

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING HELD
JUNE 3, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. in the Vernal City Planning Conference Room, 374 East
Main, Vernal, Utah 84078.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Ted Munford, Randel Mills, Robin O'Driscoll, Ed Long, Nick Porter, and Mayor Corey Foley.

WELCOME: Mayor Corey Foley welcomed everyone to the special meeting.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING Councilmember Ted Munford moved to acknowledge and approve the special City Council meeting. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Munford, Mills, O'Driscoll, Long, and Porter voting in favor.

FY2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION – INNOVATION HUB

Innovation Hub Director Sydney Millett reviewed the Innovation Hub budget and explained that the most significant change involved shifting utility-related expenses, including garbage service, into the department budget, which would result in higher overall expenditures compared to previous years. Ms. Millett also noted an increase in travel and training funds to support visits to other innovation hubs as staff evaluates concepts and opportunities related to future expansion and Phase II planning efforts.

Finance Director Nick Rousseau explained that the budget worksheet had been updated to highlight changes from the prior year, with reduced line items shown in green and increased line items shown in orange. Mr. Rousseau noted that the majority of the increases reflected the utility and travel adjustments discussed by Ms. Millett. Councilmembers reviewed the budget totals and discussed the challenges of comparing current-year actual expenditures, which do not yet reflect a full fiscal year, to prior-year actual figures. Overall, Councilmembers noted that the proposed budget reflected only modest changes from previous years.

FY2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION – FACILITIES

Facilities Manager Wayne Smith reviewed the Facilities Department budget and explained that most budget line items remained unchanged from the previous year. Mr. Smith noted one potential addition involving the purchase of a new Christmas tree display for the City Hall courtyard. He explained that the existing display is approximately thirty years old and has deteriorated significantly. Mr. Smith stated that replacement options under consideration would likely cost between \$6,000 and \$8,000 and were included as a potential expenditure within the equipment supply and maintenance budget line for Council consideration.

Mayor Corey Foley expressed support for the concept but suggested placing the proposed Christmas tree purchase on the list of discretionary budget items to be revisited later in the budget process. City Manager Quinn Bennion agreed with that approach. Mr. Smith noted that the

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remaining budget adjustments primarily reflected accounting reallocations rather than departmental spending requests. Nick Rousseau explained that several utility and shared service expenses had been reassigned to better reflect actual departmental usage.

Mayor Corey Foley also asked about snow removal equipment previously discussed for the downtown blocks. Staff confirmed that a skid steer had been purchased and is available for use during future winter operations. Following brief discussion, Councilmembers agreed to revisit the proposed Christmas tree purchase during final budget deliberations.

FY2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION – VICTIMS ADVOCATE

Victim Advocate Kim Rooks reviewed the Victim Advocate budget and explained that most budget adjustments reflect the recent reduction in force and the removal of budget line items associated with discontinued grant funding. Ms. Rooks stated that expenses related to training, equipment, supplies, phones, and other operational costs were reduced accordingly. She also noted that several grant-related budget lines associated with VOCA and VAWA funding were removed to better reflect current program funding levels. Nick Rousseau noted that staff had identified and corrected several budget items during the review process to improve accuracy and streamline the budget.

Discussion also addressed vehicle-related expenses. Ms. Rooks explained that although a vehicle remains assigned to the program, no vehicle replacement funding was being requested. She noted that fuel expenditures shown in the current year budget were being revised after staff discovered an accounting discrepancy that overstated actual fuel costs. Councilmembers acknowledged that vehicle replacement had been discussed in previous years but confirmed that no replacement was currently needed.

Councilmember Ed Long asked about the Victim Assistance contribution line item, noting that it had appeared in previous budgets but had not been utilized. Ms. Rooks explained that the line item is associated with a separate donation account funded through charitable contributions and community fundraising efforts rather than City funds. She stated that the account exists to address emergency needs that may arise for program participants. Following discussion, Quinn Bennion and Nick Rousseau questioned whether the line item remained necessary within the City budget since the funds are maintained separately from City accounts and are not regularly utilized.

Mr. Bennion commended the work of Ms. Rooks, acknowledging her increased workload since experiencing a reduction in staff.

FY2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION – ATTORNEY

City Attorney Michael Harrington reviewed the Legal Department budget and explained that most line items remained consistent with prior years. Mr. Harrington noted that membership and subscription expenses increased due to the implementation of employee evaluation software and the addition of legal research software that incorporates artificial intelligence tools. He stated that advancements in legal technology have made the software sufficiently accurate and valuable to justify the ongoing expense. Mr. Harrington also reviewed travel and training expenses, explaining

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that the proposed budget reflects attendance at several annual legal trainings for himself and paralegal staff.

