

**ESCALANTE CITY COUNCIL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 1, 2026
REGULAR MEETING/ELECTRONIC MEETING – 6:00 P.M.
ESCALANTE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS - 65 NORTH CENTER STREET**

Mayor Melani Torgersen called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Escalante City Council Chambers.

Present at said meeting were Mayor Torgersen, Council members Sally Orme, Tara Woolsey, Marlene Stowe, Chad Lyman, Ryan Cottam, City Attorney Barry Huntington and City Recorder Stephanie Steed.

Also present were Bill Wolverton, Bill Weppner, Margie Weppner, Chad Cottam, Wade Barney, Mark Saunto, Gary Griffin, Peggy Griffin and Julie Brugger.

Melyssa Holbrook joined electronically.

Mayor Torgersen led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Council member Lyman moved to adopt the agenda as written. Council member Cottam seconded the motion. Motion carried with Council members Stowe, Lyman, Woolsey, Orme and Cottam voting aye.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF AUGUST 18, 2026 MEETING

Council member Orme moved to approve the minutes of the August 18, 2026 meeting as written. Council member Stowe seconded the motion. Motion carried with Council members Woolsey, Orme, Lyman, Stowe and Cottam voting aye.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

WADE BARNEY

Mr. Barney expressed his appreciation for the city and for the crew sent to spray goatheads. Mr. Barney noted that he has tried to eliminate the Goatheads on his own without success, and thanked the Mayor and City Council for their efforts to get them under control. Mr. Barney said many residents support these efforts, adding that whenever he saw Terry Cooper working on it, he made sure to thank him. Mr. Barney said this is the best thing the city can do and that it is time to take the community back.

Mr. Barney expressed his appreciation to Stephanie Steed and Nancy Porter for their helpfulness each time he visits the office. Mr. Barney commended all of the city staff, describing them as the finest crew working for the municipality and reiterating his sincere thanks for their dedication.

MARGIE WEPPNER

Ms. Weppner said with the upcoming 25th anniversary of September 11 she would like to invite the community to participate in service activities and encourage neighbors to serve one another.

MARK SAUNTO

Mr. Saunto stated that nobody likes goatheads and that they cause a lot of grief for many people. Mr. Saunto said that goatheads are a problem and shared that he has been working to control them around his house. Mr. Saunto explained that the entire area along 300 West and near his property had formed a solid mat of weeds, so he took personal responsibility for managing it. Mr. Saunto expressed his view that the only reason he was attending the meeting was that the city is now working to address the issue as well. Mr. Saunto stated that he has been actively participating and talking to homeowners about the issue. Mr. Saunto highlighted the well-documented lethal effects of chemical spraying on bees and requested that the city ask homeowners for permission before spraying in front of their properties.

PEGGY GRIFFIN

Ms. Griffin noted her interest in following the ongoing discussion and suggested providing a timeline so community members know what to expect. Ms. Griffin expressed that she looks forward to future updates.

PLANNING AND ZONING ITEMS**PLANNING AND ZONING UPDATES**

There were no Planning and Zoning updates at this time.

SCHEDULED ITEMS**GARY GRIFFIN - DISCUSSION ON POISONOUS SPRAY**

Mr. Griffin expressed concerns regarding pesticide use and bee loss, noting that bees serve as an early warning indicator for environmental health. Mr. Griffin cited a recent U.S. beekeeper survey indicating that 62% of bee colonies died between June 2025 and January 2026.

Mr. Griffin explained his long history in Escalante and discussed the impacts of nuclear fallout on downwinders and shared that his wife passed away from exposure to toxic chemicals and radiation. Mr. Griffin said working at a hardware store he encouraged customers to seek safer alternatives to chemical weed killers like Roundup, though some preferred to purchase pesticides. Mr. Griffin explained that he uses alternative methods, such as a weed torch.

Mr. Griffin acknowledged the city's weed control efforts but expressed concern over the smell and health impacts of sprayed pesticides on the community and future generations. Mr. Griffin suggested allowing residents who wish to opt out of spraying to place a sign in their yard requesting that Terry Cooper bypass their property. Mr. Griffin said that he has lost over 10 honeybee colonies valued at \$200 each over 16 years of beekeeping and has stopped keeping bees to protect them from being killed. Mr. Griffin thanked the Mayor and Council for their consideration and requested that residents be permitted to display signs on their property if they prefer not to have herbicide sprayed. Mr. Griffin added that although he no longer keeps honeybees, he remains concerned about the issue.

