

BOARD OF DAVIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MINUTES

**Board of Davis County Commissioners - Work Session Minutes
Tuesday, September 1, 2026**

The Board of Davis County Commissioners met for a scheduled meeting at 8:30 AM on September 1, 2026, in room 306 of the Davis County Administration Building, 61 South Main Street, Farmington, Utah. Required legal notice of this meeting was given.

All documents from this meeting are on file in the Davis County Clerk’s Office. The agenda for this meeting is incorporated into the minutes as item headers.

Following the approved Davis County policy, artificial intelligence (AI) was utilized in the preliminary creation of these minutes. The final minutes were edited and completed by Davis County Clerk's Office staff.

ROLL CALL

Chair Bob Stevenson	Community and Economic Development Director Kent Andersen
Vice Chair Lorene Kamalu	Chief Deputy Sheriff Arnold Butcher
Commissioner John Crofts	Deputy Clerk Solana Guest
County Clerk Brian McKenzie	Court Facilities Director Chris Talbot
County Controller Scott Parke	Assistant State Court Administrator Michael Drechsel
County Attorney Troy Rawlings	Bennett Group Cody Stewart
Chief Deputy Civil Attorney Neal Geddes	Bennett Group Alexander Tarbet
Legal Defender Coordinator Todd Utzinger	

AGENDA ITEM

- 1

8:30 - 9:40 AM

#2026-844. A Work Session to Discuss the Davis County Justice Center - *recommended by Lorene Kamalu, Davis County Commission Vice Chair, Commissioners' Office*
- [01:23]

Commissioner Kamalu noted that this project has been the number one priority project for the Administrative Office of Courts for the past three years. She expressed excitement about the collaboration between the State and the County to benefit the justice system. A County-created handout was passed around, providing a summary of the project [see Attachment A].
- [02:18]

Chris Talbot, Court Facilities Director, echoed Commissioner Kamalu's sentiments, thanking the Commission and saying that Davis County has been good to work with. He noted that they have explored three different concepts to find the right fit for the project. Chris explained that the architects completed a full programming study for \$20,000.00, typically costing over \$100,000.00, which the court funded to advance the project. This study refined last year's rough square footage estimates: the State court space decreased slightly, while the County space expanded 30,000 square feet to 34,000. The project remains in the schematic programming phase, with a future chance of fine-tuning the details, and Chris emphasized that the total cost is estimated at over \$170 million, with \$140 million dedicated to the State court portion, making it a major funding hurdle in competition with other State projects. Commissioner Stevenson recognized Director Andersen for his representation of the Northern Utah Chamber Coalition, which has made this project its number one priority as well.
- [06:35]

Chris provided a historical overview of the three design concepts [see Attachment B2-6]. The first concept involved a new courthouse and a \$30 million parking structure, which still required the County to build its own facility. The second concept proposed an addition to the existing building costing nearly \$100 million, which failed to resolve existing deficiencies and displaced the County Attorney's offices. The third concept, suggested by Commissioner Stevenson, combined the facilities into a single shared Justice Center and eliminated the parking structure. This shared design places a 140,000-square-foot court space and a 34,000-square-foot County space on the site, preserving enough land for nearly 600 surface parking spaces. Commissioner Stevenson noted that this surface parking field allows the flexibility to build a parking structure in 10 to 15 years if needed. Chris explained that the court must remain operational during construction before the old building is demolished to create the parking lot, requiring creative off-site shuttle parking during the

transition, especially since some Sheriff parking is being eliminated.

[11:07] Chris detailed the floor-by-floor layout, starting with the first floor [see Attachment B7], which features a shared lobby entrance, County Attorney offices, public windows, and mediation services. Due to flood planes and groundwater issues from the nearby creek to the south, building below grade is not feasible, forcing the central holding facility to the first floor. Secure inmate transport would be achieved by constructing a new secure sally port garage on the left. Inmates would be taken via elevator to a secured, elevated corridor on the second story to cross into the courthouse, then down the elevators again into the central holding, without going outside. Kent Andersen, Community and Economic Development (CED) Director, asked whether the court or the County would be financially responsible for the sally port and secure corridor. Chris responded that while it was originally discussed as a County cost, County Controller Parke's numbers placed the \$1.92 million addition under the State court's costs. He reiterated that the plans are schematic and likely to change in the future, and suggested keeping the estimated amount in the budget, though it is possible it is not needed in the final construction. Commissioner Kamalu asked if inmates in the County Jail needing to get to the courtrooms would still utilize a secure transport, and Chief Deputy Butcher answered that the plans still maintain that process, with Chris confirming that the final plans would have that worked out.