Mr. Harrington then discussed public defender services, explaining that the proposed increase was primarily due to the departure of attorney Nate Rawlings and the need to secure a new conflict public defender. He stated that local attorney Daniel Sam Jr. had expressed interest in providing those services at a higher monthly rate than the City has historically paid. Mr. Harrington explained that obtaining conflict counsel from outside the Basin would likely result in even greater costs due to travel and trial-related expenses. Councilmembers expressed support for moving forward with a local provider and noted that approval of a new agreement would be presented at an upcoming Council meeting.

Mr. Harrington also reviewed conflict prosecution and special legal services budgets, noting that both categories are difficult to predict because expenses can fluctuate significantly depending on litigation, appeals, land acquisitions, and specialized legal matters. He explained that recent special legal services expenditures were largely associated with the acquisition of property within the Cobble Rock Block area and that no major legal projects are currently anticipated.

Quinn Bennion reminded Councilmembers that the Legal Department budget is partially offset through cost-sharing agreements with several partner entities, including Naples City, the Uintah Recreation District, Animal Control, the Fire District, and Dutch John. Mr. Harrington explained that he tracks his time and allocates costs proportionately based on the amount of legal work performed for each entity. Councilmembers discussed the possibility of reviewing the cost-sharing structure in the future but acknowledged the significant value the arrangement provides both to Vernal City and the participating agencies. Mr. Harrington stated that the current model continues to function effectively and noted that he would advise the City if the outside workload ever began negatively impacting services provided to Vernal City.

FY2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION – POLICE

Police Chief Mike Gledhill reviewed the Police Department budget and provided an update on department operations. Chief Gledhill reported that the department is currently fully staffed with 27 sworn officers and noted that Fiscal Year 2026 marked the first year since 2018 that the department did not need to hire a replacement officer. He attributed the improved retention to the department's culture, professionalism, and workplace environment. Chief Gledhill also reported that the department remains under budget on overtime expenses and noted that several costs associated with School Resource Officers, special assignments, and grant-funded enforcement programs are reimbursed through outside funding sources. He further highlighted the department's continued success in obtaining grant funding for equipment and programs, including e-bikes, message trailers, speed trailers, and license plate reader technology.

Chief Gledhill reviewed several proposed budget increases, including upgrades to the department's body camera and evidence management systems. He explained that changes in state cybersecurity compliance requirements necessitate moving video storage from the City's existing system to a cloud-based platform. The proposed system would also include artificial intelligence-assisted

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redaction software capable of significantly reducing the time required to process video records requests and GRAMA requests. City Recorder Sara Bell confirmed that current redaction processes are highly time-intensive and expressed support for the upgraded software. Councilmembers generally agreed that the upgrade would improve efficiency and compliance.

Chief Gledhill also reviewed the department's vehicle replacement strategy and reported that the transition from leased vehicles to City-owned vehicles has generated significant savings while allowing the department to maintain its fleet. He explained that future vehicle purchases are planned on a staggered schedule to avoid large replacement costs in a single year.

Chief Gledhill explained that the department's current Tasers were originally purchased in 2013 and that the manufacturer has indicated support for the older model will eventually be discontinued. He reviewed the proposed five-year replacement plan and discussed the operational, training, and officer safety benefits associated with newer equipment. Councilmembers discussed the cost of the program and acknowledged the importance of maintaining reliable less-lethal equipment for officers.

Chief Gledhill also reviewed funding associated with the department's officer wellness program. He explained that recent state legislation requires law enforcement agencies to provide mental health counseling services for current and former officers and their spouses. Chief Gledhill reported that the department currently contracts with counselors experienced in law enforcement and military-related mental health issues and noted that the program has been well received by employees and their families. He expressed optimism that grant funding would offset most program costs.

Chief Gledhill further discussed the department's drone program and explained that additional software and licensing are necessary to ensure compliance with Federal Aviation Administration requirements and to improve coordination between drone operations and other aircraft operating within the area. He noted that the additional technology would enhance safety and regulatory compliance for the department's licensed drone operators.

The Council then reviewed a proposed police compensation adjustment. Chief Gledhill explained that despite recent wage increases, the department continues to fall behind competing agencies both locally and statewide. He reported that staff conducted a comprehensive compensation comparison using law enforcement agencies throughout Utah and developed a proposal that would bring Vernal City's starting officer wage closer to the statewide average. Chief Gledhill stated that he had discussed the proposal with Uintah County Sheriff Steve Labrum, who indicated support for establishing a more competitive regional wage structure.

Chief Gledhill and Quinn Bennion explained that the proposed compensation adjustment would be funded through savings generated by the transition from leased vehicles to City-owned vehicles and through operational changes resulting from the restructuring of the Victim Advocate program. Staff reported that the projected savings exceeded the cost of the proposed wage adjustment, allowing the City to improve officer compensation without increasing overall Police Department

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expenditures. Councilmembers expressed support for the proposal and discussed the long-term costs associated with officer turnover, academy training, and recruitment. Chief Gledhill emphasized that retaining experienced officers is more cost-effective than repeatedly hiring and training new personnel.

