

**Uintah School District
Board of Education
Uintah County, Utah**

Approved Special Business Meeting Minutes

Date: September 21, 2026
Time: 5:00 p.m.
Location: Uintah School District
826 South 1500 East, Naples, Utah

Board Members Present:

- Dave Chivers, President
- Tawnya McKee, Vice President
- Todd Massey
- Denise Maynard
- Robin McClellan

Executive Staff Present:

- Dr. Rick Woodford, Superintendent
- Troy Timothy, Business Administrator

Minutes recorded by Business Administrator's Secretary Sarah Fluckiger.

1. Introduction

1.01 Welcome/Call to Order

Business Administrator Troy Timothy welcomed attendees and introduced the board. President Dave Chivers offered opening remarks and called the business meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

1.02 Reverence

The reverence was offered by Trisha Sorenson.

1.03 Pledge of Allegiance

Vice President Tawnya McKee led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.04 Patron Input

Presentation and Board Discussion:

Superintendent Dr. Rick Woodford presented the preliminary rationale and data supporting a statutory study of middle school reconfiguration and the possible closure of Uintah Middle School. Dr. Woodford reviewed declining enrollment, projected building utilization, anticipated operational savings, estimated capital maintenance costs, elementary school capacity, possible boundary adjustments, a proposed second dual language immersion site at Maeser Elementary School, and options for serving sixth-grade students in elementary schools and seventh- and

eighth-grade students at Vernal Middle School. He explained that the proposed action would begin a 90-day study and public input process rather than authorize a closure and outlined the opportunities for public comment before a final decision. Board members discussed community surveys, the district's long-range facilities and financial planning, the cost of delaying action, student achievement, class-size reduction, staffing, school safety, elective and athletic opportunities, and the scope of alternatives that could be evaluated during the study.

Patron Input:

Patron Jessie Harbin requested clarification regarding the rationale for potentially closing Uintah Middle School, including concerns related to the building's unreinforced masonry status. Mr. Harbin asked the district to provide detailed information about projected savings, administrative costs, and how any savings would be used. He also raised questions regarding transportation and emergency response planning if more students were consolidated at one school and offered to submit his written questions to the Board for further review.

Patron Brody Jenkins thanked the Board for the opportunity to comment and expressed concern about the timing and manner in which the proposal was presented to the Board, school employees, and the public. Mr. Jenkins questioned relying on the building's unreinforced masonry status without a comprehensive structural assessment and recommended obtaining qualified evaluations and cost estimates for repair or retrofitting before considering closure. He also urged the Board to allow sufficient time for the community to review the information and to consider alternatives for reducing costs rather than proceeding on an accelerated timeline.

Patron Chelsea Roth expressed concern that the proposal focused primarily on financial considerations without fully evaluating the effects on students. Ms. Roth urged the Board to study the potential impact of combining the two middle schools on student mental health, school culture, safety, behavior, athletics, and other student experiences. Drawing on her work as a nurse practitioner, her role on the Uintah Middle School Community Council, and her experience as a parent of two Uintah Middle School students, she emphasized the importance of gathering additional data and allowing adequate time to consider students' needs before making a decision.

Patron Stephanie Mair expressed concern that the proposal appeared to be moving forward too quickly and without sufficient consideration of alternatives. Ms. Mair encouraged the Board to study a junior high configuration serving students in grades seven through nine at both schools, noting her experience with similar models in other school districts and her belief that such a structure could preserve educational opportunities and associated funding. She urged the Board to explore other programs and configurations before proceeding with closure.

Patron Rhonda McKenna urged the Board to carefully evaluate the educational and economic effects of closing Uintah Middle School. Ms. McKenna expressed concern that returning sixth-grade students to elementary schools could reduce access to electives, while consolidating seventh- and eighth-grade students at Vernal Middle School could limit scheduling flexibility and leave insufficient capacity for future enrollment growth. She also questioned the projected operational savings, noted potential costs associated with mothballing the building, and raised

concerns about retaining educators and preserving the district's ability to respond to changes in the local economy and student population.

Patron Kristin Forbis expressed concern about implementing the proposed changes before the district could fully understand their effects on students. Ms. Forbis questioned whether operating Vernal Middle School at approximately 98 percent capacity would be manageable, noting the challenges associated with Discovery Elementary's reported utilization rate. She emphasized that building capacity involves more than the total number of students, including classroom availability, course scheduling, and students' needs, and urged the Board to allow sufficient time to evaluate and address those factors before proceeding.