[16:50] Chris described the second floor [see Attachment B8], which houses County offices, juvenile probation, and court spaces designed in pairs with a central secure holding core. He explained that multiple secure elevators are necessary to maintain total separation between inmates and the public, which is national best practice. The Justice Court is also integrated into this floor. Commissioner Kamalu asked if the layout provides sufficient space for first appearances from Monday through Friday, which Chris confirmed. Chris mentioned that the State Legislature suggested judges share courtrooms to maximize space and cut costs. However, Chris explained that the National Center for State Courts, who is conducting a utilization study of the site, shared that judges nationally are not sharing courtrooms, because it eliminates scheduling flexibility, particularly during trials. Michael Drechsel, Assistant State Court Administrator, added that it had been suggested by the legislature as a maximization tool to utilize the space, and that they tried to find creative ways to accomplish this, such as using very small courtrooms for virtual court, and alternating use of the larger courtrooms. Michael said it would ultimately save only a few million dollars on a \$170 million project, making it "penny-wise and pound-foolish" for a 50-year community building, though he greatly understands that every dollar counts when it comes to taxpayer dollars. Commissioner Crofts asked if judges had been directly consulted regarding sharing courtrooms, and Chris responded that he had received a lot of feedback, and that they are not in favor of the suggested change. He added that courtrooms are typically built for multi-functional use to increase availability for any type of court case, and to accommodate future growth. Troy Rawlings, County Attorney, strongly criticized the proposal for courtroom sharing, arguing that the legislators suggesting it have likely never litigated in a court and that doubling up judges would be disastrous for victim's rights, speedy trials, and the constitutional right to move cases along. Todd Utzinger, Legal Defender Coordinator, agreed, noting that empty courtrooms are a myth of underutilization because judges need flexibility for emergency hearings, and civil cases would suffer if criminal trials took precedence. Chris compared courtrooms to a power plant or chapel that must be built for maximum capacity rather than minimum use, even if it is not used at all times. He added that he wanted to use the National Center for State Court's utilization study to help the State Legislature understand the unique physical and operational needs of a courthouse. Michael stated that the priority should be to serve the public well, and delays in court cases represent an eternity to families and victims waiting for resolution. Attorney Rawlings added that the 2-3 week delay often comes on top of multiple months of waiting. Commissioner Kamalu emphasized that the core objective must remain community access to justice.

[27:00] Chris presented the tentative map for the third through fifth floors [see Attachment B9], which feature stacking court sets and two shelled courtrooms for future growth, wrapped by the two-story County offices. Director Andersen said that Farmington City requested aligning the facility's access with Chase Bank at Station Park due to proximity to a charter school. However, Chris explained that because there is insufficient site flexibility to accommodate this while keeping operations running during construction, they will keep the existing driveway and work with Farmington City to install a traffic light to manage and slow down traffic.

[29:55] Chief Deputy Butcher raised concerns regarding parking, explaining that the Sheriff's Department is already tight on parking and working on securing some of the parking for the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Chris acknowledged the significance of parking logistics and said that it would need to be ironed out during the design phase. Addressing a question from Commissioner Crofts on whether the design would impact operations with the EOC, Chief Deputy Butcher presented Sheriff's Department requests. He explained that the proposed concept landlocks the Sheriff's Office, preventing future expansion of their 37-year-old

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building, which already requires upgrades. If expanding outward is limited, then expanding upward would be the only option, which would require demolishing the building and relocating Sheriff staff. Chief Deputy Butcher suggested an alternative footprint that turns the proposed building to face State Street, moving it to sit directly east of where the Sheriff's Office is, and attaching a two-story addition to the Sheriff's Office, allowing the County Attorneys to move there temporarily and preserving parking and future expansion space. Commissioner Stevenson said that the highest priority is the courts building, then asked why the Sheriff's Department could not expand into that space where the monument island is, to which Chief Deputy Butcher replied that doing so would still limit them to one level since they have to accommodate the access to the sally port from the courts. Chief Deputy Butcher also expressed concern that the proposed layout hides the Sheriff's Office. Attorney Rawlings raised operational concerns regarding the Sheriff Department's alternative, noting that a double move for his staff would cause significant disruption and tremendous costs, whereas the current plan allows the County Attorney to remain in place until completion. Chris assured that these concerns would be addressed during the design phase, suggesting that architects could explore other options, like building over the circle to find a solution that works for everyone.

[39:18] Todd requested that the designated County space include at least one dedicated office for legal defenders to meet privately with clients, noting that existing conference rooms are often locked or occupied by private counsel. Chris responded that the proposed square footage has enough flexibility to accommodate this request in the design phase. Chief Deputy Butcher said that EDA is the architectural firm conducting the County's Justice Complex feasibility study, scheduled for completion at the end of the month. He added that Sheriff Sparks is fully supportive of moving the Justice Center project forward without becoming a roadblock, but is asking for some consideration of the Sheriff's Department needs.

