turned over to the City for ongoing management. He explained that the lights will generally display a warm white tone, with the option to utilize color lighting for special events and holidays.

Mr. Bennion informed the Council that the next series of Small Town Comeback videos is set to release in February. He further explained that the upcoming series represents a significant collaboration with multiple community partners and will feature topics including rural education in partnership with the Uintah School District and Utah State University, rural health with local hospitals and Northeast Counseling, the Via Ferrata, Red Fleet State Park, the All Wheels Park, and community events such as Passport Summer. He stated the videos will provide a strong representation of the community and complement previously released content.

Mr. Bennion noted that the Youth City Council trip earlier in the day was successful. He added that participants were able to meet with Senator Winterton and Representative Chew on multiple occasions, and expressed appreciation for the strong support and engagement. Mayor Corey Foley expressed positive feedback regarding the updates and appreciation for the continued efforts to promote the community and engage youth.

Councilmember Randel Mills provided an update regarding the Sewer Management Board and the lift station project. He reported that the contractor continues to be encouraged to make progress on the project. While construction is not advancing as quickly as desired, the project remains within the approved construction timeframe. Dean Baker, representing the Sewer Management Board, is continuing to press the contractor to increase momentum to avoid any potential overruns.

CLOSED SESSION

Mayor Corey Foley announced that the Closed Session portion of the meeting would be held in the Council Chambers following the exit of the present members of the public. Councilmember Nick Porter moved to go into closed session for the following items:

- 1. 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*
- 2. Strategy sessions to discuss the sale of real property, including any form of a water right or water shares*

Councilmember Randel Mills seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with all in favor.

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RECONVENE**

Councilmember Nick Porter moved to reconvene the meeting into open session. Councilmember Randel Mills seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor.

Mayor Corey Foley proposed a discussion regarding the process for Requests for Sponsorship Applications. He suggested that events funded in the prior year be budgeted into the new year and that funds in the miscellaneous account be administered by a staff-led panel to review applications and award funding when requests meet established protocol, limiting Council review to requests exceeding a set threshold. The intent is to support community events while ensuring fairness and consistency.

Councilmember Ed Long emphasized the need for staff review of applications prior to Council consideration to ensure compliance with the sponsorship policy and expressed concern with automatically carrying forward prior-year approvals. Quinn Bennion suggested staff develop a scoring system to evaluate eligibility. Councilmembers agreed that a structured sponsorship process is needed and directed that the matter be discussed at a future meeting.

ADJOURN: *There being no further business, Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll motioned to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Ed Long seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote and the meeting was declared adjourned.*