Councilmembers also discussed other factors contributing to employee retention, including department culture, scheduling practices, specialized assignment opportunities, equipment modernization, and the overall quality of the work environment. Chief Gledhill stated that while compensation remains important, the department continues to focus on creating a professional and supportive workplace that encourages officers to build long-term careers with Vernal City. Mayor Corey Foley and Councilmembers expressed support for the proposed police compensation adjustments. Quinn Bennion noted that the proposal was more manageable because the increased wages would be offset by savings generated through operational changes and the transition from leased to City-owned vehicles. Councilmembers agreed that retaining experienced officers is preferable to repeatedly absorbing the costs associated with recruiting and training new personnel.

Discussion then shifted to future Police Department facility needs. Chief Gledhill explained that the department has exhausted much of its available evidence storage space due to several long-term vehicle impoundments associated with major criminal investigations. He noted that one evidence vehicle currently occupies the Police Department sally port while another is stored in a City auxiliary building, limiting the department's available space for future evidence storage needs. Chief Gledhill further explained that evidence vehicles must be stored in secure, monitored locations and cannot simply be placed in public storage facilities.

Quinn Bennion presented a conceptual proposal to construct a secure storage building adjacent to the Police Department to accommodate evidence vehicles and free up existing storage areas for other City operations. Mr. Bennion stated that the project would likely be placed on the City's list of potential future capital projects rather than funded immediately. Mayor Corey Foley expressed support for the concept, noting that evidence storage needs are unlikely to diminish in the future and that the facility could provide long-term operational benefits. Councilmembers discussed potential building configurations and agreed that the concept should remain on the list of future budget considerations.

Chief Gledhill also discussed challenges associated with access to the Uintah County law enforcement training range, explaining that the County has recently proposed charging annual fees and limiting scheduling access. Councilmembers discussed the possibility of alternative training options, including use of public shooting ranges and the possibility of incorporating limited training space into future facility planning.

FY2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION – NARCOTICS STRIKE FORCE

Police Chief Mike Gledhill explained that no significant budget changes were proposed. He noted that personnel costs increased due to the addition of representatives from Daggett County and Adult Probation and Parole, both of whom recently joined the task force. Chief Gledhill explained that participating agencies continue to contribute approximately \$17,000 annually for each

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assigned member, and the increased personnel costs are offset by those contributions.

Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll asked about the status of Roosevelt City's participation in the task force. Chief Gledhill reported that Roosevelt City remains a member but continues to advocate for task force operations on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation. Chief Gledhill explained that Vernal City remains opposed to conducting operations on the reservation without a formal agreement in place and noted that the City's insurance carrier has also expressed concerns regarding such activity. He stated that the issue has created ongoing tension during task force governing board discussions and remains unresolved. Mayor Corey Foley commented that recent task force meetings have reflected the disagreement among participating agencies.

FY2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION – JUSTICE COURT

City Recorder Sara Bell reviewed the Justice Court budget and explained that most budget adjustments reflected routine operational changes and personnel-related expenses. Ms. Bell noted that court officer wages increased due to the cost-sharing arrangement with Uintah County for bailiff services. She also reported that staff completed an audit of court telephone expenses and discovered the City was being billed for thirteen phone lines despite only seven active lines being in use. Ms. Bell worked with Uintah County and the Justice Court clerks to eliminate the unused lines, resulting in reduced telephone expenses moving forward. She further discussed a request to improve workspace arrangements for court clerks, explaining that staff continue to evaluate potential cubicle configurations and office layout improvements to better accommodate employees within the limited space available. Ms. Bell stated that no significant budget changes were being requested.

Quinn Bennion then discussed the cost of Justice Court bailiff services, noting that the total annual cost is approximately \$185,000 for one full-time and one part-time deputy assigned through the Uintah County Sheriff's Office. Mr. Bennion expressed concern that the cost appeared disproportionate compared to other court operations and stated that, based on discussions with court staff, a single bailiff may be sufficient to meet the Court's operational needs. He explained that he had approached the Uintah County Sheriff's Office regarding the possibility of reducing staffing levels but was advised that the Sheriff's Office believes two bailiffs are necessary to maintain courtroom security.

Councilmembers discussed the issue and questioned whether additional efficiencies could be achieved in future years. Mayor Corey Foley expressed interest in receiving additional information regarding the Sheriff's Office position and potential alternatives. Chief Mike Gledhill and City Attorney Michael Harrington both noted that the current court facility provides security advantages that were not available when the Court was previously housed in City Hall. Mr. Bennion emphasized that his concerns were related to operational efficiency rather than employee performance and stated that the issue may warrant additional discussion with Uintah County in future budget cycles. Councilmembers generally agreed to continue evaluating the matter while taking no immediate action.

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ADJOURN: There being no further business; *Councilmember Randel Mills moved to adjourn. Councilmember Nick Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote and the meeting was declared adjourned.*