

MINUTES of the public meeting of the Uintah County Commission held **March 17, 2026** in the Commission Chambers of the Uintah County Building at 147 East Main, Vernal, Utah. The meeting commenced at 3:00 pm.

PARTICIPANTS: Commissioners John Laursen, Sonja Norton, and Willis LeFevre.

ATTENDANCE: Trinna Gardner, Mike Wilkins, Darrin Brown, Devin Cobb, Colt Atwood, Kirk Benge, Sydnee Lyons, Jeremy Raymond, Wendi Long, Jen Garcia, Jason Blankenagel, Angela Hawkins, Jess Hermann, James Sharp, Robin O'Driscoll, Brenda McDonald, Danny Harrell, Chery Bolton
Minutes by Sheri Allen.

WELCOME: Commissioner Laursen, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

PRAYER by Chery Bolton.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE by Angela Hawkins.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: March 10, 2026 and March 11, 2026

Commissioner Norton moved to approve the minutes for March 10, 2026 and March 11, 2026. Motion passed unanimously.

2. APPROVAL OF WARRANTS – Mike Wilkins, Clerk-Auditor

Warrants dated March 12, 2026 in the amount of \$1,200,039.15. Payments of note are \$68,510.00 to Brett Woods Construction for the Library remodel, \$32,000.00 payment on the Landfill building, and \$692,716.26 to Central Canal.

Commissioner LeFevre moved to approve the warrants as presented by Mike Wilkins. Motion passed unanimously.

3. TAX MATTERS: None

4. UINTAH FIRE SUPPRESSION SPECIAL SERVICE DISTRICT Update - Jeremy Raymond, UFSSSD

Jeremy Raymond, Uintah Fire Special Service District, presented an annual review. In 2025, the District responded to 654 fire calls, accumulated 2,360 public relations hours, and 8,107 training hours. Call volume continues to increase. Firefighters are paid on-call or part-time, and must maintain certifications through continuing education. Over the past ten years, fire calls have steadily increased. The five departments - Avalon, Jensen, Lapoint, Naples, and Vernal - had 24, 110, 69, 106, and 297 calls, respectively. The majority of incidents are fire and carbon monoxide alarms, often false alarms, followed by brush fires at 21%, Hazmat at 13%, structure fires at 10%, and medical calls at 9%. Jensen is the only department running quick response medical. Regarding false alarms, the District works with businesses on a "three-strike" policy, encouraging quick fixes for accidental or malfunction-related alarms. The Uintah Fire Special Service District (UFSSSD) handles all fire inspections and plan reviews for the county and cities. Due to new legislation, they will also manage all Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) inspections. Inspection numbers have dropped since the full-time inspector position was eliminated in 2019, relying on volunteers. Call volume drivers vary by department: Avalon's is brush fires and oil/gas incidents; Jensen's is medical calls, showing a five-year upward trend; Lapoint and Tridell's is brush fires, though slightly down from the previous year. Naples and Vernal see many fire alarms. Due to low snow and rain, brush fires are already up this year, prompting a public safety warning about burning.

The District contracts with Roosevelt City Fire Department for Ballard City and Western Uintah County, where brush fires were the main call volume in 2024 and 2025. 2025 accomplishments include purchasing washers/dryers for all stations, a wildland brush truck, extrication tools and SCBA/turnouts. Capital Projects include a 1-5 year plan for a rescue truck, brush trucks, and an Avalon pumper truck. The 5-10 year list includes more pumper trucks, ATV, a new Ballard City Fire Station, and a life safety trailer. Goals for 2026 include picking up the new brush truck in July, installing showers at Vernal, Jensen, and Avalon stations, and pre-build trip for a Naples ladder truck, and a Jensen rescue truck. They also aim to increase certified firefighters and hold a Fire Inspector 1 course. The District also provides standbys for airport operations.

5. TRICOUNTY HEALTH Annual Report - Kirk Benge, TriCounty Health

Kirk Benge, TriCounty Health Department, presented a summary of the department's year-end activities. The core philosophy of public health is viewing it as an investment in prevention; preventing outbreaks, injuries, and diseases. This approach aims to create a resilient community and ultimately saves money at the individual, county, state, and federal levels. TriCounty Health relies heavily on federal grants primarily through the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), which account for over 40% of our annual revenues. The remainder is split nearly equally among County contributions, fees for services, and state grants. The largest expense is salaries and benefits, ensuring we have highly trained, qualified staff. Other major costs include office expenses and travel. A significant item is the state pass-through grant, dedicated to preventing drug and tobacco use, especially among youth. This funding supports the SWAT (Students Working Against Tobacco) program in high schools, and a local nonprofit, the Foundation for Healthy Communities of northeastern Utah, to offer scholarships to students who complete the program. Last year, \$75,000 in scholarships were awarded to 72 students.

