

MINUTES of the public meeting of the Uintah County Commission held **May 12, 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: Mike Wilkins, Wendi Long, Matt Wilber, Jeff Snow, Matt Cazier, Angela Hawkins, Marty Partridge, Travis Campbell, Sydney Millett, Brooks Jones, Jess Hermann, Danette Brooks, Corey Auger, Brenda McDonald, Lesha Coltharp, Joel Brown, Jeremy Raymond, Lynn Sitterud.
Minutes by Sheri Allen.

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

PRAYER by Lesha Coltharp.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE by Commissioner Laursen.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: April 27, 2026 special Commission

Commissioner LeFevre moved to approve the minutes for April 27, 2026. Motion passed unanimously.

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

Warrants dated April 30, 2026 in the amount of \$1,577,959.48. Payments of note are \$1,095,245.00 to Basin Land Title & Abstract Inc. and \$120,659.15 to the Uintah Basin Association of Governments (UBAOG) for their pass through grants.

Warrants dated May 8, 2026 in the amount of \$480,767.42. Payments of note are \$175,627.47 to Young Chevrolet for three trucks for the Road Department.

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

3. TAX MATTERS:

Danette Brooks, Assessor, requested approval for two tax matters. The first is a request for a refund of business personal property tax for the 2025 tax year in the amount of \$52.17 due to an overpayment by property owner Chelsie Goodrich for the Meraki Wellness Center. The second is a request for the cancellation of a rollback tax lien in the amount of \$1,686.32 on property owned by the Cleo K. Murray Trust (Serial Number 06:058:0040), located at 6100 East Hwy 40, Jensen, Utah. The cancellation is requested because the owner has brought the parcel into greenbelt compliance.

Commissioner LeFevre moved to approve the tax matters as presented by Danette Brooks. Motion passed unanimously.

4. VERNAL AREA CHAMBER ANNUAL REPORT PRESENTATION - Marty Partridge, Chamber
Marty Partridge, Chamber Director, provided an annual report on the Vernal Area Chamber of Commerce activities. Membership grew significantly in 2025 with 56 new members, reaching a total of 292. The Chamber staff currently consists of two full-time and two part-time employees, with upcoming transitions as student staff graduate. In 2025, the Chamber received awards for Best Weekly Communication Newsletter and Best Marketing Program for the "Hello Neighbor" bag. They hosted 45 weekly lunches with an average attendance of 50 people and supported 103 small businesses during the Santa's Workshop event, which saw over 2,000 attendees. The "Shop Local" season included 60 participants and generated over \$29,000 in local revenue. International travel programs continued with trips to Japan and Finland, and upcoming registrations for the UK, Netherlands, and Iceland. Social media presence saw major growth, particularly on TikTok. In 2025, 56 ribbon cuttings were held,

supported by nearly 900 volunteer hours from the Dynamites. The Legislative Committee remained active with bill reviews and candidate events. A new referral-based networking group, Chamber Connections, has already generated \$80,000 in revenue for members. The Business and Leadership Symposium featured keynote speaker Aron Ralston and was well-received by 150 attendees.

5. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UTAH DIVISION OF FORESTRY, FIRE, AND STATE LANDS AND UTAH COUNTY - Corey Auger, DNR-FFSL

Corey Auger, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands (FFSL) Fire Warden for Uintah and Daggett Counties, requested approval of the Cooperative Agreement between the DNR-FFSL and Uintah County. These agreements are typically renewed every five years or when legislative changes occur. Recent updates to House Bill 48 have necessitated new language in the agreement. The cooperative agreement acts as an insurance policy for the County and municipalities, ensuring that once certain trigger points are hit during a wildland fire, the State assumes fiscal responsibility for the suppression efforts. Corey clarified that the Uintah Fire District carries out the operational aspects of the agreement; however, because the District is not a taxing entity, state statute requires the County to sign the document. Regarding the upcoming fire season, the State is ramping up resources, including an additional Type 1 helicopter that may be staged at the Vernal airport.

The Commission discussed evacuation procedures. Corey noted that only the County Sheriff has the authority to mandate evacuations, working in coordination with fire officials and emergency managers. Evacuations are based on fire behavior, fuels, and drought conditions. When extreme "crown fires" occur in treetops, ground suppression is often impossible until conditions change. Officials urged the public to follow "Ready, Set, Go" programs and abide by voluntary evacuation notices for safety, emphasizing that emergency responders are often at great risk when performing door-to-door notifications.

The Commission inquired about the highlights and changes regarding House Bill 48 (HB 48). Corey explained that HB 48, which addresses Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) modifications, has been delayed until 2027 following the passage of House Bill 41. The legislation is designed to identify properties in high-risk areas and encourage homeowners to implement "Firewise" measures. A risk assessment map has been released, and properties identified as high-risk will eventually see an assessment on their property taxes, which can be reduced by improving the property's fire safety score. The delay allowed the State more time to establish qualifications for risk assessment inspectors and refine the program's implementation. Commissioner Laursen emphasized that the property tax assessment is mandated and managed entirely by the State of Utah. He noted that Uintah County merely serves as the collection agent for these state funds and has no control over the assessment itself.

Commissioner LeFevre moved to approve the Cooperative Agreement between the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands as presented by Corey Auger. Motion passed unanimously.

6. ADVENTURE SAFE COMMUNITIES DECLARATION -

John Laursen, Commission Chair, presented the Adventure Safe Day Declaration. This is a new statewide initiative. The declaration recognizes Uintah County's abundant outdoor assets, including OHV (off-highway vehicles) trails, Ashley Gorge Via Ferrata, whitewater rafting, mountain biking, hiking, camping, climbing, and fishing. It emphasizes that while the unique landscape can surprise even experienced residents, planning ahead and preparing thoughtfully can ensure safety and the best possible experience.

