

MINUTES of the work session of the Uintah County Commission held **April 1, 2026** in the large Commission conference room of the Uintah County Building at 152 East 100 North, Vernal, Utah. The meeting commenced at 10:00 a.m.

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

ATTENDANCE: Karen England, Jeremy Raymond, Brenda McDonald, Bruce North, Bo Lamb, Loren Anderson, Lesha Coltharp, Angela Hawkins, Wendi Long, Caleb Hall
Minutes by Sheri Allen.

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

1. UINTAH BASIN REVITALIZATION FUND REQUEST FOR BOOKMOBILE - Karen England, Library

Karen England, Library, led the discussion on the request that the Commission sponsor the Library in using revitalization funds to purchase a bookmobile for \$400,000. She noted that 34% of County households are beyond five miles from the current Library and stated she has a plan for maintenance and eventual vehicle repurchase in 10-12 years, with an estimated working budget of about \$5,500 a year to be absorbed within the existing budget. She stated that with a tentative cost-share agreement with Daggett County, the service will eventually pay for itself. The proposed vehicle would be a purpose-built 18-foot library body on a Ford F-550 or comparable diesel vehicle.

Commissioner Norton asked what information warranted looking into the bookmobile. Karen expressed a strong desire to support rural community members, especially children and seniors, who have difficulty accessing the Library more than five miles away. She stated the bookmobile would provide social connection, learning, and creativity. She noted positive informal feedback via Facebook, the Library, the Regional History Center, and in-person visits to the "Little Library Express," and stated that the goal is to expand upon the "Little Library Express" with a bookmobile.

Lesha Coltharp stated that \$400,000 from Revitalization funds seemed extreme, suggesting funds could be better used for things like books in homes or internet services. She expressed concerns about the low usage numbers observed at the Jensen Welcome Center for the Little Library Express. She suggested looking at public transit (BTA) data to understand community movement and use. She also questioned the need for a bookmobile when many books are available online and suggested an alternative of providing Kindles with the Library app at community centers.

Commissioner LeFevre read a text message from a citizen who could not attend, stating that there are "dozens of better projects" for Revitalization funds for a return on investment, such as airport electrification, the rodeo arena, visitor center, or ice arena.

Loren Anderson asked how the bookmobile would pay for itself. Karen explained the funding from Daggett County includes a one-time investment of \$30,000 (approx. 7% of the total cost) and an annual service fee of \$15,000 to \$18,000. She clarified that the bookmobile would be more than just books, offering Wi-Fi, programming (e.g., classes for seniors on using Google/email), and laptops. She acknowledged minimal usage numbers at the Jensen Welcome Center but stated that a full bookmobile, unlike the current minivan, would allow for more programming and scheduled stops at parks and areas where children and seniors gather, which she anticipates will increase numbers and build community.

Bruce North, after disclosing his daughter works at the Library, shared his positive childhood experience with a bookmobile and his professional observation as a former elementary school teacher on the value of book access, especially for reluctant readers. He then expressed a fiduciary concern about the \$400,000 cost. He asked if alternatives were explored to reduce the price, such as smaller vehicles, using refurbished vehicles, or utilizing county or school district vehicles. Karen responded she

researched seven companies that purpose-build vehicles for bookmobiles, classrooms, and labs. She noted that for the required size, elevation, and weather conditions, prices range from \$320,000 to \$415,000. She said a smaller Ford Transit van is possible but would limit what they can carry and how far they can go. She also noted that while refurbished vehicles are less expensive, they only last 4-6 years, making frequent replacement more costly in the long run. She stated that if the Commission moves forward, the purchasing office would send out an RFP, and the lowest bid meeting all requirements would be selected. Bruce stressed the importance of advertising the service and voiced his support for investing in libraries as part of the education system.

Angela Hawkins mentioned that SB241 was signed and Governor Cox promised \$8 million in grants for rural initiatives, especially given the high percentage of children not reading at grade level. She also noted the community aspect for seniors. She asked Karen to confirm that the bookmobile would stop at multiple places within each community, not just one central spot.

Karen England stated that the plan is to stop at schools, senior centers, community centers, parks, apartment complexes, and laundromats. She emphasized the increase in programming opportunities (e.g., story times, memory care) that a bookmobile offers compared to the Little Library Express minivan.


Lesha added she researched other bookmobile programs in the state (Sevier, Paiute, Wayne, Garfield, Kane, and Utah Counties) and suggested looking at their numbers. She reiterated her concern about the \$400,000 cost. Karen noted that they are basing their programs and build on the models used by Provo City and Summit County and she has usage numbers for the Provo City bookmobile.

Commissioner Laursen suggested an online community survey and requested data on current patronage for the minivan, especially when children are out of school, wanting all details ironed out before a decision.

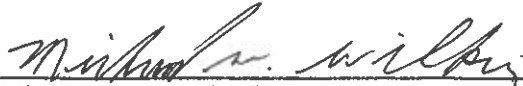
Commissioner LeFevre expressed a desire for a matching funds model for the project, similar to what he will be facing with CIB applications. He dislikes 100% grants, feeling they lack "skin in the game," and suggested asking the Library to raise a portion of the funds (e.g., \$100,000 or \$200,000) to match the County's contribution.

2. FIRE RESTRICTION - Jeremy Raymond, Uintah Fire Marshal removal
This item was discussed in the Special Commission Meeting.

ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:039 am.



JOHN LAURSEN, CHAIR



MICHAEL W. WILKINS, CLERK – AUDITOR

