

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING HELD
JUNE 10, 2026 at 5:00 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 Nick Porter moved to acknowledge and approve the special City Council meeting. Councilmember Robin O’Driscoll seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Mills, O’Driscoll, Long, and Porter voting in favor. Councilmember Ted Munford was absent from the vote.

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL AMENDING THE ORDINANCE 2026-14 AMENDING THE VERNAL CITY WATER RATES AND RATE STRUCTURE - QUINN BENNION

City Manager Quinn Bennion reviewed two proposed revisions to Ordinance No. 2026-14 amending the City’s water rates and rate structure. Mr. Bennion explained that the first revision would formally require the annual rate adjustment percentage to be reviewed every four years. The second revision would change the effective date of the annual two percent rate adjustment from July 2027 to January 2028, allowing the increase to occur at the beginning of a calendar year rather than midyear. Mr. Bennion noted that Water Department staff recommended the January implementation date to simplify administration of the rate adjustment.

Councilmember Robin O’Driscoll moved to approve Ordinance 2026-14 Amending the Vernal City Water Rates and Rate Structure. Councilmember Randel Mills seconded the vote. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

Councilmember Munford absent;
Councilmember Long..... aye;
Councilmember Mills..... aye;
Councilmember Porter..... aye;
Councilmember O’Driscoll..... aye.

DISCUSSION AND CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF THE NEW PUBLIC DEFENDER CONTRACT - MICHAEL HARRINGTON

City Attorney Michael Harrington presented a proposed public defender services agreement with Daniel Sam Jr. and noted that the contract had been discussed during the previous City Council meeting. Mr. Harrington explained that the agreement remained unchanged from the version previously reviewed by the Council and provided for compensation of \$6,000 per month.

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Councilmember Ed Long moved to approve the public defender contract with Daniel Sam Jr. for \$6,000 per month. Councilmember Nick Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

<i>Councilmember Munford</i>	<i>absent;</i>
<i>Councilmember Long</i>	<i>aye;</i>
<i>Councilmember Mills</i>	<i>aye;</i>
<i>Councilmember Porter</i>	<i>aye;</i>
<i>Councilmember O'Driscoll</i>	<i>aye.</i>

DISCUSSION AND CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF AN INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT WITH UINTAH COUNTY REGARDING ATTORNEY SERVICES AND WAIVER OF CONFLICT - MICHAEL HARRINGTON

City Attorney Michael Harrington presented a proposed interlocal agreement with Uintah County regarding temporary attorney services. Mr. Harrington explained that the County Attorney's Office is currently experiencing significant staffing shortages following the departure of several experienced prosecutors, creating challenges in managing felony caseloads and meeting constitutional timelines. He stated that the proposed arrangement would allow him to provide limited prosecutorial assistance while other attorneys, including Daggett County Attorney Kent Snyder and law school intern Julie Handy, assist with workload distribution. Mr. Harrington emphasized that the proposal was intended as a temporary measure while Uintah County recruits and hires additional prosecutors. He expressed concern that failing to provide assistance could negatively impact law enforcement efforts, crime victims, and the administration of justice throughout the community.

Councilmember Ed Long questioned whether the County Attorney's Office had identified the underlying causes of its staffing challenges and whether a long-term solution was being pursued. Mr. Harrington explained that the office is undergoing a cultural transition under the leadership of County Attorney Nate Rawlings and expressed confidence that the office would become more attractive to future applicants as those changes take effect. He stated that recruitment efforts are ongoing and anticipated that additional hiring opportunities would become available following the completion of the bar examination process later in the year.

Councilmember Ted Munford then joined the meeting.

Councilmembers discussed the potential impact the agreement could have on Vernal City and whether assistance should be conditioned upon improved cooperation from Uintah County in other areas. Councilmember Randel Mills expressed concern that the City has historically made efforts to work collaboratively with the County without receiving similar cooperation in return and suggested that issues such as law enforcement range access and other outstanding concerns should be addressed. Councilmember Ted Munford acknowledged those frustrations but stated that the proposal should be evaluated based on what is best for the broader community rather than the actions of individual County officials. He emphasized that supporting law enforcement, victims,

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and the justice system remained the primary consideration.

