

MINUTES OF THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING HELD
SEPTEMBER 16, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the Vernal City Council Room, 374 East
Main, Vernal, Utah 84078.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Ted Munford, Randel Mills, Robin O'Driscoll, Ed Long, and Nick Porter and Mayor Corey Foley.

WELCOME: Mayor Corey Foley welcomed everyone to 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 Ted Munford.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD
SEPTEMBER 2, 2026**

Councilmember Ed Long moved to approve the minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting held September 2, 2026. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll seconded the motion. The motion passed with Councilmembers Munford, Mills, O'Driscoll, Long, and Porter voting in favor.

RECOGNITION OF VERNAL CITY BY JUST SERVE - SYLVIA HENDERSON

Anna Weston and Sylvia Henderson, representing JustServe, presented Mayor Corey Foley with the JustServe Heart of Service Award in recognition of Vernal City's commitment to volunteerism and community service. Ms. Weston thanked the City for regularly using JustServe to connect volunteers with local service opportunities, including events such as the Mayor's Walk and Dinah Soar Days Balloon Festival.

Ms. Henderson explained that JustServe connects organizations with volunteers through its website and mobile application. She invited Vernal City to become a designated JustServe City, noting that the City is already completing several of the program's recommended steps by promoting volunteer opportunities and recognizing individuals who provide service within the community.

Ms. Henderson stated that the remaining step would be for the City to adopt a volunteerism proclamation. JustServe provides a template for the proclamation, which would then be submitted for review and posted once completed. She explained that the designation is intended to recognize communities that promote a culture of service and encourage residents to become involved in volunteer opportunities.

Ms. Henderson noted that more than 400 cities have received the JustServe City designation, including several communities in Utah, and that thousands of organizations use the platform to

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post volunteer opportunities. She also stated that many local high school students are already familiar with JustServe through service projects completed by school clubs, athletic teams, and other organizations. She encouraged Vernal City to pursue the designation, noting that Vernal would be the first JustServe City in the Uintah Basin.

Councilmember Ed Long asked whether the designation would remain in place permanently once adopted. Ms. Henderson responded that the City could remain a JustServe City as long as it wished and noted that there may also be an opportunity to become a Global JustServe City.

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE 2026-26 VACATING LOT 12 OF THE ROBINWOOD ACRES SUBDIVISION - BRAEDEN CHRISTOFFERSON

Assistant City Manager Braeden Christofferson explained that Geraldine Buckalew requested to amend the recorded Robinwood Acres Subdivision, Lot 12. Ms. Buckalew owns two properties within the area and would like to sell one parcel while adjusting a portion of the adjoining property for a family member.

Mr. Christofferson explained that the history of Lot 12 is complicated because portions of the original lot were conveyed and divided over time through deeds and metes and bounds descriptions, but those changes were never formally reflected on the subdivision plat. Ordinance 2026-26 would vacate Lot 12 from the Robinwood Acres Subdivision, allowing the existing properties to remain as separately described parcels outside of the subdivision.

Mr. Christofferson stated that the vacation would not otherwise affect the properties or existing ownership interests, but would clean up the subdivision record and allow the property owners to make future boundary adjustments as needed. The request was reviewed by the Planning Commission, including notification of potentially affected utility entities, and was unanimously recommended for approval with no identified concerns.

Councilmember Robin O’Driscoll motioned to approve Ordinance 2026-26, vacating lot 12 of the Robin Hood Acre Subdivision as presented. Councilmember Nick Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

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

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF AWARD OF PROJECT FOR 500 S. MILL & OVERLAY - KEITH DESPAIN

Public Works Director Keith Despain explained that Vernal City received \$3.4 million in funding through the Community Impact Board for two related roadway projects. The first portion of the funding will be used for a two-inch mill and overlay on 500 South, while the remaining funds are planned for chip seal work on major City roadways next year.

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Mr. Despain stated that, due to favorable timing, the City bid the 500 South project for completion this year. Three bids were received, with Burdick Materials submitting the low bid of \$1,599,895. The project will extend along 500 South from approximately the Walgreens area to 500 East. The contractor's proposed schedule anticipates paving being completed by October 22, 2026. Mr. Despain noted that approximately \$1.6 million would remain for the chip seal portion of the overall project next year.

