

**MINUTES** of the special public meeting of the Uintah County Commission held **August 17, 2026** in the Commission Chambers of the Uintah County Building at 147 East Main, Vernal UT. The meeting commenced at 7:00 pm.

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

**ATTENDANCE:** Keith Campbell, Joe McKea, Margie Shewell, Mike Wilkins, Loren Anderson, Angela Hawkins, Brenda McDonald, Kim McDonald, Dan Dilsaver, Jo Gardner, Matt Cazier, Elleana Kiever, Terry Kiever, Jackie Seet, Dusty D, Brian Gorum, Michael Cook, Dean Faker, Daniel Ray, JC Brewer, Jackie Bartel, Quinn Hammond, Ember Hammond, Anna Billings, Paul Chacon, Nolan Jackson, Travis Hawkins, Brownie Tomlinson, Frandee Felton, Dave Felton, Vance Norton, Dave Palmer, Melvin Ray, Sonya Ray, Ed Johnstun, Joe McKea, Curt Smuin, Danny Harrell, Teri Jorgensen, Benjamin Anderson, Robin O'Driscoll, Lizzy Hutchinson, Candace Hall, Clark Hall, Cindy Dilsaver, Tabitha McDonald, Calvin McDonald, Tammie Mecham, Travis Campbell and Colby Kiever.  
Minutes by Leasha Williams

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

**PRAYER** by Matt Cazier.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** by Willis LeFevre.

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

Commissioner Laursen opened the public hearing regarding the proposed change to the county form of government. He clarified that this is a legally required public hearing for information sharing rather than a commission work meeting or a vote. Participants were instructed to remain respectful, with the warning that interruptions would result in removal from the chambers. Speakers were asked to state their full names, focus on factual information, and limit comments to five minutes, with an additional three minutes allowed if time permitted. Groups were encouraged to designate a single representative to speak on their behalf. We are not here to answer questions or tell you our thoughts. We are bound by State Law to hold this meeting.

JC Brewer inquired about the accountability of the proposed county manager position under the new form of government. Specifically, he asked which entity would be responsible for auditing the county manager, questioning whether this oversight would fall to the Clerk-Auditor, the State Auditor's Office, or the appointed councilors. He expressed concern regarding the lack of clear accountability for this position.

Quinn Hammond, a county employee, expressed significant concerns regarding a perceived lack of factual information and clear data surrounding the proposed government change. He argued that claims of cost savings are inaccurate, citing salary and benefit data for county managers in Summit and Wasatch counties, which he noted are substantially higher than current projections for Uintah County. Quinn cautioned against replacing the current system without a comprehensive understanding of the financial and operational impacts. He concluded by expressing support for maintaining the existing commission structure and encouraged those interested in reform to run for established commission seats rather than altering the form of government.

Anna Billings outlined the proposed plan to transition from the current three-member, full-time commission to a five-member, part-time council with an appointed county manager. She emphasized that the specific financial costs, including salaries for the council and county manager, have not yet been determined and would be established by the new council. Addressing concerns regarding financial comparisons, she noted that the counties currently utilizing this form of government have significantly different economic profiles, including higher home values and county budgets. She

expressed confidence in the talent available within Uintah County to fulfill these roles and clarified that her group is a citizen-led organization not responsible for all information or financial figures circulating in the community. She encouraged residents to engage directly with their group to address any questions or concerns.

Brenda McDonald, a county employee, expressed strong opposition to the proposed governance change. She argued that the current full-time commission structure is necessary to manage the county's complex and diverse responsibilities, including energy, agriculture, and public safety, while maintaining oversight of legislative committees and securing critical funding. Brenda further contended that a council-manager system would lead to diluted representation, reduced voter accountability, and increased taxpayer costs. She concluded that the proposed changes are unsuitable for the county's fast-paced, energy-driven economy and advocated for maintaining the current, directly accountable form of government.