Mayor Corey Foley expressed concern about ensuring Vernal City continues to receive timely legal services and questioned how responsibilities would be divided if the agreement moved forward. Mr. Harrington explained that he would remain the primary point of contact for Vernal City legal matters and stated that only lower-priority projects would be delegated to Assistant County Attorney Loren Anderson as appropriate. Mr. Harrington emphasized that Vernal City would continue to receive priority attention and that the arrangement would be reevaluated if it negatively affected City operations.

Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll stated that she was uncomfortable with the automatic renewal provision and preferred that the arrangement be reviewed more frequently. Councilmember Nick Porter agreed and expressed concern about committing to a lengthy term while the long-term impact on City operations remained unknown. Several Councilmembers suggested that a shorter initial term would provide greater flexibility and allow the City to reevaluate the arrangement as circumstances evolve. Discussion focused on reducing the agreement to a three-month term with the ability to renew if necessary, while also ensuring that either party could terminate the agreement if it was no longer serving its intended purpose. Councilmembers emphasized that the assistance should remain a temporary measure designed to address the County Attorney's immediate staffing challenges while preserving the City's ability to protect its own legal service needs. Mr. Harrington stated that he would support revisions allowing either party to terminate the agreement at the end of any month if concerns arose regarding workload, staffing, or service levels.

City Manager Quinn Bennion stated that while the City's preference would be to retain Mr. Harrington's full attention on City matters, the proposal was comparable to adapting during any temporary staffing shortage and could be managed if limited in duration. Councilmembers discussed the potential benefits of strengthening relationships with future County leadership while helping address an immediate public safety need.

Councilmember Ted Munford moved to approve the Interlocal Agreement with Uintah County, including the changes of the three month provision and the ability to terminate the contract as needed, as presented. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following vote:

Councilmember Munford absent;
Councilmember Porter..... aye;
Councilmember O'Driscoll..... aye.

Prior to his vote, Councilmember Ed Long expressed concern that sharing City Attorney Michael Harrington's time with Uintah County could impact the level of legal services available to Vernal City. Mr. Harrington stated that Vernal City would remain his top priority and explained that some responsibilities could be delegated to Julie Handy and Assistant County Attorney Loren Anderson to help manage workloads. He acknowledged that his availability for informal drop-in consultations may be reduced while working periodically from the County Attorney's Office but

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emphasized that he would ensure the City's legal needs continued to be met. Councilmember Long stated that he trusted Mr. Harrington's judgment and commitment to the City. *The votes continued as follows:*

Councilmember Long..... aye;
Councilmember Mills..... aye, with reservation.

Mayor Corey Foley stated that although he remained uncomfortable with the agreement, he was willing to support the Council's direction. He emphasized that his expectation was that Assistant County Attorney Loren Anderson would provide Vernal City with the same level of civil legal service provided to Uintah County. Mayor Foley stated that if the arrangement failed to meet that expectation, he would support terminating the agreement. Councilmember Randel Mills agreed and stated that he hoped the agreement would result in improved cooperation and good-faith efforts from Uintah County moving forward.

FY2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION

Councilmember Ed Long expressed concern that the Council had reviewed departmental budgets without a clear understanding of the City's overall financial position. He stated that while individual budget requests had been presented, he wanted a better understanding of how total expenditures compared to anticipated revenues and whether the City was operating within a constrained budget environment. Finance Director Nick Rousseau acknowledged the concern and explained that staff is working to develop improved financial reporting tools and visualizations to provide a clearer overall picture of the City's finances. Councilmember Randel Mills suggested including percentage-based comparisons within future budget reports to better illustrate spending trends and budget utilization, a recommendation that received support from other Councilmembers.

Mr. Rousseau reviewed the General Fund budget summary and reported that the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget currently reflects an estimated positive balance of approximately \$249,000 after revenues and expenditures are accounted for. City Manager Quinn Bennion explained that the City maintains flexibility through adjustments to capital transfers and fund balance reserves if additional expenditures are approved during the budget process. Mr. Bennion further noted that the City currently maintains a healthy General Fund balance near the State's recommended maximum of 35 percent and that staff intends to remain below that threshold moving forward.