Councilmember Ted Munford asked about recurring pothole and pavement issues at the intersection of 500 South and 500 West and whether concrete similar to the intersection at Main Street and Vernal Avenue would be feasible. Mr. Despain stated that staff has additional plans for that section in the future and has identified significant cracking and deterioration in the area.

Councilmember Ed Long asked whether the proposed \$1.6 million project cost was within the amount originally contemplated for the work. Mr. Despain confirmed that it was and noted that the engineer's estimate was approximately \$2 million. Councilmember Nick Porter commented that all three bids came in below the engineer's estimate, which Mr. Despain noted was unusual and that the bids were relatively close.

City Manager Quinn Bennion stated that staff estimates 100 North and 500 South to be the two most heavily traveled roads maintained by Vernal City. With completion of the proposed project, both roadways will have received significant improvements within the past year.

Mr. Despain recommended awarding the project to Burdick Materials in the amount of \$1,599,895.

Councilmember Randel Mills recused himself from the discussion and vote due to a conflict of interest.

Councilmember Ted Munford moved to approve the award of the 500 South Mill and Overlay Project to Burdick Materials in the amount of \$1,599,895. Councilmember Ed Long seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

Councilmember Munford..... aye;
Councilmember Mills.....recused;
Councilmember O'Driscoll..... aye;
Councilmember Long..... aye;
Councilmember Porter..... aye.

Mayor Corey Foley expressed appreciation to all bidders for the time and effort invested in preparing proposals for work within the City.

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF THE DECLARATION OF VEHICLE SURPLUS - SHAWN RASMUSSEN

Motorpool Manager Shawn Rasmussen presented a list of vehicles and equipment recommended

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for surplus. He explained that the items have all been replaced, are no longer needed by their respective departments, and are currently taking up storage space.

Mr. Rasmussen reviewed the proposed surplus items, which included a 2002 Jeep Liberty formerly used by the Facilities Department; a 2004 JCB forklift; a 2007 GMC Canyon formerly used by Facilities and later by the IT Department; a 2008 Ford F-350 dump truck formerly used by the Streets Department; a 2008 LaFrance street sweeper; a 2009 Sullair compressor; and an older Simline crack sealer. He noted that each item has been replaced with newer equipment and that some of the older equipment would require additional maintenance if retained.

Mr. Rasmussen also discussed options for disposing of the surplus property. He stated that he contacted several fleet administrators throughout Utah and found that many entities use J.J. Kane Auctions, formerly TNT Auction. Under that process, J.J. Kane would pick up the equipment, store and advertise it, handle inquiries and inspections, conduct the auction, and provide the City with the proceeds after the sale. He explained that this approach would reduce the amount of staff time required to manage the disposal process.

Mayor Corey Foley asked how the service compared with the State surplus process. Mr. Rasmussen stated that other online surplus options would require City staff to coordinate inspections, answer questions, and allow prospective buyers access to the City yard. He felt the J.J. Kane process would require less staff involvement.

Councilmember Ed Long asked whether vehicles could simply be traded in when replacements are purchased rather than being held for later surplus. Mr. Rasmussen stated that the availability of trade-ins may depend on how the vehicles are purchased, including whether they are obtained through State contracts.

City Manager Quinn Bennion noted that the City has also used Gage Auto to dispose of vehicles in the past. He stated that Gage has handled title work, advertising, customer communication, and transactions for a flat fee per vehicle. Mr. Bennion explained that Gage has been particularly effective in selling police vehicles, including vehicles that have already been outfitted for law enforcement use. He stated that staff was open to trying another disposal method to compare results.

Councilmember Nick Porter moved to approve the declaration of the identified vehicles and equipment as surplus property. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with all in favor.

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF THE APPOINTMENT AND AGREEMENT FOR THE VERNAL CITY ATTORNEY - QUINN BENNION

City Manager Quinn Bennion explained that, following the departure of the previous City Attorney, Vernal City had been operating under a temporary arrangement with Clark McClellan. Mr. Bennion stated that the arrangement has worked well and that Mr. McClellan has agreed to

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continue serving as Vernal City Attorney on a permanent, part-time basis.

