



GRAND COUNTY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

**Grand County Commission Chambers
Hybrid virtual participation on Zoom
Moab, Utah**

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MINUTES 19 May 2026

The Grand County Commission met in a regular meeting on May 19th, 2026. The meeting was held in-person in the Grand County Commission Chambers, with hybrid virtual participation also available via Zoom. It was also broadcast and saved on YouTube. Attending the meeting in-person were Commission Chair Melodies McCandless, Commission Vice-Chair Bill Winfield, who served as Chair for this meeting, and Commissioners Trish Hedin, Jacques Hadler, Brian Martinez and Mike McCurdy. Also attending in-person were Commission Administrator Mark Tyner, Associate Commission Administrator Quinn Hall, Clerk/Auditor Gabriel Woytek and County Attorney Stephen Stocks. Commissioner Mary McGann was in attendance virtually.

Chair McCandless called the Regular Meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Citizens to be Heard

Diane Allen spoke with concern regarding the proposed pilot shuttle system at Arches National Park, expressing concern regarding a lack of transparency, operational concerns, funding availability and disagreement with some of the purported benefits.

Rory Paxman spoke with concern regarding a lack of transparency regarding the proposed pilot shuttle system for Arches National Park, adding that an explanation regarding the funding mechanism was needed, as well as studies regarding whether a program would even be effective.

Pete Gross stated that the current majority of the Commission campaigned on transparency and fiscal responsibility and he feels that the ongoing actions of those Commissioners do not reflect those priorities.

Luke Wojciechowski stressed the importance of process in building public trust for any project, which he feels is currently lacking in the development of the proposed pilot shuttle system at Arches National Park.

Tory Hill spoke with concern regarding the proposed pilot shuttle system at Arches National Park, stating that there is not enough information available to the public for such an investment of funds to be made. Hill added there were many operational concerns that she had regarding a shuttle system that are currently unanswered.

Emily Campbell stressed that TRT funds are currently fully allocated in the budget, and that in order to accommodate for the reallocation of TRT mitigation funds proposed for the Arches shuttle pilot, unrestricted general funds would be needed to fill in already allocated funding.

Allyson Mathis spoke with concern regarding the proposed pilot shuttle system at Arches National Park, stating that the math does not compute in a way that supports implementing the system at this time, as it currently is proposed.

Emily Niehaus asked the Commission to table the Arches shuttle system proposal and the expenditure that accompanies it. Niehaus explained that Timed Entry was an effective and inexpensive solution, and that the current shuttle proposal competes with the private sector.

Michael Peck spoke in experience driving a shuttle, citing the numerous operational challenges with the proposed Arches shuttle system that he feels have not been addressed.

Michael Liss spoke regarding his experience on a local committee which studied local transit solutions, including a potential Arches shuttle, and that the currently proposed project has indeed been studied extensively.

Bruni Mason stated that her quality of life was being diminished by the actions of the County Commission. Mason stated that the County Commission should stay out of National Park Service management and should focus on the welfare of its local citizens.

Saina Carey stated that the National Park Service has not done enough to improve visitor conditions at Arches National Park and that congestion has now become a local problem due to perceived indifference.

Jim Webster stressed that the Commission must slow down and work out more details and inform the local community before implementing the Arches shuttle system and spending local taxpayer dollars. Webster also expressed concerns regarding proper procurement process and pointed out the lack of representation from the National Park Service at Commission meetings where such topics are being discussed.

Mary O'Brien spoke with concern regarding the lack of transparency surrounding the proposed pilot shuttle system at Arches National Park, and requested that the Commission engage in real collaboration and slow the currently process down.

Laura Cameron spoke with concern regarding the lack of transparency surrounding the proposed pilot shuttle system at Arches National Park. Cameron stated that she felt the currently proposed shuttle system is unrealistic, and that it represents an inappropriate use of taxpayer funds.

Jerry Shue expressed hope that what he views as an ill-conceived idea would not be approved by a four-person majority voting bloc.

Everett Hildenbrandt requested that the Arches shuttle system proposal be tabled so that better uses of the funds could first be considered.

Elected Official Reports

Sheriff Jamison Wiggins recognized Intrepid Potash for a \$6,000 donation to Grand County Search and Rescue, and the C10 Car Show event which raised \$71,564 for GCSAR.