Councilmembers discussed the City's capital improvement funding strategy, including annual transfers to the Capital Improvement Program Fund. Mr. Bennion reported that the City transferred approximately \$2 million to capital projects during the current fiscal year and is proposing a similar transfer for Fiscal Year 2027. He stated that the City's financial position remains stable and that staff is comfortable with the budget items presented during the work session while continuing to evaluate deferred projects and funding priorities. Finance Director Nick Rousseau agreed that additional roll-up reporting would be beneficial and indicated that staff would continue improving financial presentation tools for future budget discussions.

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FY2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION – IT**

Information Technology Manager Alyx Larsen reviewed the Information Technology Department budget and explained that the proposed increases primarily relate to training, technology replacement, cybersecurity requirements, and software costs. Mr. Larsen requested an increase to the travel and training budget to attend a specialized training program and explained that cell phone expenses were increased to account for periodic device replacement cycles and associated accessories. He also noted that website expenses continue to rise due to annual increases from the City's website provider and reported that staff may evaluate alternative providers in the future, though replacing the website platform would be a significant undertaking.

Mr. Larsen further explained that computer replacement costs have increased due to rising technology prices and introduced a new cybersecurity line item. He stated that state and federal agencies have increased cybersecurity requirements for local governments, requiring additional security measures such as multi-factor authentication, enhanced firewall protections, and secure data transfer tools. Mr. Larsen also requested funding for replacement police patrol laptops, explaining that updated criminal justice information security standards require computers accessing protected law enforcement data to be purchased new and remain fully supported by the manufacturer. Chief Mike Gledhill noted that previous cost-saving measures involving refurbished equipment are no longer permitted under the updated requirements. Councilmembers briefly discussed the department's use of ruggedized patrol laptops before concluding the budget review.

FY2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION – STREETS

Streets Supervisor Clint Morton reviewed the Streets Department budget and explained that most proposed increases were related to personnel costs, seasonal staffing, and operational adjustments. Mr. Morton noted that the seasonal employee position continues to be largely funded through Special Assessment Area revenue and that returning seasonal flower watering staff receive modest wage increases based on years of service. He also reviewed increases associated with cell phone services, fuel allocations, and mapping software, explaining that the department is transitioning from its current mapping platform to Esri GIS software.

Mr. Morton then discussed several proposed equipment replacement requests, including replacement of a forklift that is more than twenty years old and heavily utilized by multiple departments, as well as replacement of an aging compressed air trailer used for crack sealing and roadway maintenance. He explained that both pieces of equipment have experienced increasing maintenance and operational issues due to age. Mr. Morton also requested funding for a replacement half-ton truck used primarily for crack sealing operations. Following discussion, Councilmembers expressed support for delaying the truck replacement and instead utilizing a vehicle expected to become available through the City's fleet replacement program. Mr. Morton agreed that the truck replacement could be deferred and stated that the forklift and compressed air trailer were higher priorities.

Discussion also addressed the City's ongoing landscape conversion program. City Manager Quinn Bennion explained that staff is working on additional water-wise landscaping projects, including planned improvements along 500 West and 500 North, and suggested continuing funding for future

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conversion efforts. Councilmembers discussed carrying forward unused funds from the current fiscal year to support larger future projects and educational demonstration areas promoting water conservation.

Finance Director Nick Rousseau concluded the discussion by noting that several prior-year equipment purchases had been budgeted and accounted for through different funding sources, including the recently acquired street sweeper and vehicle replacements. He stated that staff would continue refining budget classifications to improve clarity and tracking of equipment expenditures moving forward.

FY2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION – UTILITIES (WATER AND SEWER)

Water Superintendent Ivan Merrell reviewed the Water Department budget and explained that several proposed increases were driven by operational needs and ongoing infrastructure maintenance. Mr. Merrell noted that overtime expenses increased due to major in-house projects, including the 3500 West slip-lining project, which staff completed internally and estimated saved the City between \$2 million and \$3 million. He also discussed increases to equipment maintenance, treated water costs, water purchases, software, and contracted line repair services. Mr. Merrell reported that the City expects to receive satellite leak detection data in June, followed by acoustic leak detection analysis later in the summer, and requested additional funding to address repairs identified through that process. Mayor Corey Foley and several Councilmembers expressed support for increasing available funding to address water system leaks and infrastructure deficiencies as they are identified.