Kim McDonald advocated for retaining the current commission structure, emphasizing that it ensures maximum democratic accountability and direct communication between constituents and elected officials. He argued that the proposed council-manager model introduces an unelected administrator, which could dilute representation and remove the ability of voters to directly hold management accountable for daily operations. Furthermore, he noted that at-large commission elections allow all county residents to vote for every seat, ensuring broad representation, whereas a district-based council system could limit voters to a single representative who may not address localized concerns.

Joe Gardner questioned the criticism regarding commissioner meeting attendance at the State Legislature, noting the significant demands of the role. He expressed concern that a shift in government might lead to urban centers exerting unreasonable control over outlying areas, potentially diluting representation. He advocated for collaborative efforts to manage the county's growth effectively, highlighting past frustrations with development and land-use planning as areas that require focused, unified attention.

Terry Kiever expressed support for the proposed change to the county form of government. He addressed concerns regarding the lack of direct voter control over an appointed county manager by noting that similar appointment processes currently exist within special service districts. Additionally, he argued that a part-time commission structure would open the position to qualified community members who are currently unable to serve due to their full-time employment commitments, thereby expanding the available pool of talent for county leadership.

Mike Wilkins presented financial data from the Transparent Utah website to compare compensation costs. He noted that the total annual wages for the council-manager structures in Summit, Tooele, and Wasatch counties were \$783,000, \$509,000, and \$720,000 respectively, excluding benefits. He contrasted these figures with the current Uintah County commission's total annual wages of \$292,531.

Mike Cook expressed skepticism regarding the financial claims supporting the proposed change in government, noting a lack of verified data from the proposal's sponsors. He questioned the feasibility of a part-time commission structure, arguing that the combined work and service time commitment is unrealistic and unsustainable for citizens. He further voiced concerns about reduced representation, explaining that the transition to a district-based council would limit voter influence compared to the current at-large commission system. He encouraged attendees to conduct their own thorough research before supporting the measure.

Daniel Ray challenged the accuracy of claims regarding potential cost savings of the proposed government change, noting a lack of verified financial data from the sponsors. He questioned the feasibility of the part-time council structure, arguing that the significant time commitment would be unsustainable for most citizens. Additionally, he voiced concerns that a district-based council would dilute voter representation compared to the current at-large commission system and cautioned against

the potential for future redistricting. He urged the public to conduct independent research before supporting the measure.

Joe McKea emphasized the demographic and economic differences between Uintah County and other counties that have adopted alternative forms of government, such as Summit and Tooele. He questioned the suitability of the proposed council-manager model for Uintah County's specific needs, noting that the traditional three-commissioner structure has served the county well for many years. Additionally, he presented comparative financial data regarding total compensation—including wages, benefits, and reimbursements—for council members in alternative-form counties versus Uintah County, encouraging attendees to review the 2025 data available on the Transparent Utah website.

Calvin McDonald expressed concerns regarding accountability under the proposed county manager structure. Referencing a past experience with legal conflict of interest, he highlighted the critical need for clear oversight of administrative roles. Furthermore, he encouraged citizens to take an active role in community issues beyond simply voting, emphasizing that civic engagement is essential for effective local government.

Travis Campbell expressed concerns regarding the proposed reduction in representation, moving from three commissioners to one representative. He argued that population-based district designations could lead to geographic or special interest imbalances. He further noted that the 10-year redistricting cycle could exacerbate these imbalances if population shifts occur, potentially leading to persistent under-representation and contentious redistricting processes. Finally, he voiced opposition to the potential for increased bureaucracy and reduced accountability inherent in the proposed county manager structure.

Dan Dilsaver addressed inquiries regarding the potential financial implications of the proposed government structure. He clarified that specific salary figures for the proposed county manager and council positions have not been established, noting that these determinations would be made by the newly elected officials rather than current leadership. He also responded to concerns about political shifts and representation, arguing that population growth and movement, rather than the form of government, are the primary drivers of demographic change. He further noted that a five-member council model would reduce the relative influence of any single representative compared to the current three-commissioner system. Finally, he emphasized that redistricting is strictly population-based, not partisan, and encouraged continued public dialogue and engagement regarding the proposal.