County Attorney Stephen Stocks gave an update regarding the Crimes Against Women conference that he is currently attending, and discussed recent new legislation that took effect which created strict penalties for so called acts of 'revenge porn'

General Business - Action Items, Discussion and Consideration of:

1. Commission member disclosures and future considerations

Commissioner McCurdy disclosed that his wife is an employee at the Grand County Sheriff's Office. McCurdy added as a future consideration upcoming discussion aimed at increased staffing at the Old Spanish Trail Arena.

2. Approval of Consent Agenda Items

- A. Approval of Meeting Minutes for May 5th, 2026**
- B. Ratification of Payment of Bills**
- C. Ratification of Contract with Pivot Cycles to Loan E-Bikes to GCATT for Trail Maintenance**
- D. Ratification of Indigent Defense Council Grant Application**
- E. Approval of Contingency Expense for GCSAR**
- F. Renewal of MOU With MVFD Administration of Impact Fees**
- G. 2026 Cooperative Wildfire System Agreement**
- H. Moab Office of Tourism Contract Renewal with Campstories Public Relations**
- I. Moab Office of Tourism Participation in Utah Office of Tourism Fiscal Year 2027 International Opt-In Marketing Program**

Motion by Commissioner McCurdy to approve the Consent Agenda, as read by the Chair, less items F, G, and H.

Motion Seconded by Commissioner Winfield

Discussion

Item H to be added to the end of general business topics.

Motion passes 7-0

3. Local Match for Coordinated Visitor Transportation Initiative (Commissioner Martinez)

Presentation

Grand County, the National Park Service, and the State of Utah are working together to address the long-standing transportation challenges at the Arches National Park entrance and along the US-191 corridor through Moab. This item considers the County's contribution in a three-partner funding plan for a 2026–2027 shuttle pilot, with a total budget of up to \$3 million, divided as follows:

- National Park Service — \$1,500,000 (50%) through NPS Centennial funding (available to the NPS only in fiscal year 2026);
- State of Utah — \$1,000,000 from the UDOT Recreation Hotspot program; and
- Grand County — \$500,000 from TRT Mitigation Funds (this proposed allocation)

Commissioner Martinez gave a statement describing this effort to bring together Grand County, the National Park Service and the State of Utah to address longstanding transportation challenges at Arches National Park.

Attorney Stocks stated that legal review was not applicable for this particular action and that the Cooperative Management Agreement would need review after this approval. The current approval is centered around a

funding commitment. McCandless spoke to the collaborative process involved in getting to the current proposal, and clarified that Via has not already been selected as the vendor that would run the shuttle system.

Commissioner Hedin expressed general concern regarding the lack of collaboration and discussion regarding important items, stating that it may be sacrificing the necessary care that would be achieved through various decision-making processes.

Commissioner McCurdy sought clarification from Lena Pace regarding the \$1.5 million commitment from the NPS. Local Regional Director Lena Pace clarified that NPS has prioritized this project, but the funding has not yet been 100% confirmed. NPS has looked at a number of congestion mitigation strategies, which now includes the ACE alternative as has been presented by Grand County.

Commissioner Winfield stated current Commission leadership is working hard to create accomplishments, with unanimous approval from all related entities for this proposed project.

Motion by Commissioner Winfield to approve the allocation of \$500,000 from Transient Room Tax (TRT) Mitigation Funds as the County's local match for the Grand County–Arches National Park Shuttle Pilot.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Martinez

Discussion

Commissioner McGann expressed concern regarding the budgetary implications of this action, stating that gas prices and predicted monsoons in 2026 may create upcoming economic uncertainty which would negatively affect the budget. McGann added that TRT mitigation funds are equivalent to unrestricted General Funds, and that she feels this is not a responsible use of taxpayer funds.

Commissioner Martinez claimed that TRT collections were up 23% from when the Arches Timed Entry system was removed, and that the recent strength of the economy justifies the use of funds. Martinez expressed gratitude to officials with UDOT for their collaboration in this project. Martinez added that this topic has been studied in great depth, he has thoroughly reviewed all available studies, and the shuttle proposal is a result of that effort.

Attorney Stocks requested clarification regarding the funding mechanism behind \$500,000. Clerk/Auditor Woytek requested clarification on agenda summary description which suggested that Commission Administration had identified funding offsets for the TRT Mitigation that was now being proposed for this project, with no response offered.

