

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD
JULY 1, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the Vernal City Council Room, 374 East Main, Vernal,
Utah 84078.

PRESENT: Councilmembers 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. He excused Councilmember Ted Munford from the meeting.

INVOCATION OR UPLIFTING THOUGHT: The invocation was given by Councilmember Randel Mills.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilmember Nick Porter

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD
JUNE 17, 2026**

Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll moved to approve the minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting held June 17, 2026. Councilmember Nick Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Mills, O'Driscoll, Long, and Porter voting in favor. Councilmember Munford was absent from the vote.

**CONSIDER THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE ANNEXATION PETITION FOR WILLOW
BEND PROPERTIES - SARA BELL**

City Recorder Sara Bell presented a petition, submitted by Camille and Mike Morley of Willow Bend Properties, requesting the annexation of approximately eight parcels located west of the Aggie Boulevard roundabout. She stated that the proposed annexation included property owned by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and that the petition included the required property owner signatures and annexation plat. Ms. Bell explained that acceptance of the petition would initiate the formal review process, including a 30-day protest period, and would not constitute final approval of the annexation.

Councilmember Randel Mills asked whether the petitioners had identified plans for the property. Ms. Bell stated that she had not received any formal development plans. She noted that the northern parcels were commercially zoned by Uintah County, while the southern parcels were zoned R-2 Residential, and that the petitioners were currently seeking to bring the properties within Vernal City limits.

City Manager Quinn Bennion stated that the primary motivation for the annexation appeared to be obtaining a City water connection for the southern portion of the property. He explained that the northern portion was currently served by Maeser Water Improvement District but that the petitioners wished to keep the properties together under one jurisdiction for future development or

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD JUNE 3, 2026

sale. Mr. Bennion also noted that Uintah County’s residential zoning classifications did not correspond directly with the City’s classifications. He stated that the County’s R-2 zone allowed a combination of uses similar to the City’s R-2 and R-3 zones and that staff and the City Attorney would research the appropriate zoning designation before the final annexation ordinance was considered.

Mr. Bennion further explained that a joint waterline serving the area had been constructed approximately 17 years earlier through cooperation among Vernal City, Ashley Valley Water and Sewer Improvement District, and Maeser Water Improvement District. The project was financed through a 25-year Community Impact Board loan held by Vernal City, with payments being made by the participating districts. He stated that approximately seven years remained on the loan and that the proposed annexation had raised questions regarding future ownership, use, and payment obligations associated with the line. Staff was working with the affected districts to resolve those issues before a protest or Boundary Commission proceeding became necessary.

Ms. Bell explained that, if the Council accepted the petition, she would review and certify it and provide notice to Uintah County and all affected entities, including Ashley Valley Water and Sewer Improvement District and Maeser Water Improvement District. The notice would identify the proposed annexation, the protest period, and the remaining procedural requirements.

Councilmember Ed Long asked whether the outstanding waterline issues would prevent the petition from moving forward. Mr. Bennion stated that staff was optimistic the issues could be resolved and that they did not prevent the Council from accepting the petition and continuing the annexation process. He added that, other than the church property, the area was largely vacant and that all affected property owners had voluntarily joined the petition.

Councilmember Ed Long motioned to accept the annexation petition for Willow Bend Properties. Councilmember Nick Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with the following roll call vote:

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

UPDATE ON WATER CONDITIONS - KEITH DESPAIN

Public Works Director Keith Despain provided an update on the City’s water supply indicators. He reported that the Kings Cabin and Trout Creek SNOTEL sites experienced record-low snowpack and remained significantly below the April median. Storage levels at Red Fleet and Steinaker reservoirs were also below the previous year. Ashley Creek flows remained near 100 cubic feet per second, compared with a historical median closer to 400 cubic feet per second. Mr. Despain explained that runoff began unusually early in March and had steadily declined, with recent rainfall providing only temporary improvement.

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD JUNE 3, 2026

Mr. Despain reported that customer water usage increased approximately 25 percent in April compared with 2025, likely because of the unusually warm spring, but decreased during May and June. Treatment plant data through May also showed a substantial reduction from the previous year. He stated that the decrease could reflect customer conservation, reduced City irrigation, infrastructure improvements, and ongoing efforts to reduce water loss.

Councilmember Randel Mills asked for staff's recommendation. Mr. Despain stated that staff had not prepared a formal recommendation but remained concerned about balancing supply and demand through the remainder of the summer. He recommended continuing conservation messaging and monitoring conditions to determine whether conservation rates would become necessary. He explained that the City was relying primarily on Ashley Springs but had used approximately 10 percent of its Red Fleet allocation and had begun releasing water from upper reservoirs earlier than usual.

Councilmember Ed Long asked about the City's available Red Fleet supply. Water Superintendent Ivan Merrell reported that Red Fleet allocations included approximately 1,840 acre-feet for Vernal City, 1,620 acre-feet for Ashley Valley Water and Sewer Improvement District, 560 acre-feet for Maeser Water Improvement District, and 661 acre-feet for Jensen. He explained that the City's allocation could provide approximately 13 months of indoor winter-level usage, but summer outdoor demand was substantially higher. He cautioned that Red Fleet served multiple entities and should not be viewed as a guaranteed supply for Vernal City alone.

