

TOWN OF ALTAMONT TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Date & Time: Wednesday, August 19, 2026, at 6:30 PM

Location: Altamont Town Office, 15588 West 4000 North, Altamont, UT 84001

Attendance Registry

Roll call was formally conducted at the commencement of the meeting. A quorum of elected officials was confirmed present to conduct legal town business.

Name	Title/Role	Status (Present/Absent)
Scott Allen	Mayor (Presiding)	Present
Russell Sorensen	Council Member	Present
James Hems	Council Member	Present
Mike Foy	Council Member	Present
Chris (Porter) Baca	Council Member	Present
Amanda Gardner	Town Clerk	Present
Jonathan Stearmer	Invited Guest (Kunz PC)	Present

Opening Procedures

Call to Order & Welcome: Mayor Scott Allen officially called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and welcomed those in attendance.

Business Item: Town Attorney Review and Selection

The Council identified a critical need to update the town's legal infrastructure to protect against aggressive litigation and modernize aging municipal codes. The necessity of this item was highlighted by a specific, recurring ordinance violator who has expressed intent to leverage superior financial resources to bankrupt the town.

Single Bid Acknowledgment Mayor Allen noted for the record that the Town received one (1) Request for Proposal (RFP) for Town Attorney services. The bid was submitted by Jonathan Stearmer of Kunz PC, located in Vernal, Utah.

Litigation Strategy and Cost-Containment Discussion Mr. Stearmer presented a "no-box" problem-solving philosophy, emphasizing resolutions that benefit both the municipal entity and the affected neighbors without resorting to unnecessary and expensive motion practice. Regarding litigation, Stearmer referenced a philosophy shared by Commissioner Miles regarding the necessity of a "bulldog" approach when litigation is unavoidable; he stated he is prepared to "bite legally" if negotiation fails. To prevent the town from being financially overwhelmed, Stearmer recommended the use of "closed sessions" for strategy to maintain attorney-client privilege. He further committed to cost containment by keeping legal filings succinct, typically between 3 and 12 pages.

Ordinance Modernization Requirement The Council raised concerns regarding town ordinances dating back to the 1980s. While updates occurred in 2020 and new subdivision laws were added in 2024 to meet state requirements, the Council noted a lack of enforceable consequences. The town is currently

collaborating with Nate Zillis of the Uintah Basin Association of Governments (UBAG) on further updates. Mr. Stearmer committed to auditing these files to ensure all ordinances provide "rock solid" legal standing with enforceable penalties.

Billing Philosophy and Ethical Standards Mr. Stearmer detailed a "preventive medicine" philosophy, aimed at identifying legal issues before they escalate into municipal failures. His summarized standards include:

- **"Gut-Check" Policy:** Minor inquiries and procedural questions are generally not billed unless they require research or drafting.
- **Ethical Conflicts:** Stearmer maintains a strict policy against representing individual council members on private matters to ensure undivided loyalty to the Town of Altamont and to avoid "pulling punches" in legal strategy.
- **GRAMA and Communication:** While accessible via text and email, Stearmer noted that the Government Records Access Management Act (GRAMA) applies to these formats. He specifically recommended telephone communication for sensitive "gut-checks" as a strategy to manage the creation of public records that would otherwise be subject to disclosure requests.

Financial Transparency Measures Legal invoices will be treated as "open books" for taxpayer review. While the total hours and costs will be public, Stearmer noted that specific descriptions regarding legal strategy will be redacted to preserve attorney-client privilege and protect the town's position in pending matters.

The Council concluded the discussion and moved toward formal legislative action.

Official Motion and Voting Record

At the conclusion of the inquiry and discussion period, the Council proceeded to a formal vote.

- **Motion:** To accept the proposal from Kunz PC for Town Attorney services.
- **Mover:** Council Member Russell Sorensen.
- **Second:** Council Member Mike Foy.
- **Voting Result:** 5-0 Unanimous Approval.

Individual Voting Record:

- Mayor Scott Allen: Aye
- Council Member Russell Sorensen: Aye
- Council Member James Hems: Aye
- Council Member Mike Foy: Aye
- Council Member Chris (Porter) Baca: Aye

The vote is recorded as binding, establishing Kunz PC as the legal counsel for the Town of Altamont.

Administrative Directives and Implementation Timeline

The following directives were established to formalize the legal relationship and begin immediate ordinance review.

1. **Engagement Documentation:** Jonathan Stearmer shall provide a 1.5-page engagement letter to the Council by Friday, August 21, 2026.
2. **Review Assistance:** The Council acknowledged and accepted the offer from Nate Zillis (UBAG) to assist in the review of the engagement documentation.
3. **Document Transfer:** Clerk Amanda Gardner is directed to compile all files regarding current ordinance disputes and transfer them to Kunz PC for a formal audit.
4. **Meeting Logistics:** The regular meeting schedule is confirmed for the second Wednesday of each month. Mr. Stearmer will attend telephonically to minimize municipal costs unless his physical presence is requested for closed sessions or complex matters.

There being no further business, the Council proceeded to adjournment.

Adjournment

The Council moved to close the special session.

- **Motion to Adjourn:** Council Member Russell Sorensen.
- **Second:** Council Member Chris (Porter) Baca.
- **Result:** Unanimous verbal approval.

Official Conclusion Time: The meeting was adjourned at 6.50 PM.

Minutes prepared by Town Clerk Amanda Gardner

Read and approved this 9 day of September, 2026