Looking at the last couple of years, the main contributing factors to early death in the TriCounty area for 20 year olds and younger are: suicide, overdose, and accidents (primarily vehicular). In 20-40 year olds, the leading causes shift to substance abuse, vehicular accidents, and emerging cancer. In 40-60 year olds, the top causes remain substance abuse and vehicular accidents, with chronic diseases (diabetes, heart disease) becoming prominent. For those over 60 years old the main drivers are cancer, chronic disease, and natural causes.

The Health Promotion Department focuses on public education, nutrition, and physical activity. The Environmental Health Group works to protect the air, water, and environment. Services include inspecting restaurants, approving septic installations, and reviewing setbacks for water wells. The Nursing Group is known for vaccines and immunizations and early nutrition programs like WIC (Women, Infants, Children). WIC highlights: every dollar spent on prenatal nutrition and education saves Medicaid approximately \$3 just in preterm birth costs, not including the long-term health benefits. Additional Public Health Initiatives are distributing car seats, Narcan trainings, and suicide prevention. Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) program is available for businesses to train staff on handling mental health crises. Environmental Health performed over 1,000 inspections (septic, restaurants, etc.) and issued 800 permits. WIC had over 1,300 people attend appointments, gave out several thousand immunizations, and investigated 400 cases of potential infectious disease outbreaks and successfully contained them. TriCounty Health also has an ongoing collaboration with fire and law enforcement to prepare for unexpected events.

6. ORDINANCE #03-11-2026 01: CREATING CHAPTER 06.29, Tethering of Dogs - Devin Cobb, Uintah Animal Control & Shelter

Devin Cobb, Uintah County Animal Control & Shelter, requested approval for Ordinance #03-11-2026 01, Tethering of Dogs. This ordinance introduces new rules for outdoor tethering, addressing issues like inappropriate chain size, and ensuring adequate food, water, and insulated housing during winter. Devin noted the county prosecutor had concerns, suggesting much of it is covered under existing cruelty to animals laws. Devin acknowledged some of these points but emphasized the new ordinance is more specific on protections, including requirements for shade, water, and prevention of tangled chains. It requires a swivel on each end of a chain or tie-down, though it doesn't apply to trolley

systems (running lines), which still need swivels to prevent the dog from getting hung up.

Commissioner Norton moved to approve Ordinance #03-11-2026 O1 as presented by Devin Cobb. Motion passed unanimously.

7. ORDINANCE #03-11-2026 02: AMENDING CHAPTER 12.01, County Wide Cemeteries - James Sharp, Cemeteries

James Sharp, Cemeteries, requested approval to amend Ordinance #03-11-2026 O2 County Wide Cemeteries. This amendment addresses several necessary updates that have arisen over the past few years. Due to an increase in inquiries regarding metal headstones, the ordinance needed to establish a standard for structural integrity. The current inquiries often involve flimsy materials that would not hold up, necessitating a written standard. The amendment clarifies some gray areas regarding vases. It also specifically prohibits nailing decorations into cemetery trees, as this is detrimental to the trees' health. This was added to address people claiming the practice was allowed because it wasn't explicitly forbidden. The amendment formalizes the existing standard that cuts off the setting of new headstones ten days before Memorial Day. This rule is in place to prevent trucks from causing track marks across graves and headstones right before the holiday, which historically angered many visitors. A company recently challenged this practice because it was not in writing, making its inclusion in the ordinance necessary for enforcement.

Commissioner LeFevre moved to approve Ordinance #03-11-2026 O2 as presented by James Sharp. Motion passed unanimously.

Every year around Memorial Day, the decoration of graves presents an issue with cemetery maintenance. To inform the public, we have implemented a clear notification system and policy regarding the removal of decorations. Billboards are placed at every cemetery entrance across the county one month before Memorial Day weekend. They are positioned to be visible as visitors exit the cemetery. Notices are placed at every exit of all county cemeteries; Maeser has three exits with three signs; Lapoint has two exits with two signs. This ensures that anyone visiting to decorate has the opportunity to see the policy as they leave, addressing the issue that many people do not read the newspaper or listen to the radio. Decorations are permitted throughout Memorial Day weekend and for one week following the holiday. Cemetery staff will remove all remaining decorations on the Monday following that week. This strict cleanup is necessary because, with over 17,000 people buried in the county's cemeteries, it is impossible for the maintenance crew to work around decorations. The public is encouraged to return and collect their items before the Monday cleanup. Items are not saved; they are removed and sent to the landfill to allow maintenance to proceed. This rule is applied fairly and equally to everyone. The County attempts to offer the public a high degree of freedom for decoration compared to other city cemeteries that remove items the day after placement. The purchase contract for a burial plot explicitly states that the buyer agrees to adhere to all cemetery ordinances, past, present, and future, as a condition of burial within Uintah County cemeteries.