Substitute motion by Commissioner McCurdy to commit Grand County's \$500,000 share out of Fund 47, using available Optional Sales Tax funding in reserves

Substitute motion seconded by Commissioner Winfield

Commissioner Hadler questioned whether there were enough Optional Sales Tax funds to support both this project and the Spanish Valley Multiuse Path. Hadler added that he had concerns regarding the financial implications of the decision and stressed that there were already many existing needs that these funds could help to address. Commissioner McGann stated that economic activity couldn't be relied upon for this funding and stated that it was a poor decision financially. Commissioner Hedin stated that the Commission must stop spending money out of budget. Commissioner Winfield agreed that financial decisions are hard for everyone, but that this decision was strategic and not being taken lightly, and that he feels that misinformation regarding the subject is rampant.

Substitute motion fails 3-3, McGann, Hedin, and Hadler opposed, McCandless abstains

Original motion passes 4-3, McGann, Hedin, and Hadler opposed

4. Drought Declaration (Emergency Manager Kate Finley)

Presentation

Drought conditions deteriorated across Grand County throughout March. Data from the National Weather Service demonstrates the present drought situation; to include: SNOTEL sites across the La Sal Mountains reached record low snow water equivalent (SWE) by March 11 and melted out completely before median peak SWE; the US Drought Monitor degraded 1 to 3 categories across Grand County since March 3 with all of Grand County currently in D3 (Extreme Drought); water supply forecasts along the Colorado and Dolores Rivers are less than 30% of average; March 2026 was the 5th driest March on record over the past 132 years; Evaporative Demand Drought Index (EDDI) (a measure of plant atmospheric thirst) has been 100% dry (ED4) over Grand County for at least the last 12 months.

The drought has had and is likely to continue to impact various operations throughout the county. Having an emergency declaration for drought will allow farmers and ranchers in the county to access emergency relief and individual assistance that would be inaccessible otherwise.

Commissioner Winfield added that State officials have been active regarding this matter, San Juan, Iron and Uintah counties have already made such a declaration.

Motion by Commissioner Winfield to approve the declaration of the existence of a drought emergency

Motion seconded by Commissioner McCurdy

Discussion

Clarification given regarding the difference between state and local declarations, which centers around an earlier effective date associated with local action.

Motion passes 7-0

5. Moab Office of Tourism Summer Campaign Budget Recommendation (Commissioner Martinez)

Presentation

The Moab Office of Tourism's media marketing agency, Madden Media, is observing a "Great Trip Edit" this summer: travelers are repricing and reprioritizing summer trips due to high fuel prices and the recent Spirit Airlines shutdown. One of the office's longtime goals is to increase summer visitation to lessen the season's economic dip. Madden Media prepared a summer marketing campaign to position Moab as a summer destination that is well worth it. The Moab Tourism Advisory Board approved this budget increase during its May 12 meeting.

Motion by Commissioner McCurdy to approve the Moab Office of Tourism's increased paid media budget for a summer marketing campaign

Motion Seconded by Commissioner Martinez

Discussion (none at this time)

Motion passes 6-0, Hedin absent

6. Moab Office of Tourism New Position Proposal (Personnel Services Director Tess Barger)

Presentation

MOT's office structure previously included an Administrative Assistant position. This position was eventually reclassified into the Assistant Economic Development Director position, which was not backfilled after the department transitioned to the Moab Office of Tourism in 2025. MOT is requesting to add a full-time Administrative Assistant position as soon as possible. No job duties permanently assigned to existing staff will be delegated to this position. Rather, this position will absorb the additional unassigned job duties that have been picked up by other staff members over the past year. The addition of this Administrative Assistant will support the office's improved efficiency and capacity.

Motion by Commissioner Winfield to postpone action on this item until the June 2nd Commission meeting.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Martinez

Discussion (none at this time)

Motion passes 6-0, Hedin absent

7. Resolution amending the Grand County Employee Handbook (Personnel Services Director Tess Barger)

Presentation

The Commission approved an updated Grand County Employee Handbook version which includes all current resolutions, verbiage changes, and federal/state statute updates. This additional language added to the updated handbook means that all future resolutions or updates made to the handbook will automatically be added to the most recent version of the handbook. The proposed language addition, found on page 115 of the revised handbook is, "All employee policy changes adopted by resolution of the Grand County Commission are hereby incorporated into this Employee Handbook by reference, effective upon adoption. If this Handbook conflicts with any subsequently adopted resolution, the resolution governs. A resolution is effective whether or not it is added to the Handbook. Personnel Services is responsible for maintaining the current version of the Handbook and ensuring that incorporated changes are reflected in published versions as soon as practicable."