BILL WEPPNER - FIRE DEPARTMENT SCENE LIGHTING UNITS AND TOOLS

Mr. Weppner said the Fire Department is asking for approval for several purchases. Mr. Weppner said scene safety is one of the department's big focal points this year, and they would like to purchase two lithium battery-powered scene lights that help them when they are out on a rescue or running traffic on the highway. Mr. Weppner said the total expense of that would be \$1,324. Mr. Weppner said they also need some additional

tools, which would amount for \$120.99, and some C batteries, which are used to keep their SCPA's running while charging the lithium batteries. Mr. Weppner said the total expenditure would amount to \$1,528.86. **Council member Lyman moved to approve the purchases listed above for the amount of \$1,528.86. Council member Woolsey seconded the motion. Motion carried with Council member Orme, Stowe, Cottam, Woolsey and Lyman voting aye.**

SECURITY CAMERAS

City Recorder Steed presented two quotes from Geneva, a state-contract vendor using Verkada software, for city security cameras. City Recorder Steed explained the first bid (\$1,412.57) covers relocating two existing cameras to the City Office for general security and ballot box monitoring. City Recorder Steed said the second bid covers four cameras for the Wellness Center: one interior dome camera for the main room, one exterior entrance camera, and two optional mini hallway cameras. City Recorder Steed emphasized the need for at least two key cameras and noted that no cameras would be placed in the physical therapy room. City Recorder Steed explained that Verkada provides unified single-screen monitoring, 30–60 day cloud storage, night vision, mobile access, and law enforcement sharing with no extra monthly data fees beyond Wi-Fi, though a three-year licensing contract is required. City Recorder Steed explained that the previous cheaper Wellness Center system was unreliable and that the new system is for post-incident review. Mayor Torgersen highlighted public safety for the 24-hour facility. Council member Lyman suggested adding audio recording for the interior camera, and City Recorder Steed agreed to check the additional cost with Geneva, noting installation takes approximately one month from order placement. **Council member Lyman moved to accept both bids from Geneva and inquire about adding interior audio capability. Council member Stowe seconded the motion. Motion carried with Council members Cottam, Lyman, Woolsey, Orme and Stowe voting aye.**

DATA PRIVACY AWARENESS TRAINING VIDEO

City Recorder Steed noted that the Data Privacy Awareness Training Video is required for all personnel who handle confidential data. Following her introduction, City Recorder Steed presented the video.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

ADMINISTRATIVE

City Recorder Steed said the budget and financial reports are available for review.

City Recorder Steed said the Annual Audit is scheduled for tomorrow.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Mr. Cottam explained Brent Pickering inspected the waterline area today and discovered that the lines were washed out due to recent rain and he has reached out to the county for assistance. Mr. Cottam reported the springs remain intact and are functioning properly.

Mr. Cottam said the well usage has decreased, and it has not been turned on for a week.

Mr. Cottam said the Casters were successfully installed on the benches at the community center.

Mr. Cottam said regarding the airport, Council Member Woolsey and himself met with an individual on-site and he also visited Bryce Canyon Airport. Mr. Cottam explained the Bryce Canyon Airport manager provided the City with surplus parts for the airport they no longer need and instructed him on operating and testing the runway lights using the radios.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

BILL WEPPNER

Mr. Weppner reported that since the previous meeting, the Fire Department responded to one false alarm, one vehicle fire, and one ambulance assist.

Mr. Weppner said four new members have joined the department and requested that anyone who sees them thank them and encourage their attendance at training sessions.

COUNCIL REPORTS

MAYOR MELANI TORGENSEN

Mayor Torgersen said 9/11 Day of Service is upon us and she would like to plan a clean up day. Town projects were discussed including yard cleanups, removing sagebrush at the sewer lagoon fence, and trash cleanup near the landfill. Council member Lyman expressed support for neighbors serving each other to build community. The 9/11 day of service will take place Friday from 4–6 p.m., followed by a dinner at the park pavilion.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHAD LYMAN

Council member Lyman reported on a meeting held with Curtis Nelson of Ensign Engineering, Brent Pickering, Stephanie Steed, and himself. Council member Lyman said the discussion focused on securing potential funding sources for alternative water supplies and water meter upgrades.

COUNCIL MEMBER TARA WOOLSEY

Council member Woolsey reported that she and Chad Cottam had a meeting with the airport manager from Bryce and he provided numerous recommendations.

Council member Woolsey said there was an inspection at the Airport on Sunday.

COUNCIL MEMBER RYAN COTTAM

Council member Cottam had nothing to report at this time.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARLENE STOWE

Council member Stowe had nothing to report at this time.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALLY ORME

Council member Orme had nothing to report at this time.

UNPAID BILLS

Council member Lyman moved to pay the unpaid bills. Council member Stowe seconded the motion. Motion carried with Council members Stowe, Orme, Lyman, Woolsey and Cottam voting aye.

CLOSED MEETING

There was no Closed Meeting at this time.

Mayor Torgersen adjourned the meeting at 6:52 p.m.

Stephanie Steed, MMC, UCC
City Recorder

Date minutes approved: 09/15/2026