

MINUTES of the special public hearing of the Uintah County Commission held **August 6, 2026** in the Ballard City Offices at 2381 E. 1000 S. Ballard, Utah. The meeting commenced at 7:00 pm.

PARTICIPANTS: Commissioners John Laursen, Willis LeFevre, and Sonja Norton.

ATTENDANCE: Angela Hawkins, Nile Mathisen, Dan Dilsaver, Cindy Dilsaver, Jo Gardner, Dan Mortensen, Shaun Angus, Jackie Sweat, Anna Billings, Nolan Jackson, Danny Harrell, Mike Wilkins, Melissa Yergensen, Matt Yergensen, Loren W. Anderson, Matt Cazier, Al Kettle, Calli Kettle, Joe McKea, Andy McKea, Leah Bastian, Brent Bastian, Daniel Mauchley, Mike McKee, Karen McKee, Danette Brooks, Tammie Mecham, and Bevan Watkins.
Minutes by Tai Duncan

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

PRAYER by Mike Wilkins

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE by Commissioner Laursen

PUBLIC HEARING: Proposed Optional Plan to change County form of government

Commissioner Laursen began by stating the public hearings are being held as they are required by law as a result of the petition to change the County's form of government. This is not a work meeting, the Commissioners are not able to make any decisions. The purpose of the hearing is to share information. He asked that all be respectful and not interrupt speakers. Disruptive behavior will be asked to leave. If several individuals share similar facts and opinions, please designate one speaker. Those wishing to speak should have noted on the sign-in sheet; if there is time after hearing from those that have requested to speak, the floor will be opened up for those that did not request the opportunity to speak but would like to or for those that would like to speak again. Speakers will be given 5 minutes the first time and then 3 minutes a second time, if applicable. Please provide information or clarification only as we are focusing on the facts regarding the form of government not for other grievances or attacks. The Commission will answer questions where possible.

Dan Dilsaver, a sponsor of the petition, addressed the hearing. He feels changing to the proposed form of government is for the best, it will increase representation across the county. Five council members would be elected from five specific districts determined to have around 7500 voters each. In response to things he has seen, those proposing the optional plan have no authority to determine what the salary would be for the part-time council members. That would have to be determined by the council once elected. There has been concern about transparency with previous commissions. Three Commissioners are overworked doing executive and administrative functions. The Commissioners cannot get together to discuss items unless in a public meeting due to being a quorum. Commissioner Laursen clarified two Commissioners can meet to discuss and share information but cannot make a decision unless it is in a public meeting. Dan added better decision making is possible with more knowledge; taking the knowledge of five is better than three. It is better to obtain knowledge across the County rather than one centralized location.

Jo Gardner, also a petition sponsor, took a moment to speak. He has heard it said that it will be difficult to get qualified individuals to run for office but he doesn't agree. There are only three requirements to run for Commission: 18 years of age or older, a County resident, and no criminal history. They are not required to have a degree or specific education. Other offices have other requirements. There are individuals in the County that have the heart and desire to serve the community; several serve on the School Board as well as other boards. We can get that kind of representation on the Council.

Mike Wilkins was next to speak. He has asked other counties with a council form of government what their costs are in order to get an idea what the costs could be compared to what the costs are currently.

Those with a County Manager or Administrator also have an Administrative Assistant. Cache County annual costs are roughly \$398,000, Grand County \$600,000, Morgan County \$312,000; Salt Lake County \$660,000, Summit County \$783,000, Tooele County \$509,000, and Wasatch County \$720,000. These are wages only, benefits have not been included. Currently, the salaries for Uintah County Commissioners total \$292,000. Three of these other counties provide benefits while four do not. This is merely information to take into consideration.

Mike McKee thanked the petition sponsors for their hard work; it is good to share different ideas and gather as much information as possible. However, he feels the proposed change would not be in the County's best interest. He has seen government from many different perspectives having been on the School Board, a college board, Central Utah Water, the 7 County Infrastructure Coalition, and County Commission. He understands the various forms of government and encourages others to do the research so they fully understand the different options available as well. The current form, three Commissioners, have executive and legislative duties. With the proposed change, the Council would have only legislative duties. The County Manager would have all executive duties and would not be elected but appointed by the Council. Therefore, their interest would be to keep the Council happy. The current Commissioners are responsible for the entire county which is closest to the people. As a west-side resident he feels the Commission has done well representing the entire County throughout the years. Ballard has not been forgotten; they were able to tie into the Victory Pipeline and fire protection and law enforcement are now standard. Library connections were set up between the two counties, Uintah and Duchesne, to benefit all citizens. He encouraged everyone to consider all factors. Full-time Commissioners are fully dedicated to the job at hand and are more able to be involved and follow the issues. They can be more educated about the topics, such as resource management plans with other agencies, because their full attention is on making the best decisions. A part-time board will not have the time to build the relationships necessary and fully dive into the details of each matter. Many topics, such as centrally assessed properties, are complicated and take time to learn. He reiterated his appreciation to those that want what is best for the community.