Motion by Commissioner McCurdy to approve the inclusion of the language addition to the 2026 revised Grand County Employee Handbook.

Motion Seconded by Commissioner Hadler

Discussion (none at this time)

Motion passes 6-0, McCandless absent

6pm Citizens to be Heard

Chris Davis asked what would happen if the National Park Service did not receive 1.5 million in funding to contribute toward the proposed shuttle system. Clarification was given that if the funding was not received, the proposed agreement would fail.

8. Removal of parcels from the 2026 tax sale (Treasurer Kauffman and Clerk/Auditor Woytek)

Presentation

Each year the Treasurer is tasked with identifying all parcels with taxes that are 5 or more years delinquent. These parcels are eligible for tax sale which happens in May or June. Auctioning property is not a desirable outcome for the taxpayer or the County. The Treasurer and the Clerk/Auditor make every effort to contact these taxpayers and encourage them to get the taxes paid in order to avoid the tax sale. In some circumstances, taxpayers are unable to pay all of the delinquent tax by the sale date. If this is the first year the parcel is up for tax sale, it is common practice in Grand County, and many other counties, to allow these taxpayers more time to pay.

State Code 59-2-1350 states that "If the county auditor, subject to approval by the county legislative body, issues a written finding that it may be in the best interest of the public to withdraw a property from the tax sale, the county auditor may withdraw the property from the sale." It is important to note that interest still accumulates on the taxes. Also, if the back taxes are not paid by November, current year taxes will also be owed in order to redeem the property. Historically, parcels have not been recommended for removal from the tax sale if they were eligible for tax sale in the prior year.

Grand County has not sold a parcel at tax sale since 2004. This year, 5 parcel owners requested more time to pay through the Treasurer's Office. All 5 have been recommended for removal from the tax sale by the County Auditor whose written statement is attached.

Motion by Commissioner McCurdy to approve the removal of parcels from the 2026 tax sale as presented

Motion seconded by Commissioner Winfield

Discussion (none at this time)

Motion passes 7-0

9. Dark Sky Reimbursement Program (Code Enforcement Specialist Brandon Black)

Presentation

At the end of 2025, Code Enforcement was working with Rocky Mountain Power in an attempt to get area lights located on private property and paid for by private property owners updated to be compliant lighting. To take advantage of this opportunity, Rocky Mountain Power sent letters to property owners who had area lights associated with their billing accounts. They were offering a "one-time only," low-rate cost of updating the lights for \$210 per light. The low rate was possible by adding the area light updates during the same timeframe that the streetlights were updated. Property owners were recommended to reach out to Code Enforcement for the potential opportunity for a reimbursement program through the County. Rocky Mountain Power's letter stated there was a reimbursement program, but once the property owners contacted Code Enforcement, they were advised that there was potential funding for reimbursement. Through the program, there have been eight residential light updates, three commercial lights updated, and an HOA that updated eight of their lights. There is one property that was annexed into Moab City during the light updates that updated their lights, which needs to be discussed before any commitments are made by the County. The

overall goal was to help update the lighting to assist the community's goals of becoming a Dark Sky-compliant area. This ask will provide reimbursement from the county to assist in Dark Sky-compliant lighting.

Motion by Commissioner Winfield to approve \$6,090 from Commission Discretionary for reimbursement for light replacement, with the caveat that local matching funds approved to support the proposed archery range funds be used first if those local matching funds were not needed.

Motion seconded by Commissioner McCurdy

Discussion

Commissioner McCurdy requested a stronger outreach campaign in future related efforts.

Motion passes 7-0

10. STAR Grant — ABC Thompson (Cristin Hofhine, County Attorney's Office)

Presentation

Staff recommends that the County Commission consider recalling the STAR business grant funds awarded to ABC Thompson LLC for the Thompson Cafe Project due to the substantial passage of time, lack of demonstrated substantive progress toward project completion, and prolonged inactivity within the planning and permitting process. The project has remained stalled for months and has not advanced in a manner consistent with the intent and timeline of the grant program.