Practical adventure-safe behaviors include bringing enough water, dressing appropriately, checking weather and trail conditions, knowing limits, staying on designated trails, wearing life jackets, and sharing plans with others. Practicing these behaviors demonstrates respect for fellow citizens, first responders, and natural spaces. The declaration supports broader stewardship efforts, including water safety and land care. Uintah County Tourism is working with state partners, including the Division of

Outdoor Recreation and Utah State Parks, to promote these messages. Therefore, Commissioner Laursen declared Saturday, May 16, 2026, as Adventure Safe Day in Uintah County, joining a statewide effort across all Utah counties.

7. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT 24-7 PROGRAM AND UINTAH COUNTY -

Loren Anderson, Civil Attorney, requested the ratification of the Cooperative Agreement for the 24/7 Sobriety Program between the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and Uintah County. This program provides a mechanism to monitor individuals who have received DUIs but retain driving privileges by requiring twice-daily breathalyzer tests to ensure they are fit to drive. The agreement authorizes the Uintah County Sheriff's Office to administer these tests, allowing the County to retain a portion of the monitoring fees required by DPS. Loren noted the program has been in place for some time and the updated agreement increases the funding retained by the County.

Commissioner Norton moved to approve the ratification of the Cooperative Agreement 24-7 Program and Uintah County as presented by Loren Anderson. Motion passed unanimously.

8. JONES & DEMILLE CONTRACT for Professional Engineering for Cemetery Storage Building
- Gennie Bird, Purchasing

Tabled

9. APPROVAL OF LAND DISPOSAL #17:004:0003 - Mike Wilkins, Clerk-Auditor

Mike Wilkins, Clerk-Auditor, requested approval to surplus approximately 1/3 acre of land, serial number 17:004:0003, located near Whiterocks Canyon/Whiterocks Creek. A neighboring landowner has expressed interest in purchasing the parcel. Per County ordinance, the land will be placed on Public Surplus and auctioned to the highest bidder at market value. Mike recommended not publicizing the specific appraisal value. However, a minimum bid based on the Assessor's valuation will be established on the auction website so potential bidders know the starting price.

Commissioner Norton moved to approve the land disposal as presented by Mike Wilkins. Motion passed unanimously.

10. RESOLUTION #05-12-2026 R1: Declaring Uintah County in extreme drought conditions - Loren W. Anderson, Deputy Civil Attorney.

Loren requested approval of Resolution #05-12-2026 R1, declaring Uintah County in extreme drought conditions. Under Utah Code, county legislative bodies may declare an emergency to access state resources. This declaration is prompted by lack of rainfall over the past two years and an unprecedentedly low snowpack this season, leading to concerns regarding water resources, wildfire risk, and agricultural impacts. By declaring a drought, the County can access funds not otherwise appropriated for these purposes. Other counties have made similar declarations. The declaration will be in effect for a maximum of six months per state code, though it can be rescinded earlier if conditions improve. Loren noted this would be beneficial to county residents and citizens.

Commissioner LeFevre moved to approve Resolution #05-12-2026 R1 as presented by Loren Anderson. Motion passed unanimously.

11. RECESS FOR BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

Commissioner Norton moved to recess for the Board of Equalization. Motion passed unanimously.

12. BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

A. Approval of 2026 Tax Exempt Properties

Mike requested approval for the 2026 tax exempt properties, which included three new exemptions:

- Serial #05:125:0002: 40 Acres for the Ashley Valley Sewer Management Board.
- Serial #05:047:0060: for the UBAOG Basin Transit Authority garage.

- Serial #03:043:0002: for the 501(c) Project Alley Recovery Foundation.

Discussion was held regarding partial exemptions, specifically a recommendation to remove the 50% partial exemption previously granted to the Vernal Rod and Gun Club, as its facilities are no longer utilized for law enforcement or hunter education services.

B. Hearing Officer's recommendation of Personal Property Appeals

Mike requested that this item be moved to the next Commission meeting on May 19th. He noted that the hearing officer had not yet provided the recommendations from the personal property appeals hearings, which were held the previous Thursday.

Commissioner Laursen moved to accept the 2026 tax exempt properties, with the exception that the Vernal Rod and Gun Club would lose its 50% partial exemption. Motion passed unanimously.

13. ADJOURN BOE and RECONVENE COMMISSION MEETING

Commissioner Laursen moved to adjourn the BOE and reconvene the Commission meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

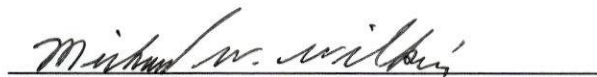
14. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Jeremy Raymond, Uintah County Fire Suppression Special Service District Director, provided information regarding evacuation procedures. Due to the dangerous fire conditions this year, he encouraged residents to download the Genasys Protect app to receive emergency notifications. Additional alerts are sent via Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) through mobile devices, television, and radio. He also recommended the Watch Duty app for tracking active fires and receiving updates on specific incidents, such as those in neighboring counties. Jeremy highlighted the "Ready, Set, Go!" program: "Ready" (prepare your home and family), "Set" (pack gear and be prepared to leave), and "Go" (evacuate immediately when notified). High-risk areas include Dry Fork, Taylor Mountain, Deep Creek, Whiterocks, and Diamond Mountain. Residents can view the risk assessment map on the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands (FFSL) website via the Utah Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal (UWRAP) or contact local fire officials for more information.

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



JOHN LAURSEN, CHAIR



MICHAEL W. WILKINS, CLERK – AUDITOR