8. POLICY 550: SAFETY AND VEHICLE OPERATIONS, Updates - Jen Garcia, Human Resources
Jen Garcia, Human Resources, requested approval for several updates to Policy 550: Safety and Vehicle Operations. These changes are designed to align with the Clerk-Auditor's Office taking over risk management and requirements from Utah Counties Indemnity Pool (UCIP), the County's insurer. Incident Reporting (Section 1e): department heads will now report bodily injuries and workers' compensation incidents to Human Resources, and department heads will report all property-related incidents to the Clerk-Auditor's Office. All reports must be submitted within five days. This modifies the previous requirement for department heads to report all incidents solely to HR. Safety Committee (Section 2a): The Clerk-Auditor's Office, or their delegate, is being added to the Safety Committee. This ensures a representative from the office handling risk management and property reports is on the committee. Personal Vehicle Insurance (Section 3i - New Addition): A new requirement was added to

align with UCIP guidelines. Employees authorized to use their personal vehicles for county business must maintain continual and valid liability insurance on those vehicles.

Commissioner Norton moved to approve the updates to Policy 550 as presented by Jen Garcia. Motion passed unanimously.

9. AWARDING INVITATION FOR BID UC26-03: Portable Wind Fence for the Uintah County Landfill - Trinna Gardner, Purchasing & Grants

Trinna Gardner, Purchasing & Grants, requested approval to award a contract for Portable Wind Fences to Metta Technologies for 15 wind fences, totaling \$121,800.00. The wind fences, also known as litter fences, are for the Landfill to reduce wind-blown debris by slowing wind speeds around the active work area, helping to contain waste and keep the site cleaner. An Invitation for Bid (IFB) was issued and three responsive bids were received and opened during the work session on March 11. Bids were submitted by Conwell Inc. DBA Southwestern Sales Company, Ecker Netting Inc. DBA Judge Netting, and Metta Technologies, Inc. All three vendors met the specifications of the IFB. After reviewing all bids, Metta Technologies offered the overall lowest price. The pricing breakdown was: Conwell Inc.: \$7,800 per unit, with a shipping cost of \$3,800 for up to 10 units, Ecker Netting Inc.: \$11,120 per unit, with a shipping cost of \$3,900, Metta Technologies, Inc.: \$7,400 per unit. Shipping was tiered: \$4,800 for up to five units, and \$6,000 for up to 10 units. Approval was requested to purchase 15 wind fences from Metta Technologies for the total amount of \$121,800.00.

Commissioner LeFevre moved to approve UC26-03: Portable Wind Fences to Metta Technologies as presented by Trinna Gardner. Motion passed unanimously.

10. RECESS FOR MUNICIPAL BUILDING AUTHORITY

Commissioner Norton moved to recess the Commission Meeting and convene as the Municipal Building Authority. Motion passed unanimously.

11. AWARD AND APPROVE CONTRACT REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL UMBA26-1: Uintah County MBA Master Plans Buckskin Hills Recreation Complex and Western Park - Trinna Gardner, Purchasing & Grants

Commissioner Norton, as MBA Chair, presented item 11 on the agenda. The Uintah County Municipal Building Authority (MBA) issued RFP UMBA 26-1 to seek qualified planning and design firms to prepare comprehensive master plans for both Western Park and the Buckskin Hills Recreation Complex. The purpose of the RFP was to select a team capable of evaluating current facilities and operations, engaging stakeholders and the public, and developing a clear, fiscally responsible master plan to guide future growth, investment, and long-term success for each site. The selected engineering firm is required to complete both master plans within 12 months of the project kickoff. The RFP was released on January 14, 2026, and seven qualified firms submitted proposals. The proposals were opened during the work session on March 4, 2026. The submitted prices were as follows: Terra Con: \$140,000, Sunrise Engineering and SE Group: \$139,940, Jones and DeMille: \$143,700, Design Workshop: \$367,320, Blue Lines and BHI: \$198,960, Arcadis: \$279,720, and Alpin Associates: \$154,000. Each submission was reviewed and evaluated by a committee using criteria that included relevant experience, project approach, team qualifications, project schedule, and overall cost. After careful review and scoring, the evaluation committee determined that Sunrise Engineering and SE Group offered the strongest combination of experience, project understanding, and overall value, including a competitive cost proposal. Based on the evaluation results, the recommendation was to award the project to Sunrise Engineering and SE Group for \$139,940 and to authorize the execution of the contract for the project scope of work.

Commissioner Laursen moved to award the UMBA26-1 RFP to Sunrise Engineering & SE Group and authorize the contract as presented by Commissioner Norton. Motion passed unanimously

12. ADJOURN MBA AND RECONVENE COMMISSION MEETING

Commissioner Norton moved to adjourn the Municipal Building Authority and reconvene Commission Meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

13. PUBLIC COMMENT : None

ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:49 pm.



JOHN LAURSEN, CHAIR



MICHAEL W. WILKINS, CLERK – AUDITOR