The STAR Business Grant contract was executed in June 2023 with a contract period extending from June 20, 2023, through June 20, 2024. The grant awarded ABC Thompson LLC \$100,000 for redevelopment and reopening of the Thompson Cafe and associated commercial improvements in Thompson Springs.

Saina Carey, the grant awardee, gave a detailed overview of the process to date and existing progress.

Motion by Commissioner Hedin to revoke the grant award to ABC Thompson LLC in the amount of \$90,000

Motion seconded by Commissioner Hadler

Substitute motion by Commissioner Martinez to extend the terms of the grant contract through 2026 to allow the applicant to comply with the contract, and with the caveat that the grant awarded to ABC Thompson LLC in the amount of \$90,000 will be returned upon failure of contract completion

Discussion

Attorney Stocks stressed that a site plan needs to be submitted for the project in order for progress and ultimate approval to occur.

Substitute motion by Commissioner McGann to postpone action and direct the County Attorney's office to draft an updated contract with achievable and appropriate deadlines, to be approved by the Commission at a later date.

Motion passes 7-0

11. Ordinance Grand County Clean Energy Program (Chair McCandless)

Presentation

The Community Clean Energy program is a brand-new program giving Utahns the ability to choose clean, reliable, affordable clean energy through Rocky Mountain Power (RMP). The Community Clean Energy Program was designed through a partnership between RMP and the Community Renewable Energy Agency (aka the URC, of which we are a member), and in March 2026, the program was approved by the Utah Public Service Commission (PSC). If we adopt the program, all eligible RMP customers in our community will have a new option for choosing clean energy through their power bill. Customers can opt out at any time, during the cancellation period, there is no fee to exit.

Motion by Commissioner McGann to approve the ordinance enacting the Grand County Community Clean Energy Program

Motion seconded by Commissioner Winfield

Discussion

Attorney Stocks pointed out that there were potential costs to the County associated with postal outreach to customers alerting them to the opt-out period.

Motion passes 7-0

12. Appointment of Commissioner(s) to Boat Ramp Working Group (Commission Administrator Tyner)

Presentation

In 2022, P&Z Director John Guenther applied for a planning and design grant to redesign the Moab Boat Ramp (near the pedestrian bridge across from Lion's Park). The design and plans are complete (although they lack full engineering and an updated pricing structure), but the County has not moved forward on the project due to funding and staff capacity.

The Working Group will assess the viability and potential funding sources to complete the boat ramp project. The working group will consist of County Staff and elected officials (Commissioners, P&Z, Roads, and Admin) coordinating with partners and staff from the BLM, NPS, GCSAR, UGO, UDOT, GWSSA, FFSL, Utah State Parks, and Moab City.

The first meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 27th at 10:30 -12:00 in the Commission Chambers.

Motion by Commissioner Winfield to approve the assignment of Commissioners Martinez and Hedin to the Boat Ramp Working Group

Motion seconded by Commissioner Martinez

Discussion (none at this time)

Motion passes 7-0

H. Moab Office of Tourism Contract Renewal with Campstories Public Relations (pulled from consent agenda)

Commissioner Winfield pointed out that this item had not gone through legal review.

Motion by Commissioner Martinez to approve Moab Office of Tourism's renewal contract with camp stories pending legal review and purchasing policy review

Motion seconded by Commissioner Hadler

Discussion

Commissioner Martinez clarified the intent to renew the contract with Campstories as the PR firm for one additional year, and that renewal action needed more explicit approval before proceeding.

Motions passes 7-0

Discussion Items

13. UMTRA Infrastructure Wish List

Explanation given that the County needed to establish a firm list of infrastructure items that it would like to see implemented or improved at the UMTRA site, as a basis for requests that it intends to make in collaboration with Moab City. An updated land survey is scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2026.

14. Kem C. Gardner Financial / Payment

No discussion made at this time.

General Reports

General Commission Reports and Future Considerations

Commissioners offered their reports, as summarized in the agenda packet.

Chair McCandless adjourned the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

Melodie McCandless
Chair, Grand County Commission

ATTEST:

Gabriel Woytek
Grand County Clerk/Auditor