Ember Hammond expressed opposition to the proposed transition to a part-time council structure, arguing that the role requires full-time dedication to effectively address complex county issues, such as child protection and advocacy. She contended that part-time positions could lead to divided focus and reduced commitment to public service. Emphasizing the value of the current full-time commission structure, she urged residents to thoroughly research the implications of the proposed government change, stressing the importance of having fully engaged officials who are accountable to the voters.

Cindy Dilsaver addressed inquiries regarding the "part-time" nature of the proposed council structure. She clarified that this designation primarily entails the elimination of benefits and the provision of a stipend, rather than a specific weekly hour requirement. She argued that the role would attract qualified, successful community members willing to serve without benefits, noting the minimal legal requirements for the position. Additionally, she suggested that opposition to the county manager proposal may stem from concerns regarding increased administrative accountability.

JC Brewer reiterated his concerns regarding the accountability of the proposed county manager position. He questioned the specific oversight mechanisms, asking which entity would be responsible for auditing the manager to prevent potential corruption or ethical issues. He emphasized that the authority of a hired manager must be subject to clear, independent audits and rejected the notion that the council's power to hire and fire constitutes sufficient accountability.

Ed Johnstun expressed support for the concept of part-time government, referencing the founding fathers' vision of citizen-legislators who serve for a time before returning to private life. He argued against viewing politics as a career and suggested that a part-time structure could attract qualified community members to public service. Additionally, he emphasized the importance of localized representation in a large county, noting that constituents require representatives who understand the specific needs of their respective geographic areas.

Quinn Hammond challenged the assertion that financial figures regarding the proposed government change had not been provided, citing a public post from a proposal sponsor that estimated commissioner stipends at \$30,000 without benefits and a county manager salary between \$160,000 and \$200,000 plus benefits. While expressing openness to the possibility that a five-member commission could be beneficial, he voiced strong opposition to the district-based representation model, arguing that it limits voter influence. He further commented on workload expectations, drawing from his own extensive professional experience.

Jackie Bartels expressed her support for retaining the current form of government, questioning the necessity of the proposed changes. She encouraged greater civic engagement and active volunteerism from residents, noting that empty meeting chambers suggest citizens often participate only when frustrated rather than proactively contributing to community progress.

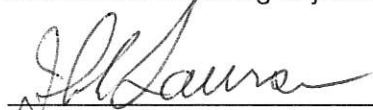
Tammy Mecham expressed strong opposition to the proposed change in government, arguing that the transition to a five-member council would dilute voter influence compared to the current three-commissioner system. She challenged financial claims regarding subsidies for the county conference center, contrasting them with expenditures for Buckskin Hills, and urged county residents to independently verify budgetary documents to ensure accurate representation of government spending.

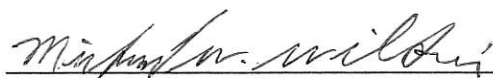
Dan Dilsaver addressed financial concerns regarding the Uintah Conference Center. Citing a 2025 financial summary, he reported revenue of \$163,600 and expenditures of \$1,377,500, resulting in an 88.1% subsidy for the facility. He defended the accuracy of these figures against challenges regarding their validity.

Mike Cook offered additional comments regarding the proposed government changes, emphasizing that the current structure's demands on commissioners—particularly regarding legislative travel—would be challenging for part-time officials to manage. He expressed concern that the proposed council-manager model would introduce unnecessary layers of government, potentially leading to administrative inefficiencies and communication difficulties. Finally, he argued that a five-member council increases the statistical likelihood of electing ineffective leadership compared to the current three-commissioner system. Addressing earlier remarks regarding county employees, he emphasized the dedication and significant volunteer efforts of the current staff, expressing concern that the proposed government changes would not be beneficial to the workforce.

Commissioner Laursen concluded the hearing by encouraging attendees to conduct independent research regarding the proposed government change, specifically advising them to review the proposed rules to understand the scope of authority granted to the potential county manager position. Commissioner Laursen announced that two future commission meetings have been rescheduled to 7:00 p.m. and will be held on the 1st and 22nd of September.

**ADJOURN:** Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:10 pm.

  
JOHN LAURSEN, CHAIR

  
MICHAEL W. WILKINS, CLERK – AUDITOR