Mr. Merrell and Public Works Director Keith Despain also discussed the City's ongoing efforts to improve budgeting transparency and planning within the Enterprise Fund. Finance Director Nick Rousseau presented a revised methodology for calculating indirect services costs charged to the Water and Sewer Fund, explaining that the new approach relies on measurable data and documented cost allocations rather than estimates used in prior years. Mr. Merrell and Mr. Despain expressed support for the revised methodology and described it as a significant improvement over previous practices. Councilmembers generally agreed that the updated approach provided greater accountability and transparency.

Mr. Merrell reviewed a proposed upgrade to the City's Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system, explaining that the existing system relies on outdated technology and no longer meets current cybersecurity standards. He stated that the upgrade would modernize monitoring and control functions throughout the water system, improve operational efficiency, and allow staff to remotely monitor system conditions during emergencies. Councilmembers discussed the project costs, ongoing software considerations, and potential funding opportunities. Mr. Merrell emphasized that the upgrade is necessary to maintain compliance with current cybersecurity requirements and improve the reliability of the City's water infrastructure.

Discussion also focused on a proposed hydrovac truck purchase. Mr. Merrell explained that the equipment would improve the department's ability to respond to water leaks and perform utility excavation work. Mayor Corey Foley questioned whether similar services could be provided

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through contracted vendors and suggested issuing a request for proposals to evaluate response times, costs, and service availability. Following discussion, Councilmembers expressed interest in exploring contracted services before pursuing a major equipment purchase. Staff agreed to continue evaluating alternatives and to increase contracted repair funding to provide flexibility while the City assesses future equipment needs.

Mr. Despain then discussed plans for a future water system master plan update and outlined several potential infrastructure projects that may be funded through future rate revenues and grant opportunities. He explained that the recently adopted water rate structure was designed to create a dedicated funding source for infrastructure replacement, water rights acquisitions, and other long-term system improvements. Councilmembers discussed the importance of maintaining accountability for those revenues and ensuring that future expenditures remain focused on water system needs. Mr. Despain stated that future master planning efforts will help identify and prioritize the City's most critical infrastructure projects.

Before concluding the discussion, Mr. Merrell thanked the Council for its support of the Water Department and acknowledged the significant work ahead in addressing aging infrastructure and improving the City's water system. Mayor Corey Foley expressed appreciation for the department's efforts and indicated his support for continuing to provide the resources necessary to address the City's long-term water needs.

FY2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION – NON DEPARTMENT

City Manager Quinn Bennion and Public Works Director Keith Despain reviewed the proposed Capital Improvement Program budget and provided updates on several major projects planned or underway throughout the City. Mr. Bennion explained that the Capital Improvement Program includes funding for Lamplighter Block redevelopment, American Subdivision infrastructure improvements, Cobble Rock Block enhancements, the 3500 West transmission line project, the 100 North water and sewer project, roadway rehabilitation projects, trail development, Safe Routes to School improvements, transportation planning studies, and other infrastructure initiatives. Staff also reviewed several grant-funded projects and noted that many planned improvements leverage outside funding sources through federal, state, and Community Impact Board programs.

Mr. Bennion reported that the City is awaiting notification regarding a potential \$3 million Environmental Protection Agency grant associated with the Lamplighter Block project. He explained that if awarded, the grant would significantly reduce the City's direct financial contribution toward environmental remediation and redevelopment efforts. Staff also discussed ongoing planning and design work for Phase I improvements within the Lamplighter Block and reviewed funding sources available for future construction.

Mr. Despain provided updates on several active infrastructure projects, including the American Subdivision utility improvements, the 3500 West transmission line project, and the 100 North water and sewer replacement project. He reported that construction continues to progress on each project and noted that additional Community Impact Board funding had recently been approved to support roadway improvements associated with the 100 North project. Mr. Despain also discussed

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future roadway rehabilitation efforts, Safe Routes to School improvements, transportation planning studies, and potential downtown enhancement projects currently under consideration.