Mr. Bennion explained that Mr. McClellan would be employed by Vernal City and covered under the City's insurance through the Utah Local Governments Trust. The position would be salaried and generally require approximately 12 to 15 hours per week. Because the position would remain below the applicable hourly threshold, it would not include employee benefits.

Mr. Bennion stated that appointing Mr. McClellan would also end the legal services consortium previously shared with several other local entities. He had notified the participating entities of the proposed change, and those organizations would need to secure their own legal counsel. Naples City had already completed an RFP and selected an attorney, while the remaining participating entities would need to make other arrangements.

Mr. Bennion noted that the employment arrangement is somewhat unique because most City employees do not have a separate employment agreement. He stated that the proposed agreement outlines the terms of Mr. McClellan's appointment and employment.

Councilmember Ed Long asked about the significance of keeping the position below 20 hours per week. Mr. Bennion explained that averaging 20 hours or more would trigger additional benefit requirements, including participation in the Utah Retirement Systems.

Councilmember Ted Munford expressed support for the appointment and welcomed Mr. McClellan to the City.

Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll moved to approve the appointment and agreement for Clark McClellan as Vernal City Attorney as presented. Councilmember Ted Munford seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

Councilmember Munford..... aye;
Councilmember Mills..... aye;
Councilmember O'Driscoll..... aye;
Councilmember Long..... aye;
Councilmember Porter..... aye.

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION 2026-09 ADOPTING A DISTRACTED DRIVING POLICY IN THE VERNAL CITY PERSONNEL MANUAL - SARA BELL

City Recorder Sara Bell explained that Resolution 2026-09 was presented as part of Vernal City's participation in the Utah Local Governments Trust's 2026 Integrity Promise. She stated that the program is intended to reduce risk, strengthen safety practices, and protect employees, residents, and public resources. By completing Parts A and B of the program, Vernal City is eligible to receive a five percent return on its workers' compensation and liability premiums.

Ms. Bell explained that the Integrity Promise includes several ongoing risk-management practices, including reviewing infrastructure inspection and complaint documentation, reviewing City

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policies and procedures, completing a Fraud Risk Assessment, and participating in the Trust's Legal Brief Series. New requirements for 2026 include an increased focus on safe driving and driver accountability.

Resolution 2026-09 would add a distracted driving section to the City's Personnel Manual and Driver Qualification Policy. The proposed policy prohibits employees from manually texting, emailing, dialing telephone numbers, accessing the internet, taking photographs or videos, or entering information into a device while a vehicle is moving. The policy allows voice communication, navigation, hands-free technology, and certain emergency and public safety uses. Employees would also be required to review and acknowledge the policy annually, with safe driving practices reinforced through department safety discussions.

Councilmember Ted Munford expressed support for the policy. Ms. Bell stated that the proposed language had been reviewed in detail by City department heads and finalized with assistance from City Attorney Clark McClellan.

Councilmember Randel Mills asked whether the City has a progressive discipline process for employees who fail to follow the policy. City Manager Quinn Bennion confirmed that the City has an existing progressive discipline process that may include verbal and written disciplinary action and additional measures when necessary.

Ms. Bell confirmed that the proposed policy meets the requirements of the Utah Local Governments Trust and stated that an annual employee acknowledgement form would also be developed. The acknowledgement would be incorporated into the City's annual employee training process.

Mayor Corey Foley suggested that the City consider providing hands-free devices to employees who regularly operate vehicles or equipment that do not have built-in hands-free capabilities. He stated that providing inexpensive equipment where appropriate could help employees comply with the policy while maintaining safety. Mr. Bennion supported allowing department heads to evaluate those needs individually.

Councilmember Ed Long moved to approve Resolution 2026-09 adopting the Distracted Driving Policy and incorporating it into the Vernal City Personnel Manual as presented. Councilmember Randel Mills seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with all in favor.

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE HOTEL VERNAL HAUNT LEASE - MAYOR COREY FOLEY

Mayor Corey Foley discussed the upcoming Hotel Vernal Haunt and noted the significant community interest in the event. He explained that proceeds from the Haunt benefit local charitable organizations and that participating groups contribute volunteer hours, with distributions based on their level of participation. Mayor Foley stated that the event has returned substantial funding to the community over the years.