Councilmember Long stated that the figures suggested the City could likely make it through the summer using a combination of Red Fleet and Ashley Springs water. Mr. Despain agreed that sufficient water was probably available for indoor use and some additional demand but emphasized the importance of preserving Red Fleet as an emergency supply in case the following winter also produced poor snowpack. He added that the City's Ashley Creek water right diminished as the creek's flow declined.

Mayor Corey Foley asked whether the City should move quickly to establish conservation rates. City Manager Quinn Bennion stated that the matter had not been noticed for action that evening but recommended establishing a conservation rate structure within the following month so it could be implemented if necessary. Mayor Foley supported prompt review and emphasized the importance of notifying residents in advance, giving them an opportunity to reduce their usage, and clearly explaining how any additional revenue would be used. Councilmember Long agreed that the rate structure should be approved in advance but implemented only if conditions required it.

Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll asked about the AquaHawk customer portal. Mr. Despain stated that the City was working to establish data-sharing agreements among AquaHawk, Sensus, and the Pelorus billing system. He estimated that the portal, which would allow customers to monitor their water usage, would be available in at least one month.

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD JUNE 3, 2026

Councilmembers supported beginning a public conservation campaign and requested that staff return with information regarding a proposed conservation rate structure at the next meeting. Councilmember Mills recommended providing residents with clear information and practical conservation measures, while Councilmember Nick Porter suggested encouraging residents to reduce vehicle washing because of the amount of water it uses.

DISCUSSION REGARDING 100 NORTH STREET PAINT STRIPING CONFIGURATION - KEITH DESPAIN

Keith Despain provided an update on the 100 North reconstruction project, which included replacement of the water and sewer lines and repaving approximately 1.5 miles between 1000 West and 500 East. He proposed adding bicycle lanes on both sides of the roadway when the new asphalt was striped. The proposed configuration would replace the center turn lane with a double yellow centerline, 12-foot travel lanes, four-foot bicycle lanes, and on-street parking. Dedicated right-turn lanes would remain at the major intersections.

Mr. Despain stated that the revised configuration would require additional striping and could slightly increase the project cost. Because the roadway would be chip sealed the following year, the City could evaluate the configuration for one year and make adjustments before installing more permanent striping.

Councilmember Nick Porter suggested considering protected bicycle lanes located between the parking area and sidewalk. Quinn Bennion stated that the configuration could be confusing to drivers who were not accustomed to it and could result in vehicles parking within the bicycle lanes. He noted that the proposed design was similar to the existing configuration on 500 South and that bicycle lanes on 100 North and 100 South had been identified in the DinoTrails Master Plan as alternatives to Highway 40.

Mr. Bennion reported that staff had contacted the Utah Department of Transportation about potentially assisting with the cost because 100 North would provide an alternate bicycle route to Highway 40. UDOT had expressed general support but had not made a financial commitment. Staff proposed testing the configuration during the first year and seeking UDOT assistance with more permanent striping following the chip seal.

Councilmembers discussed whether removing the center turn lane would affect traffic flow or require additional public outreach. Councilmember Randel Mills supported testing the proposed configuration, noting that the original striping could be restored after the chip seal if the bicycle lanes created concerns. The Council expressed general support for proceeding with the proposed bicycle lanes.

STAFF REPORTS

Quinn Bennion reported on activities associated with Dinosaurland Freedom Fest and the upcoming Independence Day celebration. Approximately 120 volunteers helped install the flag field, and the patriotic program held Sunday was well attended. He thanked Councilmember Randel Mills for speaking at the program and noted that numerous community activities were

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD JUNE 3, 2026

planned for July 3 and 4. Mr. Bennion also participated in a KUTV interview regarding the flag field and Vernal City's America 250 events.

Mr. Bennion provided an update on personal fireworks restrictions. Vernal City submitted a map to the State Forester identifying areas within the City where fireworks were prohibited. Residents were encouraged to exercise personal responsibility, use legal fireworks only on their own private property within designated areas, and remain mindful of the drought conditions and their personal liability. The City also encouraged residents to attend the free drone show on July 3 and the professional fireworks show on July 4.

Mr. Bennion stated that informational materials prepared by City staff were distributed to the seven fireworks stands and three retail locations selling fireworks within the City. He noted that communities throughout the area had adopted different approaches to fireworks restrictions based on their individual circumstances.

Mr. Bennion also reported that a joint meeting between Vernal City and Uintah County was being planned for later that month.

CLOSED SESSION

Mayor Corey Foley announced the closed session portion of the meeting, to be held in the jury room. *Councilmember Ed Long made a motion to go into closed session for the following items:*

- 1. Strategy session to discuss the purchase, exchange, or lease of real property, including any form of a water right or watershed, or to discuss a proposed development agreement, project proposal, or financial financing proposal related to the development of land owned by the state or a political subdivision,*
- 2. Strategy session to discuss pending or reasonable imminent litigation.*

Councilmember Randel Mills seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor.

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