Mike McKee's time expired but he was the individual who requested to speak so was allowed to take an additional three minutes. He continued by noting taxation is another example of complicated issues that take time to learn fully. He remembers the School Board telling people the tax rate would stay the same so taxes would not be increased; not fully understanding that even though the tax rate stays the same the amount of taxes paid by each property owner may or may not increase. As house values increase the tax rate decreases. Board members need to fully understand how the system works in order to be fully transparent. It takes time to understand every detail and part-time doesn't allow for that. CIB, Community Impact Board, funding is another example of complicated details. It is important to understand the formulas used by the State, where the funding comes from, how to utilize the funds, and how to match the funds for the best possible projects. He concluded by noting there are pros and cons to each form of government but he feels full-time Commissioners are the better option.

Dan Dilsaver also took another opportunity to speak. He agreed with Mike McKee that having representation from the west-side of the county is important and thanked him for his years of service. He stated that no one knows what the costs will be of the proposed optional plan so we should not make comparisons to other counties. He pointed out that Commissioner Norton served as Mayor for Vernal City and that was a part-time position. She agreed and stated she served as Mayor to serve the community just as she ran for Commissioner to serve her community. She did not run for office for the salary. Dan agreed, we want individuals who are here to serve not get a salary. We don't know if the council member salary will be \$300 a month or \$5,000; that would be determined by them. He asked Mike McKee if he knew all the nuances before taking office. Mike responded he knew some but learned over time as a full-time Commissioner. Dan concluded by saying the important thing to consider is better representation and communication.

Mike Wilkins also took a moment to speak again. When he spoke to other counties he also spoke with someone who was an original sponsor of their change to the council form of government. They ran their

change through a study committee to review all the options. This proposed change is not going through a study committee. After the study committee review, the other county did change their form of government and the individual he spoke with feels they lost their representation on the Hill (with the State and Federal Legislators) because the council members are part-time and not able to build the relationships with the legislators. Additionally, a manager will not receive the same respect as an elected official on the Hill.

Joe McKea took the opportunity to speak; you will see him on the November Ballot as a Republican Commission candidate. He did not choose to run for Commissioner for the salary; he is quitting his full-time job to serve. He is not in favor of, or opposed to, the proposed plan. He likes the idea of addressing other options and doing the necessary research to determine what is best for the County as a whole. He is currently a member of the Uintah Special Service District 1 Board, the Rec District. As a part-time board member he feels he is less informed and less involved as they do not deal with the daily details. When he was the County Human Resources Director, he was able to build relationships with other HR directors in other counties and heard from those with part-time council members that they had difficulties resolving internal functions and issues because part-time board members are not as available or informed. He fully agrees we all want what is best for the County and he is not sure what the best form of government is, but feels full-time members are more dedicated.

Jo Gardner also spoke a second time. He explained that a three member Commission cannot fully discuss and educate each other as two constitute a quorum. All board members should be fully informed and decisions should be made by more than two. Better communication is an advantage of a five member council.

Danny Mortensen took the opportunity to speak as well. He does not agree with the Commission's decision to do away with a second on a motion. If one Commissioner is against what the other two want to do, he/she has no option but to vote no. Consequently, two are making the decisions. When a second was required, it was an opportunity to slow down the process and force the board to come to a compromise. The ability to vote on a motion without a second is not a government of the people.

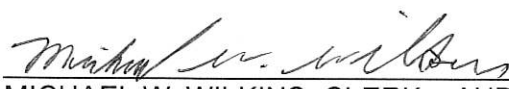
Cindy Dilsaver also took the opportunity to speak. She is concerned most of the people commenting on Facebook have not actually read the proposed plan and are not actually informed. She encouraged all citizens to read the plan, ask questions, and become fully informed before making a decision. She has spoken with two part-time council members in other counties who were able to keep their jobs and still serve their community and were appreciative of that opportunity.

Commissioner Laursen clarified the Commissioners are able to discuss and inform one another outside of a public meeting but all decisions must be made in a public meeting. Robert's Rules of Order does not require a second on a motion for a small group. By Robert's Rules of Order, the Commission is a small group and they follow these guidelines as best they can. Regardless of the number of the board, the majority determines the outcome. He also encouraged all voters to review the information, weigh the pros and cons of each form of government and make an informed decision. We all want what is best for the community and making informed decisions is the best for all involved. Do not just take someone's word, study it for yourself. He encouraged everyone to reach out to the petition sponsors as well as the Commissioners with any and all questions.

As there were no other comments, the public hearing was concluded.

ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:35 pm.


JOHN LAURSEN, CHAIR


MICHAEL W. WILKINS, CLERK – AUDITOR