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Mayor Foley explained that Vernal City has historically entered into a lease agreement with the Haunt organization for use of the Hotel Vernal property. Because this is expected to be the final year of the event before the building enters a demolition phase, he proposed reducing the lease amount from \$1,000 to \$1 so that more of the proceeds could remain available for charitable purposes.

Councilmember Ted Munford expressed support for the proposal but asked whether reducing the lease amount would create any additional liability or insurance exposure for the City. City Attorney Clark McClellan stated that the existing lease structure and insurance requirements could remain in place while setting the lease amount at \$1.

Councilmember Ted Munford moved to renew the lease for the Hotel Vernal Haunt for \$1. Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

Councilmember Munford..... aye;
Councilmember Mills..... aye;
Councilmember O'Driscoll..... aye;
Councilmember Long..... aye;
Councilmember Porter..... aye.

STAFF REPORTS

Councilmember Randel Mills reported on the Ashley Valley Sewer Management Board and asked whether the Board was still waiting for information from Vernal City regarding the number and location of sewer manholes. Public Works Director Keith Despain stated that the City had already provided a shapefile showing the manhole locations and that City staff had also worked directly with the Board's surveyor in the field to verify the information.

Mayor Corey Foley reported that the sewer lift station had reached substantial completion. He also discussed a significant rain event that occurred several weeks earlier and noted that, with one pump temporarily out of service, the first four pumps reached maximum capacity and a fifth pump had to be activated. He stated that the event demonstrated the amount of stormwater infiltration entering the sewer system during heavy rainfall. Mayor Foley noted that the sixth pump would be online soon, providing additional capacity for major storm events and future community growth. He commented that the lift station project had taken considerable time and coordination but was nearing completion.

Councilmember Ed Long reported that the Recreation District Board recently toured the recreation center expansion. He stated that the addition is larger than it appears from the exterior and that construction is progressing. The project is still anticipated to have a grand opening in January.

Councilmember Ted Munford reported on the Mosquito Abatement District. He stated that the Uintah Basin historically has not experienced many West Nile virus cases, although cases have gradually been identified closer to the area over time. He noted that there had been one or two

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animal cases reported in the Basin this year but no known human cases. Councilmember Munford encouraged residents to eliminate standing water around their properties, including water that may collect in containers and equipment, to help reduce mosquito breeding and the risk of West Nile virus.

Keith Despain reported that striping on 100 North was completed by Straight Stripe, including the bike lanes, for approximately \$13,000 to \$14,000. He noted that this was less than the cost proposed through the project contractor.

City Manager Quinn Bennion reminded the Council of upcoming meetings on September 23 and September 30, both of which would begin in open session and may include closed-session discussions related to the downtown hotel proposals and security matters in Ashley Gorge.

Mr. Bennion reported that staff had met regarding recent requests for a school zone, reduced speed limit, or crosswalk near Terra Academy. He explained that any improvements must meet applicable State standards and warrants. Staff planned to meet with Terra Academy representatives to review the requirements and discuss possible safety improvements. He also reported that the City and Uintah County were exploring use of County-owned property south of the school for additional parking and student pick-up and drop-off.

Mayor Corey Foley noted that questions had also been raised regarding law enforcement presence at Terra Academy. He explained that School Resource Officers are provided through a contract between Vernal City and the Uintah School District and are assigned to District schools.

Mr. Bennion reminded the Council to complete the MHTN preference survey for the Lamplighter Block and reported that the Youth City Council had held its first meeting.

Mr. Bennion also reported that the Uintah County Commission had discussed proposed eminent domain proceedings in Ashley Gorge. Vernal City was not named in the proposed resolution, although the City has facilities and water interests in the area. The County Commission tabled the item without taking action.

Mayor Foley encouraged interested residents to review the County Commission discussion. Mr. Bennion stated that Vernal City would continue monitoring the matter due to its facilities, water source, and interest in future access to Ashley Gorge.

ADJOURN: There being no further business, *Councilmember Randel Mills moved to adjourn. Councilmember Ed Long seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote and the meeting was declared adjourned.*