Third-Grade Teacher Leslie Woodward asked the Board to consider student safety and support needs at both middle schools when evaluating consolidation. Ms. Woodward emphasized that elementary schools need sufficient space for small-group instruction to help students meet literacy goals and questioned how boundary changes involving Discovery Elementary would fit within the review process. She also encouraged the district to include student interests in stakeholder surveys, expand elective opportunities if the middle schools are combined, and provide engaging programs for sixth-grade students if they return to elementary schools.

Patron Clint Young asked the Board to study how returning sixth-grade students to elementary schools could affect academic performance, including statewide testing outcomes. Drawing on his experience as a sixth-grade student during a similar transition, Mr. Young expressed concern that band, athletics, and other middle school opportunities may be difficult to provide effectively at elementary schools. He also urged the Board to consider student safety, bullying, and age-related developmental differences if sixth-grade students are placed with younger elementary students.

Patron Steph Adams thanked the district for presenting information that clarified the proposal and asked why sixth-grade students were previously moved from elementary schools to middle schools and what current conditions support reversing that change. Ms. Adams encouraged the Board to allow time to evaluate the longer core-class schedule recently implemented for sixth-grade students before changing the grade configuration. She also asked the Board to consider five-day instruction through eighth grade, adjust elementary school boundaries to better balance enrollment, and explore establishing a second dual language immersion program.

Sixth-Grade Teacher Delene Jaques suggested using a team-teaching model to support sixth-grade students if they return to elementary schools. Ms. Jaques recommended assigning teachers by core subject and allowing students to rotate among math, science, and language arts classes, similar to the district's current extended-block approach. Drawing on her experience as both a sixth-grade student and teacher, she stated that this structure could ease students' transition to multiple teachers, provide more instructional time for core subjects, and prepare them for middle school.

Patron Caroylann Sweat urged the Board to consider student safety, bullying, mental health, and the needs of students with individualized education programs when evaluating the proposal. Ms. Sweat shared concerns about her child's access to teacher support and electives, noting that

required courses can limit elective participation for some students receiving special education services. She asked the Board to examine these student experiences, school safety concerns, and instructional practices before deciding whether to close another school.

Patron Melanie Thul encouraged the Board to reevaluate how school capacity is calculated, noting that Vernal Middle School already feels crowded despite operating below its stated capacity. Ms. Thul expressed concern that combining the middle school populations could increase behavior-management and student-safety challenges. She also emphasized the importance of expanding elective opportunities, explaining that engaging courses can support students' interests, reduce stress, promote mental well-being, and help address behavior concerns.

Patron Benjamin Anderson stated that the enrollment and financial data may support closing Uintah Middle School and expressed appreciation for the Board's willingness to consider a difficult decision. Mr. Anderson encouraged the Board to consider delaying implementation for an additional year if needed to allow more planning and potentially keep sixth-grade students in the middle school configuration. He also questioned the proposed five-year mothballing period, suggested considering a shorter period, and noted that maintaining an unused building would continue to involve costs.

Patron Miranda Carr suggested considering construction of a replacement school on district-owned property rather than closing Uintah Middle School and consolidating students into other buildings. Ms. Carr described her child's positive experience transitioning to a new facility and stated that a new school could preserve staffing, reduce crowding, and help address concerns about the effects of closure on students. She also supported reviewing elementary school boundaries and transportation needs and expressed interest in expanding access to dual language immersion while avoiding additional congestion at already crowded schools.

Patron Kassie Robbins commented via Zoom and asked the Board to consider how closing Uintah Middle School could reduce access to gymnasium and activity space used by community youth sports and other programs. Ms. Robbins also encouraged broader access to dual language immersion opportunities across the district and expressed concern that reducing available school space could limit future educational opportunities. Drawing on her experience working at Vernal Middle School, she added that the building already feels crowded in hallways, classrooms, and common areas despite operating below its stated capacity.

Input given in accordance with Board Policy 002.0720.