[42:26] Chris presented the financing model [see Attachment B13-16], reiterating that the amounts are merely proposed at this time and are not finalized, explaining that the total project cost is estimated at roughly \$172 million, with the State Court's portion at \$142.8 million and the County portion at \$29.1 million. Due to State reluctance to bond or fund the project upfront, the proposed strategy is for the County to issue a bond for the construction, and the State Court would pay rent back to the County over a 20-to-30-year term, after which the State would take ownership of its portion. Chris estimated the annual bond payment at \$9.1 million for 20 years, or \$10.7 million for 30 years, with additional State operations and maintenance funding paid back to the County. Chris said he anticipates project completion by 2030 or 2031.

[47:23] Chris explained that consolidating into this single facility would close the courts in Bountiful and Layton, saving rent and returning a \$7 million credit to the State from the sale of the Layton building, while resolving public confusion if a court proceeding is moved to a different building. Commissioner Crofts asked if that was a common occurrence, and Attorney Rawlings answered that it happens more than is desired, and Chris added that the cases end up being rescheduled because the judges do not like to wait. He also said that consolidating reduces the square footage, since fewer redundant rooms will be needed in one facility. Chief Deputy Butcher agreed that consolidation would improve Sheriff Department staffing efficiencies by eliminating the need to secure three separate facilities. He described the current inefficient transport system, where transport buses cannot fit in the Layton sally port, requiring alternative that require significant staff time.

[50:48] Todd brought up the fact that Davis County only conducts initial appearances three days a week, where most counties do five. He argued that Layton and Bountiful City cases should be handled by their own municipal justice courts rather than overloading the District Court, emphasizing that a new courthouse alone will not resolve the District Court caseload issue. Commissioner Kamalu asked Michael if he believes that could be accomplished, and he answered that this issue is a major legislative topic, discussing why district court judges are "tied up" in other cases that don't serve the broader spectrum of district court issues. He explained that Davis County's current arrangement is a holdover from the 1980s circuit court system, with only five such locations remaining in the State. Todd added that the citizens would also be better served with the change, since their cases wouldn't be "fed" into the District Court and they could have more flexibility.

[54:44] Chris asked if the County would be willing to fund the sally port walkway. Commissioner Stevenson responded that State legislative approval should be secured first before fine-tuning costs, noting that funds could be redirected from the County's original \$6.5 million parking commitment. Chris suggested presenting the funding request, which is due tomorrow, as proposed. Cody Stewart, from The Bennett Group, one of Davis County's lobbyists, inquired after alternative funding options. Chris answered that unless the State pays one lump sum, the 20–30-year bond is the only option, and is likely more palatable for the State. Chris added that since the State will assume ownership of the district court's part of the building after the bond is paid, it is a good investment to the State. The State would stay bond-free as desired, since the County would issue the

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bond and the State would merely be making payments until the bond terms are over and they assume ownership. Controller Parke raised concerns regarding who would cover construction cost overruns once a bond is issued, whether the Division of Facilities Construction and Management (DFCM) would manage a County-owned facility project, and how ownership of the building and land would be structured at the end of the lease. Chris responded that DFCM would manage the project, and that built-in inflation escalation should mitigate overrun risks. He added that each respective entity would own their portion of the building, and it would be decided later who would conduct maintenance. Commissioner Crofts asked why the State would not issue the bond, and if that would be negotiable. Chris answered that the State does not bond for projects, and that this project is in competition with a lot of other projects. Michael explained that this formula was agreed upon due to the State's unwillingness to fund the project in one lump sum and their hesitancy to bond; this is a creative solution that serves the citizens of Davis County in the long-run and is a more attractive way for the Legislature to allocate funding for the project. After a discussion on who would be best to fund and own the sally port and walkway to the courthouse, it was decided to "put a pin" in the topic until it can be discussed more in-depth.

[1:04:35] Cody warned that the State Legislature is forecasting an incredibly difficult fiscal year due to large expenditures on double tracking and Medicaid. Chris replied that even receiving \$8 million in State funding to start design would be a major success, and that their completed programming study gives them an advantage over the other projects that may only have a feasibility study done. Commissioner Stevenson said that lease payments would not start for the State until 2031. Alexander Tarbet, from the Bennett Group, emphasized the need to communicate a sense of urgency, and Commissioner Stevenson suggested a meeting with local Davis County elected officials, as well as mayors and city managers, to build Countywide support. There was a discussion about creating the sense of urgency and importance surrounding the project, and several things were suggested:

- 1. Influence from both Michael and Attorney Rawling
- 2. Stories from Davis County residents
- 3. Having both a court and County representative at the Northern Utah Chamber Coalition to speak on behalf of the project
- 4. Speaking to the legislatures during their outreach meeting in the fall
- 5. Lobbyist involvement

MEETING ADJOURNED

The meeting adjourned at 09:40 AM.

ATTACHMENTS

All publicly distributed materials associated with this meeting are noted as the following attachments:

- 1. A1-5: Justice Center Project Overview
- 2. B1-17: Davis Justice Center Commission Presentation Aug 2026

Minutes Prepared by:
Solana Guest
Deputy Clerk

Minutes Approved on:
09/15/2026

Brian McKenzie
Davis County Clerk

Bob J Stevenson
Commission Chair