

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD
JUNE 3, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the Vernal City Council 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 regular City Council meeting.

INVOCATION OR UPLIFTING THOUGHT: The invocation was given by Mayor Corey Foley.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilmember Ed Long.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD
MAY 20, 2026**

Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll moved to approve the minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting held May 20, 2026. Councilmember Nick Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Munford, Mills, O'Driscoll, Long, and Porter voting in favor.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD
MAY 27, 2026**

Councilmember Ed Long moved to approve the minutes of the Special City Council Meeting held May 27, 2026. Councilmember Ted Munford seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Munford, Mills, O'Driscoll, Long, and Porter voting in favor.

**PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE VERNAL CITY FY2027 TENTATIVE BUDGET - NICK
ROUSSEAU**

Finance Director Nick Rousseau presented the tentative Fiscal Year 2027 Budget and explained that the proposed budget does not include a property tax increase or any other significant changes. He noted that state law requires the City to hold a public hearing on the tentative budget prior to adopting the final budget later in the month.

Mayor Corey Foley opened the public hearing and invited members of the public to provide comment.

City Manager Quinn Bennion expressed appreciation for Mr. Rousseau's work in preparing his first municipal budget and noted the steep learning curve associated with the process. Mr. Bennion stated that staff took a conservative fiscal approach in developing the budget and worked diligently to identify efficiencies. He explained that the proposed budget includes a reduction of 1.5 full-time equivalent positions and reflected the direction and feedback provided by the City Council during budget work sessions.

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Seeing no further comments, Mayor Corey Foley closed the public hearing.

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE NO. 2026-14 AMENDING THE VERNAL CITY WATER RATES AND RATE STRUCTURE - KEITH DESPAIN

Quinn Bennion explained that Public Works Director Keith Despain and Water Superintendent Ivan Merrell were attending a Community Impact Board meeting to seek additional funding for the 100 North water and roadway project due to increased asphalt costs. He stated that the proposed water rate ordinance had been discussed extensively over several months and revised twice in response to public feedback. The updated proposal would implement Tiers 1 through 4 while eliminating the higher proposed tiers and included a 2% annual rate adjustment intended to reduce the need for larger increases in the future.

Mayor Corey Foley emphasized that adopting a tiered water rate structure was important both for water conservation and for maintaining eligibility for certain infrastructure funding opportunities. He noted that the City's existing rate structure was outdated and acknowledged that the proposal would affect customers differently depending on water usage. Mayor Foley stated that while the proposal may not be universally popular, community members generally recognized the need to invest in the City's aging water system.

In response to questions regarding infrastructure funding, Mr. Bennion explained that the 100 North project had been approved by the Community Impact Board with a funding package consisting of approximately 70% grant funding and 30% low-interest loan funding. He noted that water infrastructure replacement projects routinely cost millions of dollars and that the proposed rate adjustments would help the City address those needs over time.

Councilmember Randel Mills expressed concern with making the proposed 2% annual increase permanent and suggested establishing a future review period. Mr. Bennion explained that the ordinance could be amended to require reevaluation after a specified number of years. Councilmember Ted Munford stated that smaller annual increases were preferable to allowing rates to remain unchanged for extended periods and then requiring substantial adjustments. He also expressed support for eliminating the higher proposed water rate tiers, noting that Tiers 1 through 4 would adequately address the City's needs while representing a reasonable compromise.

Councilmember Ed Long stated that the proposal had been thoroughly reviewed and heavily influenced by public input. He noted that removing the higher tiers reduced the impact on high-volume users while still creating a rate structure that would support future infrastructure improvements. Councilmember Long emphasized that the City faces significant water system replacement needs and that the ordinance would help position Vernal City to secure funding and address ongoing water loss within the system.

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Councilmember Ed Long made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 2026-14 Amending the Vernal City Water Rates and Rate Structure, with the provision that the 2% annual rate adjustment be reviewed every four years. Councilmember Nick Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with the following roll call vote:

Councilmember Munford..... aye;
Councilmember Mills aye;
Councilmember O'Driscoll..... aye;
Councilmember Long..... aye;
Councilmember Porter..... aye;

STAFF REPORTS

City Recorder Sara Bell reminded Council members that employee insurance open enrollment meetings would be held the following day and encouraged spouses to attend if desired.

Quinn Bennion requested Council feedback regarding the operation of the fountains at Cobble Rock Block amid ongoing community discussions about water conservation. He explained that the fountains utilize recycled water and experience only minimal water loss through evaporation and normal use. However, he noted that public perception remained an important consideration, particularly following the Recreation District's decision to close the splash park for the season.

Councilmember Randel Mills inquired about the possibility of using well water to supply the fountains. Mr. Bennion explained that the fountains involve public contact with the water and that using untreated well water could create health and maintenance concerns. He stated that, despite the minimal water loss associated with the fountains, temporarily shutting them off would demonstrate the City's commitment to water conservation during a dry year.

Several Council members expressed support for temporarily shutting off the fountains. Discussion also included concerns that the fountains could attract increased use as a substitute for the closed splash park, potentially creating safety and liability concerns because the feature was not designed as a splash pad.

Following discussion, Council members reached a consensus supporting staff's recommendation to temporarily shut off the fountains. Mr. Bennion stated that staff would proceed administratively and would also provide educational messaging regarding the City's water conservation efforts. Ms. Bell suggested sharing additional public information explaining the City's conservation measures, similar to previous educational outreach regarding the City's use of well water for landscaping. Mayor Corey Foley agreed and encouraged staff to continue providing information about the City's conservation practices, including the watering of downtown flower displays.

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