Superintendent Dr. Rick Woodford explained that the statutory 90-day period is intended to provide notice and meaningful opportunities for public input and stated that the Board could allow additional time or delay implementation if needed. He clarified that a dual language immersion program requires both an immersion teacher and a companion teacher at each grade level, meaning a substantial portion of students at a participating school must enroll for the program to be financially and operationally feasible. Dr. Woodford explained that sixth-grade students were previously moved to the middle schools because elementary enrollment and building utilization were significantly higher at that time, while current enrollment conditions

have changed. He acknowledged differing views regarding the most appropriate setting for sixth-grade students and stated that the district would review data and public input during the study. Dr. Woodford also indicated that elective opportunities and subject-area teacher rotations could be considered if sixth grade returns to the elementary schools.

President Chivers thanked patrons for attending and sharing their concerns and perspectives. He emphasized that respectful public input provides the Board with important information to consider throughout the study process and stated that the Board would evaluate the additional information before making a final decision. President Chivers recognized the work of district employees and administrators in advancing the Board's goal for students to perform above the state average in tested areas. He also explained that the statutory process requires public notice before the Board may consider a school closure and stated that district staff would continue making information available through the planned online landing page.

2. Business/Action Items

2.01 The Uintah School District Board of Education will consider whether to approve a motion initiating the statutory study, notification, and public input process regarding the possible closure of Uintah Middle School, effective beginning with the 2027–2028 school year, and to provide notice to parents and municipal leadership about the potential closure, with action on the issue to be taken within the time period provided by statute.

Motion: Member Todd Massey moved that the Uintah School District Board of Education initiate a study about the possible closure of Uintah Middle School and related changes to school boundaries and attendance areas for middle school and elementary students at affected schools and initiate the notification and public input process required by Utah Code § 53G-4-402(24) to consider the closure of Uintah Middle School, effective beginning with the 2027–2028 school year, with changes to boundaries and attendance areas to be made if Uintah Middle School is closed and action to be taken within the time period provided by statute. Vice President McKee seconded the motion.

Member Todd Massey explained that he made the motion because the study, administrative review, and continued public input would provide the information needed to make the right decision. He emphasized prioritizing students while also reviewing district expenditures, identifying responsible savings, and directing more resources toward student needs. Member Massey stated that the timing of any changes was less important than making an informed decision and thanked the administration and staff for their work.

Vice President McKee emphasized the importance of considering the proposal's impact on students. She noted her personal perspective as a parent of students who have attended or may attend Uintah Middle School or Vernal Middle School and assured patrons that the effects on students matter to the Board. Vice President McKee stated that the Board would work to balance student needs with the other factors involved in the decision and expressed appreciation for the community's input.

Member Denise Maynard encouraged community members to contact Board members and participate in the upcoming Board meetings and public hearing. She emphasized that the proposal initiated a study rather than a final decision and asked patrons to continue sharing their perspectives throughout the process. Member Maynard acknowledged the personal and emotional significance of Uintah Middle School to the community and stated that the Board cares about the students, teachers, and others who may be affected.

Member Robin McClellan thanked patrons for participating and stated that their comments provided additional ideas for the Board to consider. She sought clarification regarding the scope of the proposed study, including whether the Board could evaluate changes to grade configurations and elementary boundaries even if it ultimately decided not to close Uintah Middle School. Member McClellan expressed interest in examining options such as transitional grade groupings, continuing the sixth-grade instructional approach being implemented during the current year, and providing rigorous five-day instruction. She emphasized the difficulty of balancing the Board's fiduciary responsibilities with student needs, the learning environment, feasibility, long-term sustainability, and the broader impact on employees and families. Member McClellan supported gathering additional public input and studying the proposal's effects on people. She indicated that she was still considering her vote and might vote nay to represent the concerns expressed during patron input, even though she saw value in conducting the study.

Before calling for the vote, President Chivers explained that the motion had been prepared with legal counsel to comply with statutory requirements and to preserve the Board's available options within the scope of the study.

Vote: Four in favor: President Chivers, Vice President McKee, Member Maynard, and Member Massey. One nay: Member McClellan.

The motion carried 4:1.

3. Adjournment

Motion: Member Massey moved to adjourn the meeting. Member Maynard seconded the motion.

Vote: Five in favor: President Chivers, Vice President McKee, Member Maynard, Member McClellan, and Member Massey.

The motion carried unanimously. The business meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.