

Utah Energy Research Board Meeting Minutes

Date: February 11, 2026 **Time:** 9:51 AM MST **Location:** Utah San Rafael Energy Lab - Virtual/Digital Recording

Attendees

- **Board Members & Officers:** Emy Lesosky (Chair), Jefferson Moss, John O'Neil, Laren Huntsman, Larry Howell,, Mason Baker, Prerna Jain, Stephen Ellis,, Todd Combs, Dennis Worwood
 - **Others:** Brian Schooff (Project Engineer), Summer Clark, Dr. Jaron Wallace , Dr. Jeremy Pearson, Joe Finley ,Laura Nelson, Logan Browning, Angela Smith.
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1. Call to Order & Approval of Minutes

- **Call to Order:** Chair Emy Lesosky called the meeting to order.
- **Roll Call:** Summer Clark conducted the roll call to record attendance.
- **Minutes Approval:** The board reviewed the minutes from the November 13 meeting.
 - **Motion:** Todd Combs moved to approve the minutes.
 - **Second:** Mason Baker seconded the motion.
 - **Result:** The motion carried unanimously.

2. Digital Twin Proposal: University of Utah TRIGA Reactor

Dr. Jeremy Pearson presented a proposal to develop a digital twin simulation tool for the University of Utah's TRIGA research reactor, in collaboration with Idaho National Lab (INL).

- **Project Goals:** To improve reactor operations, simulate future improvements, and provide a training tool for operators.
- **Funding Discussion:** The project requires \$600,000 in total. The current plan includes \$200,000 from the Institute, \$200,000 from the University of Utah, and \$200,000 (potentially in-kind) from INL.
- **Board Concerns:** * **Matching Funds:** Members questioned proceeding without a secured industrial partner.
 - **Technical Details:** Requests were made for a better budget breakout, clarification on Intellectual Property (IP) rights, and specific software formatting.
- **Outcome:** The board requested further information on the budget, IP, and technical details. Approval was deferred to a potential follow-up meeting once these details are compiled.

3. Supercritical CO2 Demonstration Project

Dr. Jaron Wallace presented a proposal from Valor Atomics to build a 10 MW thermal natural gas-powered heater to test supercritical CO2 power generation and other technologies.

- **Project Scope:** Valor Atomics will fund the entire \$20 million project, which will eventually become the property of the lab.
- **Timeline:** Valor requested an aggressive completion date of June 2026.
- **Board Discussion:** Members expressed concern regarding the feasibility of the June timeline and the need for rigorous risk management and contract exit clauses.
- **Motion:** To enter into an agreement for a "Phase 1" approach, focusing on the initial \$400,000 design, engineering, and execution planning phase. The board will re-evaluate before moving to Phase 2 (construction).
 - **Moved by:** Prerna Jain.
 - **Seconded by:** John O'Neil.
 - **Result:** The motion carried.

4. Nuclea Energy MOU

Dr. Jaron Wallace introduced a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Nuclea Energy, a Canadian company, to explore siting a 3.5 MW electric test reactor at the lab.

- **Context:** This is a non-binding MOU for exploration only; any future binding contracts would require a separate board vote.
- **Motion:** To approve the MOU.
 - **Moved by:** John O'Neil.
 - **Seconded by:** Stephen Ellis.
 - **Result:** The motion carried.

5. Lab Updates & Strategy

- **Construction:** Valor Atomics is on track for a July 4th operational deadline. The reactor vessel is scheduled to arrive at the site shortly.
- **Staffing:** The lab is growing from five to eight employees to support increased activity from Natura Resources.
- **Security:** New perimeter fencing and updated ID check-in procedures are being implemented to meet DOE standards.
- **Strategic Plan:** Dr. Jeremy Pearson outlined five pillars: reactor development, supply chain/workforce, fuel life cycle, value chains (data centers/industrial heat), and integrated energy systems.
 - **Board Feedback:** Recommendations included a five-year forward organizational chart for workforce planning and increased public communication/outreach.

6. Public Comment & Adjournment

- **Public Comment:** Commissioner Dennis Ward expressed concerns regarding state energy policy and the tax/cost burden on small power users as large consumers generate power "behind the meter." Emy Lesosky noted that SB132 and ongoing strategic investment frameworks are intended to address these issues.
- **Adjournment:**
 - **Motion:** Stephen Ellis.
 - **Second:** Larry Howell.
 - **Meeting Adjourned:** 10:52 AM MST.