Councilmembers discussed the City's long-term capital planning efforts and expressed appreciation for the amount of outside funding secured for community projects. Councilmember Nick Porter suggested that staff prepare a future summary showing the amount of grant funding and outside resources leveraged for major redevelopment projects to help illustrate the value received by taxpayers. Mr. Bennion agreed that such information would be beneficial once the projects are completed.

Finance Director Nick Rousseau then reviewed the City's debt service obligations and explained that existing debt consists primarily of Community Impact Board loans, Municipal Building Authority obligations, and Enterprise Fund debt associated with water and sewer infrastructure projects. Mr. Bennion also reviewed the status of the City's Community Reinvestment Agency funds, reporting that redevelopment area revenues continue to meet or exceed projections and are being used to support approved redevelopment projects within the district.

FY2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION – PERSONNEL

Quinn Bennion presented several personnel compensation recommendations for Fiscal Year 2027. Mr. Bennion reported that the previously discussed Police Department market adjustments had been incorporated into the proposed budget and recommended a three percent wage adjustment for all other City employees. He explained that while he generally supports performance-based compensation, the City recently implemented a new employee evaluation system and has not yet accumulated sufficient data to reliably tie evaluations to compensation decisions. Supervisors Clint Morton and City Recorder Sara Bell expressed support for the new evaluation process, noting that the increased frequency of employee check-ins and goal-setting discussions has improved communication and accountability. Councilmembers discussed prior compensation approaches and generally expressed support for the proposed three percent adjustment.

Mr. Bennion also recommended a two percent adjustment to the City's salary ranges and presented a market analysis of several specialized positions that are difficult to recruit and replace. Working with Human Resources Manager Jenny Brailsford, staff compared compensation levels with similar positions in other communities and identified several positions that had fallen behind market rates. Mr. Bennion noted that the Building Official and Building Inspector positions were significantly below comparable market compensation levels. He recommended targeted market adjustments totaling approximately \$27,000 for selected specialty positions. Councilmembers discussed the proposal and generally agreed that specialized positions requiring unique certifications, experience, and expertise warrant periodic market review to remain competitive and support employee retention.

FY2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION – MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Quinn Bennion reviewed several remaining budget considerations for Council discussion. The first item involved construction of a secure evidence storage building for the Police Department. Mr. Bennion explained that existing evidence storage space has been exhausted and that the proposed

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facility would help address long-term storage needs. Airport Director Ken Campbell suggested several alternatives that could reduce project costs, including potential partnerships with Uintah County and utilizing existing facilities. Councilmembers generally supported pursuing a more detailed cost estimate and exploring lower-cost options before making a final funding commitment.

Assistant City Manager Braeden Christofferson then revisited the proposed General Plan update and outlined options for funding the project through a combination of Capital Improvement Program funding and future budget allocations. Mr. Christofferson explained that the City's General Plan will require updating before 2029 and noted that a comprehensive review would address numerous policy and planning issues that have evolved since the original plan was adopted. Councilmembers expressed support for moving forward with the update and agreed that funding could be spread over multiple budget years if necessary.

Councilmembers also discussed several smaller budget considerations, including replacement of the City Hall Christmas tree display, budgeting for council electronic devices, and the potential purchase of budgeting software. Following discussion, Councilmembers indicated that replacement of the Christmas tree display was not a current priority and expressed support for continuing to utilize existing budgeting tools while staff evaluates future software options. Finance Director Nick Rousseau, Public Works Director Keith Despain, Airport Director Ken Campbell, and several Councilmembers praised the budgeting tools and reporting systems developed by Mr. Rousseau during his first year with the City. Councilmembers generally agreed to defer consideration of additional budgeting software while continuing to refine existing systems.

Before concluding the work session, Public Works Director Keith Despain reviewed the remaining Municipal Building Authority debt obligations associated with City Hall construction and reported the anticipated payoff schedules for those loans. City Recorder Sara Bell reminded Councilmembers that three public hearings related to the budget process would be held during the next regular meeting, including the Fiscal Year 2026 budget reopening, the salary schedule ordinance, and adoption of the Fiscal Year 2027 budget. Mr. Bennion thanked Councilmembers, department heads, and staff for their participation throughout the budget process and expressed appreciation for the collaborative discussions.

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